

543

Read V. C. Gopalratnam & Kunos.

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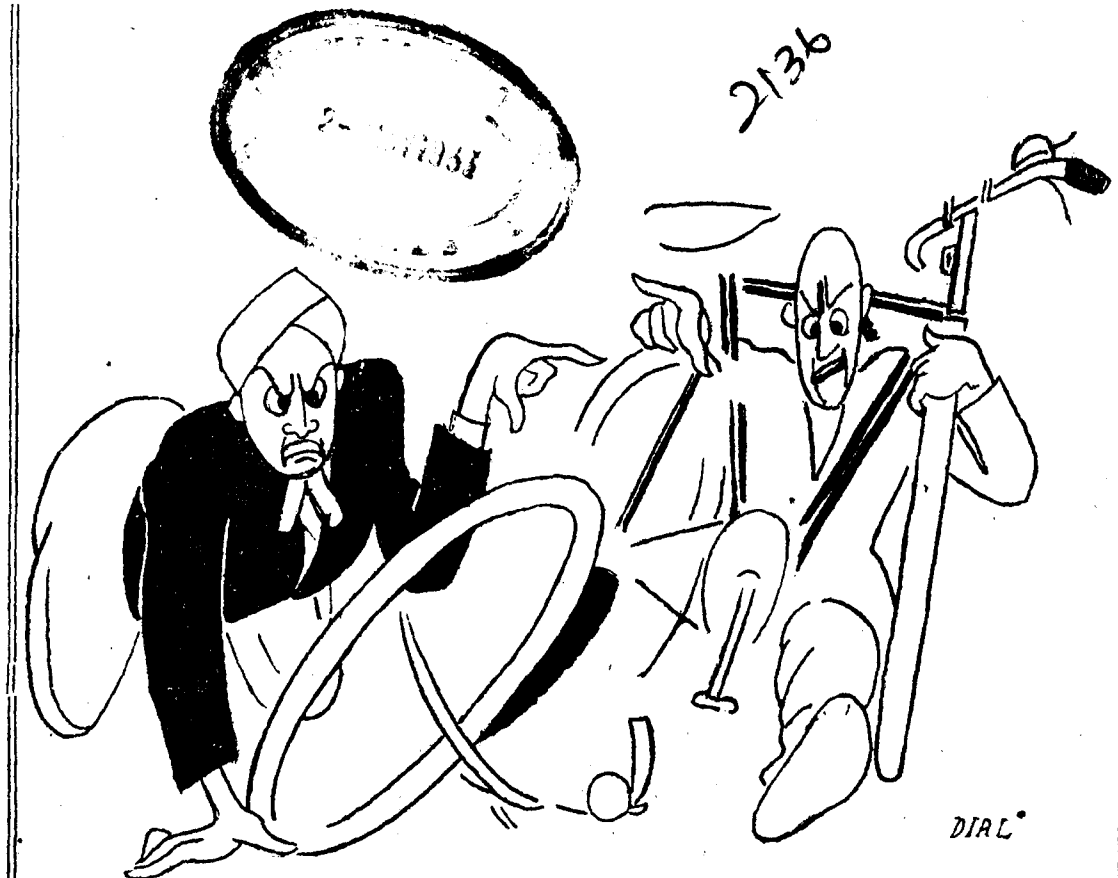
43

The MERRY MAGAZINE

Vol. I

MADRAS, 25th APRIL, 1933.

No. 8.



First Cock-eye :—" Why don't you look where you are going ?"
Second ditto :—" Why don't you go where you are looking ?"

48 Pages

As. 2.

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THE MERRY MAGAZINE

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SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has reiterated his view that Germany must be conceded, in principle, equality of status. Exactly as India has been conceded, in principle, Responsibility.

A committee of hosts, says a report, gave a delightful garden party to Sir M. Usman. We understand that no special weight is to be attached to this periodic function in honour of the guest.

In the Punjab Council, the Chief Secretary took a new member to task for 'making ignorant remarks' in his maiden speech.

We agree that this privilege should be earned by seniority.

"When are retired officials re-employed in special posts to be re-retired?"—asked Mr. Hamid Khan.

Not until the pressure from other unemployed retired men becomes really acute.

Says a Madras Mail News Head-line: 'Hammond 127 Not Out.' Clearly a hard 'un for the bowlers to crack!

'Elephants for sale'—says another. We always instruct our agent not to buy white ones.

The Y. M. C. A. Athenaeum 'talked out' a debate on the 'Ethics of Suicide.' We attribute this indecision to the venerable example of our legislators.

A Bengal Government Press Communique announces that the Presidential speech as well as the resolutions of the 47th Indian National Congress could neither be delivered nor moved. But it very sportingly gives a summary of both. In this a hint to Congressmen to utilise Government machinery for their future propaganda?

Help or we sink—is the S. O. S. of Indian carpet manufacturers, urging protection against foreign competition.

If they can make their carpets sink, they need not.

An "Eat More Fruits" campaign is essential in this country, says Mr. Siva Rao; and appeals to the Railway authorities to co-operate.

The Goods-traffic section have long ago anticipated Mr. Siva Rao; for we have never received our parcels intact.

The League is beginning to act vigorously. It says what it likes, while member-states do what they like.

A deputation from Ceylon is proceeding to Delhi to negotiate a trade agreement between the two countries. Interviewed, the leader of the deputation said that they would present a 'stiff front.'

At dinner, we presume.

Mr. Churchill does not wish to participate in the reconquest of India, a few years hence. It has always been a sore point with him that he could not be present at the original conquest of this country.

There is, however, every prospect of his coming out as a special War-correspondent.

"What are you there for?"—thundered Mr. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, pointing an accusing finger at the Indian Members of the Viceroy's Council.

Inter alia, to keep the others out!

The Assembly adjourned the consideration of a motion for the release of Gandhiji, *sine die*. We have nothing but admiration for the members who thus outwitted the attempt to defeat it.

Mr. Anklesaria was greeted by ironic laughter in the Assembly; but he was equal to the occasion, and retorted, 'He laughs best who laughs last.' We therefore propose to wait till after the birth-day honours are announced.

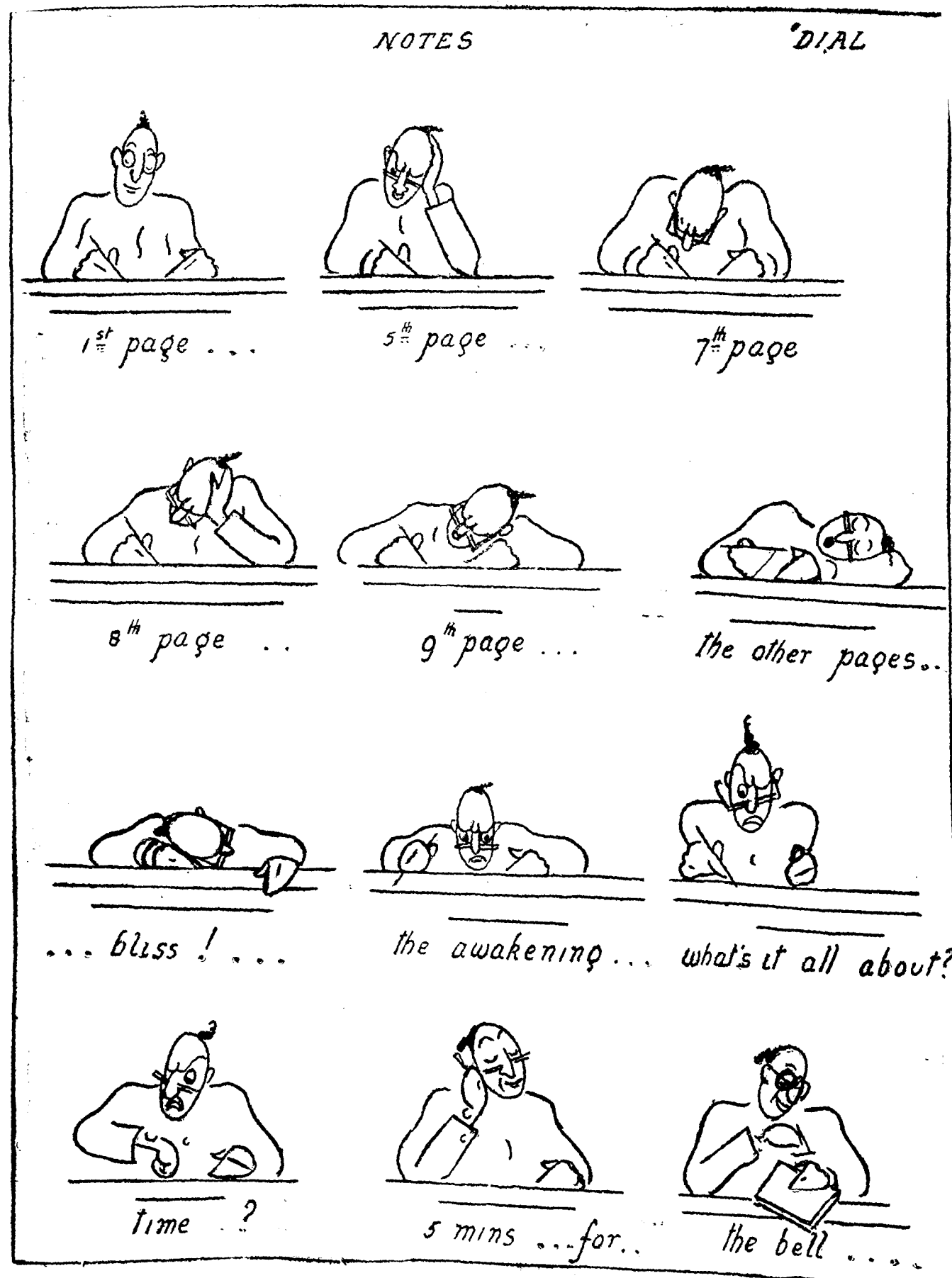
Mr. Jadhav revealed the fact that Mr. Anklesaria was returned by the constituency, which was formerly represented by Mr. Patel, the ex-President of the Assembly.

Serve the Assembly right!

An Opening for Educated Unemployed

(KUNOS)

2138



AT a recent election to the Senate, "the Supreme Governing Body" of our venerable *alma mater*, the University of Madras, has rejected the Right Reverend Dr. Harry Waller, Lord Bishop of Madras, (Cambridge Blue, Classical Scholar, Doctor of Divinity, clean Sportsman, true Christian, perfect Gentleman, sincere Lover of India,—but obviously very poor Electioneerer) in favour of Messrs. Krishna Rao Bhonsle, Ahmed Meeran Sahib and Ayyasami Chettiar,—three eminent citizens, of whose academic and other qualifications the erudite members of the Senate know apparently a great deal more than the ill-informed writer of this article. With comparable taste and discrimination, the same august body of leading Educationists have rejected Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastri (an aspiring young vakil, who is not even a Boy Scout) and the Rev. F. Bertram (a junior tutor in one of our suburban Colleges) in favour of persons who, whether or no they were superior to these rejected candidates in wisdom and virtue, in status and geographical propinquity, could not have been inferior to them in the the art, craft and technique of Electioneering.

All this is by way of introduction to a very desirable, practical and profitable proposal which I shall now unfold for the consideration and acceptance of the "educated unemployed" of this progressive though ancient land. While the market for every commodity for which there is a fairly steady demand and of which there is a fairly regular supply has been organized on a scientific basis, is it not a pity and a privation that the VOTE—that most precious of all commodities in an enlightened and democratic age—should still be left to the inefficient handling of blundering amateurs? The recent academic elections to which we have adverted in the first paragraph of this manifesto are incidents not worth any notice in themselves; but they are highly significant as bringing out most forcefully the urgent need and the momentous importance of a professional agency and a developed technique in the manipulation of Votes, even where the Votes are obtainable *gratis*. Let us,

for the sake of a telling analogy, imagine that the Right Revd. gentleman desires the removal (of course, authorised and legally sanctioned) of 200 flower-pots from the Botanical Nursery across the road to his own spacious compound; how much simpler, surer and safer would it be for him to entrust the task to a firm of contractors possessed of patience, lories and experience, than to take it all on himself? We should say that he was very old-fashioned indeed in his ways if he personally attempted such a task. (The circumstance that the pots were a gift and not a purchase does not alter the case in the least.) The learned Divine is not altogether without *vous*; and he ought to have realised that the collection and removal of voting papers is not a less arduous and exacting process, and demands not less but more of methodical labour and attention to detail, than the nurture and the removal of the most delicate plants.

But it is generally recognised that while at University elections, Votes are to be wangled, wheedled or wrested, coaxed, cajoled or canvassed out of people, at most other elections, Votes, whether in blocks or in single units, could only be purchased or *re-purchased*, like other kinds of floating stock or scrip, at prices which vary within fixed limits in accordance with a formula which is capable of precise statistical determination by specialists. It is quite time that we rose above visionary, sentimental and ethical considerations and adopted and acted upon a sternly realistic and scientific attitude to all contemporary social phenomena and opportunities, whether drinking, racing or voting. And assuming this attitude, it is at once clear that from every point of view, whether that of the buyer or the seller, these Votes are very valuable "economic goods" and should be made the concern or "stock in trade" of a highly-organised, professional agency, which should be responsible, solely or in very large measure, for the collection and supply of Votes on a strictly commercial, non-political basis, regardless of all petty considerations of personal character, of party or of political principles.

We stress the non-political character of this professional service, for outside abhorred Russia, it is a well-established and dearly-cherished creed of orthodox economists that the economic machinery must never be allowed to be interfered with by mere politicians.

Having thus far demonstrated the theoretical soundness of the proposal, let us now proceed to prove its practicability and illustrate its fruitful applications. Does not society even now permit the employment of undertakers for performing and attending to our funerals, of matrimonial agents for arranging and celebrating these interesting domestic events, of lawyers to conduct our cases, of architects to design and engineers to build our houses for us? In employing and remunerating these professional people, does any citizen feel the least conscientious scruple? Is it not equally reasonable and advantageous to have 'Electioneers' who would be whole-time workers and trained experts at their special and chosen profession, and who would whether on a contractual basis for continued periods or for odd jobs or as Standing Electioneers or on other suitable terms, carry on our elections on behalf of and in the interests of their principals and employers. The idea itself, it may be added, is by no means new; for already it is a matter of fact that this business is being carried on in an unsystematic way by uneducated people; ours is only an attempt to elevate it into a learned and organised profession with a status and a philosophy of its own.

In estimating the prospects of business, it is gratifying to note first of all that the elections already in vogue in College Unions, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, Bank Directorates, Managing Committees of Schools, Colleges, Clubs, etc., Municipalities, Taluk Boards, District Boards, Presidentships and Vice-Presidentships, local and all-India Legislative Councils, etc., are sufficiently numerous, frequent and hotly contested. But it must not be forgotten that with the advent of the impending Hoardingdon (or Willinghoare) Reforms, elections in this country will attain a frequency, a multiplicity, a magnitude and a complexity which it will be sheer criminal folly to ignore. It may thus be confidently asserted that the proposed Electioneering

Faculty could provide active, lucrative and continuous employment for all our promising graduates who are not yet engaged in any of the older professions and trades.

We are very anxious, at least for the present, to restrict the practice of this new profession to Graduates, because we are firmly convinced that Electioneering will ultimately become a subject of University study; and it is our dearest ambition that this Science of which we are the founders and pioneers should be recognised as a subject of post-graduate study, like the noble and allied subject of Law, and not a mere undergraduate faculty, like Agriculture, Medicine or Engineering.

All Graduates, therefore, who are interested in the proposal and who are eager to take up this lofty mission of at once relieving unemployment and placing a highly-organised and technically-expert service at the disposal of all patriots who can afford to pay for it, should apply sharp to *Kunos*,

Cure of The Merry Magazine.

P. S.—As soon as the contemplated Institute is formed and chartered, Government will be approached (i) for the abolition of the statutory maximum limit on election expenses; and (ii) for the conferment on the members of the exclusive right to practise the profession. As for (i), it is strongly felt even now that the imposition of this maximum is unjust and immoral and amounts indeed to an intolerable outrage on the liberty of the individual. When a man falls ill or goes to court, there is no statutory limit set to his medical or legal expenses. This invidious and unmerited handicap from which members of our profession suffer (and those of the other professions are free) should be removed forthwith. As for (ii), we claim the same exclusive right to practise our profession as lawyers now enjoy to practise theirs. In any litigation a party can act and argue *in propria persona* or through an advocate, but never through an unenrolled agent. Similarly, in an election a candidate can canvass himself or through a member of the Institute of Electioneers, but he should not be permitted to employ an unqualified private agent.



He was an old man and so, many disputes would be usually referred to him.

It was morning. After bath, ablutions and pooja, he had taken coffee when a gentleman came in and stated his case.

The old man listened well and said with emphasis, "You are right."

Sometime later, the other party came and represented his case.

The old man listened well and said, "Yes, you are right."

His young daughter had been listening to both. She began to laugh terribly. The father began to chide her for her folly in laughing for nothing.

The girl then asked him, "Dear father, you told the other man in the morning that his case was right. You told this man just now that his case was right. How can it be? Only either of them can be right; the other must be wrong."

The old man scratched his head, shrugged his shoulders and muttered out, "Yes, dear, you are also right!"

R. Lakshmanan, *Saidapet.*

An Indian gentleman while travelling in Belgium, saw a sign board over a barber's shop. He read it thus—Hullo, What do you think, I will shave you for nothing and give you a drink? The Indian gentleman was much pleased and he entered the shop and got himself nicely shaved. He then demanded the drink. Much to his mortification the shop-keeper said, "Oh, friend, You do not seem to have read the board. It is said there—'What? Do you think I will shave you for nothing and give you a drink?'"

The Indian gentleman paid the fees for shaving and came away.

Mrs. V. K. Nayakee, *Madras.*

A youth was applying for a post as a Book-keeper. "Of course," said the manager, "you understand double entry?"

"Oh, yes sir," replied the youth. "In my last place they had triple entry—one set of books for the boss, a second for the shareholders, and a third for the income-tax people."

S. Pattabiraman, *Mylapore.*

"Dear teacher," wrote a parent, who evidently disapproved of corporal punishment, "don't hit our Ramu. We never do it at home except in self-defence."

—T. D. Nataraj, *Tiruppur.*

A mixed party of visitors was being taken through the locomotive workshops of a Railway company, by the manager. The day was hot and the guide was getting a little more than peeved at having to answer some of the questions of a boring type of woman.

She asked him, "What is that large iron thing?"

Manager:—"Oh, it is an engine boiler."

She:—"Fancy! But why do you have to boil engines?"

Manager:—"Well, madam, how else should we make the locomotive tender?"

R. M. Simhan, *Royapettah.*

An active verb shows action, as in the sentence, *He kissed her*. A passive verb shows passion, as in the sentence, *She kissed him*. —S. R. Ayyar, B. A., *Bombay.*

Among the applicants to a post in the Railway, there was one who had completed the S. S. L. C. in the second attempt. When the Railway official went thro' his certificate book and found the word 'cancelled' written across a page, he asked: "What is the meaning of this?"

"That is the cancelled page, sir," the fellow replied and he was selected. When another appeared, who had completed S.S.L.C. even in the first attempt, the same official asked "Where is your cancelled page?"

T. S. Govindan B. A., *Bodinayakanur.*

A student, dressed neatly, enters the house of his Principal and gives the servant a card, which the latter took to his master. The card runs as follows: C. P. R. Nath, I. C. S. Looking at the card, the Principal dresses himself to meet the I. C. S. and the student enters.

Principal:—"Rangan, don't disturb me now, I want to meet an I. C. S." (turning to the servant) "Let the gentleman in."

Servant:—(Astonished) "Here he is."

Principal:—(Angrily) "Rangan, what do you mean by C. P. R. Nath?"

Student:—(Calmly) "C. P. Ranganath, sir."

Principal:—(Irritated) "What do you mean by I. C. S.?"

Student:—(Composedly) "Intermediate Class Student, sir."

Principal:—(Disappointedly) "What do you want?"

Student:—"I want to consult you whether I can sit in this dress for the group photo!"

—R. B. Chander, *Tiruvannur.*

A practical man was confronted in a dark lane by a ruffian, late in the night.

"Hand over all your money, or I will blow your brains out," threatened the ruffian.

"Blow away," calmly replied the man of the world, "one can get on very well in this city without brains, but not without money."

—V. Ganapathi, *Triptlicane.*

A rather stout gentleman approached a booking window and demanded a ticket.

"Wait please," came the answer of the booking clerk.

"Do you mean to say that you are issuing tickets according to weight?" roared the stout gentleman at the window.

G. A. Krishnan, *George Town.*

She:—"Darling, dad is giving us a cheque for Rs. 1,000 for a wedding present."

He:—"Then we must be married at two o'clock instead of three o'clock."

She:—"Why, dear?"

He:—"The bank closes at three o'clock."

S. Chandrapalan, B. A., *Shiyali.*

Magistrate:—(Turning to Prisoner) "Well, what is your name, your profession and what are you charged with?"

Prisoner:—"My name is Eveready; I am an electrician by trade, and I am charged with battery."

Magistrate:—(Turning to constable) "I see, constable, put this Eveready in a dry cell!"

—S. Gopal, *Mylapore.*

Mrs. Smith was very inquisitive to learn some latest news about her neighbour, Mr. Jones. She turned towards her husband, who was deeply immersed in the newspaper, and said, "Smith, can you find anything about Mr. Jones's running over his mother-in-law?"

Mr. Smith:—"Wait a little, my lady, I have not yet reached the *Sporting News*."

—R. Ramanujan, *Mayavaram.*

Father to little son:—"Well, Jimmy, whom do you like to marry?"

Jimmy:—"I'll marry grandma."

Father:—"What a fool you are!"

Jimmy:—"Well, daddy, You married my mother and I'll marry your mother."

Miss. Chinnamma, *Cochin.*

Names of Prize Winner on Editor's Page.

TICKLERS

(TUT-TUT-TUT)

1. Annotate with reference to any context of your own.
 - (a). Home, sweet home! there's no place like home.
 - (b). A favourite has no friend.
 - (c). But I'll never more endure
To sit with empty hands at home.
 - (d). Comfort thyself, what comfort is in me?

2. Write short notes on :—

- (a). The Indian Civil Service.
- (b). The Legislative Assembly.
- (c). The Anti-Dumping Bill.
- (d). Temple-Entry.

3. What do you know of :—

- (a). The Lord Mayor of Madras.
- (b). Sir Hari Singh Gour.
- (c). Mr. C. C. Biswas.
- (d). W. Macdonald.

ANSWERS TO TICKLERS

1. (a). This gives expression to the natural longing of a man exiled from home. The sentiment would be appropriate in the mouth of Mr. Jinnah, who is becoming increasingly subject to fits of nostalgia. He has however taken a vow not to return home, until either his famous fourteen points are wholly conceded, or it's time for Lord Willingdon to go,— whichever is earlier.
 - (b). This is a political aphorism, and can be illustrated from everyday experience. We have every reason to believe that it was the melancholy reflection of Mr. Anklesaria on seeing the list of invitees to the Consultative Committee—a list from which his name is conspicuous by absence.
 - (c). This is the chorus of a song very popular with Sapru, Jayakar and other moderate patriots of India. Their argument is that it is better to go to London and return with empty hands, than to remain at home with empty hands. We think it conclusive.
 - (d). Sir John Simon's plaintive message to the British *charge d'affaires* in Russia, when he learned that some of the British accused had pleaded guilty in open court, and then sought to retract.
2. (a). This is an example of the figure of speech called Euphemism, which means softening harsh truths. The I. C. S. is still predominantly un-Indian in personnel; its civility is now a matter of history—(vide what happened at Tellichery not a thousand years ago); and the members of it, far from being servants, are the masters of the country.

- (b). This is India's premier Talkie house. It is recognised by Law as an indispensable part of the machinery of the principle that its members are free to talk as they like, while the government do as they like. Just now it has special claims to public notice in that the Opposition (a technical term signifying a group of members opposed to one another) is composed of two leaders without parties, and one party without a leader.

- (c). This is a measure intended to prevent Japan from outrageously underselling Lancashire in the Indian Market. It cannot be helped if, incidentally, it gives some measure of protection to the Indian Textile Industry.

- (d). A Himalayan irrelevance in the National struggle, devised by the mountainous Mahatma for purposes of relief—comic to the outside world, but tragic to us.

3. (a). This is just now a person, not an office. It was felt that the status of a Kumararajah was at last higher than that of a mere president, which any one can become in these democratic days. But Kumararajahs are not to be had for the mere asking. Hence the change in the nomenclature. The title 'Lord Mayor' is certainly more euphonious, and unfolds besides a distant prospect of the British Peerage, which can still honour itself by inviting to its ranks the scion of our chief Nagarathar.

- (b). One of the most romantic careers in modern India. Has got on wonderfully well, in the positive and comparative degrees. May still achieve the superlative. He claims to be the leader of a party in the Assembly (vide supra) humorously styled Nationalist, the strength of which is never below one. Is passionately interested in Truth, and is often engaged in daring experiments with it. Goes to England at public expense, and, it is to be feared, will come back!

- (c). Mr. C. C. Biswas is another member of the Assembly, but hails from Bengal. (By the way, to judge from government reports, our sister province is full of terrorists, and to judge from this gentleman, it seems to be also full of toadies. We wonder if there is any causal connection between the two.) Is also proceeding to England primarily, it would seem, to give the Joint Committee a unique exhibition of the graceful art of public genuflection.

- (d). One of the five Britons now being tried in Russia on charges of sabotage etc., To be distinguished from Ramsay, of that ilk, the titular Premier of England. The difference between them seems to be that William Macdonald is in the habit of *not meaning* what he says, while the other, of course, never says what he means.

Elephants and Kings

(P. P. SAMUEL)

There was a Zemindar who cried :—
"These twentytwo long years I've tried
To get the title 'Raj'—
Not even 'Maharaj'—
"Yet....." And he sobbed like a dear child.

Gopal ought to be careful about poking fun at eminent men. Perhaps it is true that in England a dog may bark at a king; but, for ought I know, in India, it is an imprudent dog that would even sneeze at anything bigger than a country cat. Well, Gopal should be warned in time, and not be allowed to go about, like a born fool, retailing his yarn which he calls "Elephants and Kings". When you have read the story yourself, you will agree with me that he is in for it. Here is the story :—

The Zemindar of Somapuram was—in American language—a go-getter. At the age of twenty-eight he had come to the Gadi with a vow that within a span of two years he would become a Rajah. All that he wished for was that pressmen should click their cameras in his face and that the cannon should boom from Fort St. George whenever he arrived in Madras. He didn't worry about the number of salutes accompanying the title. Salutes are salutes—two or twenty!

A year of concentrated effort passed by, and a fat list of Birthday Honours was published. South India had a generous share of the Vanities, but Somapuram was not mentioned in the list. The Zemindar studied the next day's paper, from the advertisements to the name of the publisher, to see if there were any mistakes in the B. H. List. No! he had disbursed a goodly lakh by way of Christmas presents and contributions to various fashionable charities, to no purpose. A man of baser

metal would have given it up as a bad job, but the would-be Rajah knew that he was himself the master of his political fate.

Naturally, his resolution for the New Year was to bag the title, within a year, even if he got broke in the attempt. Very soon there was a tide in his affairs which he took at the flood. Poetry apart, a golden opportunity offered itself and he jumped at it. An eminent British officer (who had a say in the distribution of titles) was touring the Southern

Districts of the Madras Presidency. The Zemindar knew that the British are a race of sportsmen and sportswomen who occasionally love to leave the daily round of golf and tennis for a spot of big-game hunting. "A day after big-game followed by a dainty dinner—yes, that's the card!" said the Zemindar to himself.

But then a difficulty cropped up. There were no tigers or lions

in his estate: neither wild elephants, except once in a great while, when they strayed from the heart of the British reserve forest adjoining. It would be rather difficult to arrange with a wild elephant to come out of its way—even if one told it that the Sahib was coming! But his tame tusker would lay down his life for his master!

So the Sahib received an invitation (written on perfumed note paper and delivered by a flunkie in gold and velvet) begging him to "grace Somapuram by his benign presence" and bag a couple of wild elephants before dinner. The Englishman's eyes sparkled at the thought of big-blood; the Memsahib said, "Isn't it just sweet?"; and Somapuram was sandwiched on the crowded programme between a municipality and an ancient temple with frescoes.



As soon as the flunkey of Fate returned from the eminent one, the Zemindar bought a costly aeroplane and employed a pilot for a month on a fabulous salary. "My Rolls," said he, "has no class to it: it is only good enough for an ordinary zemindar. The Sahib must fly from the railway station to my palace."

On the morning of the great day he kissed his tusker on its forehead, and asked a mahout to give it a mud-bath, lead it to a particular spot in the reserve forest, throw a lot of earth on it, order it to stand there until it was told, and come away immediately. The forest Ranger came to know of it, and strongly objected to the presence of an alien elephant on British soil: but when he received a sealed letter, with a neat little bit of green paper in it, from the zemindar, he changed his mind and said that he had only been joking.

The party started at 11 a. m. mounted on elephants and armed with powerful rifles. There were no beaters with drums and things. "Not necessary," said the zemindar. "There are so many wild elephants in my estate that one bumps his head against them if one doesn't keep one's eyes skinned." But a long four hours' tramp produced nothing exciting. They did come across a boar or two, but they just said "Tehah" and passed on.

At 3 p. m. they had a hurried Spartan lunch of twenty courses or so. "Rather unlucky," said Somapuram; "Otherwise we should have come across a dozen by lunch time. I am beginning to feel sorry that I have troubled you for what looks like a wild goose chase."

"Not at all," said the Briton. "A sportsman must take his chances."

"Oh, it is more enchanting than a night in Honolulu," said the sportswoman.

And after lunch they proceeded in ever-narrowing circles towards the spot where the faithful tusker was awaiting his fate. The

sun was about to set when the elephants suddenly came to a halt. And just fifty yards in front stood a 'wild' tusker—a mountain of mud, with little plants sprouting from his back.

"Gee!" said the Memsahib.

But her husband said it with the business end of the rifle, emptying both the barrels simultaneously. With a loud roar and a crash the brute bit the earth. And another shot proved that the animal was stone dead.

"The most wonderful marksmanship I have seen!" said the oily zemindar.

The marksman blushed like a turkey cock and said (like a true Briton) that it was a mere accident.

"He is a beauty," said the lady, referring to the elephant, of course.

Then they dismounted and a nice photograph was taken, with the Sahib standing on the fifth rib of the elephant (rifle and all), and the Memsahib perching on its tusk, careless like.

And lest they forget, the zemindar sent them an enlarged copy of the photograph (accompanied by seasonable fallaleries) just a few weeks before Xmas and mentioned that whenever they felt like bagging a couple of elephants, or even small fry like wild boar or sambar, Somapuram was theirs.

Need the sequel be told?.....I fear it must be on 1st January, 1910, the History of India swelled up by a short paragraph, for the zemindar of Somapuram was made a..... RAO SAHIB! The 'Rao' is perhaps rather common, but the 'Sahib' should add an inch to one's stature.

But when the reporters reached the palace with their question papers to interview the Rao Sahib, they were told that he had suddenly fallen ill and that the aeroplane had gone to Madras to fetch a doctor.

Keep this copy of the Merry Magazine with you.
It may bring you five rupees.

Amateur Acting

(PRAKRIT)

AMONG the words to be included in a new edition of "Hobson-Jobson," the dictionary of Indian words, is, we understand, *Sabha*—a Sanskrit word meaning an assembly or association, now used as a regular termination in the name of amateur dramatic associations in South India.

Last year, even Nidragiri showed signs of a new awakening by inaugurating the Sarvajana Ranjana Sabha. Andiappa Chettiar, seller of brass vessels, and chairman of the municipality, made a memorable speech on the occasion: "I am glad that by the inauguration of this Sabha we shall be removing a point of reproach against the claim to civilisation and culture of this ancient city. Music and acting are among the greatest fine arts, and we have long wanted to organise an association in Nidragiri to foster these arts. We witness the fulfilment of our desires at last today. This Sabha, consisting as it does of educated men as members, is sure to improve the ideals of the South Indian stage. The professional stage has, as you all know, unfortunately fallen into disrepute and it hardly knows what true dramatic ideals are. The members of this Sabha are benefactors to the city. They confer both pleasure and instruction on the inhabitants. To the members themselves the Sabha will prove of the greatest value. By association with one another in the practice of a noble art, the members have the opportunity to improve their own minds." The reader need not be surprised at the eloquence of the Chettiar, for it was well known that the speech he made on the important occasion was composed for him by Subramania Aiyar B. A. L. T., Headmaster of the Andiappa Chettiar High School.

An Attack and the Assailant

Six months later, the Municipal Council of Nidragiri meeting under the presidency of Andiappa Chettiar (also president of the Sarvajana Ranjana Sabha) passed a resolution making a free grant of land to the Sabha to build a theatre thereon. Mr. Venkataraman, who was widely known as the whip of Nidragiri, wrote a long letter to the newspaper attacking the resolution of the municipality. He first pointed out how unfortunate it was that ground reserved originally for a child welfare scheme should be voted away to a dramatic association of doubtful value. He then proceeded to make a direct attack on the Sabha which, he said, cast a pernicious influence on the town. He wrote further: "The Sabha pretended to improve the ideals of the stage, but it has actually degraded them. The members have not the brains to compose a single new dramatic scene, and they have staged no play composed later than 'Nandanar.' The highest standard of acting attained by the Sabha is represented by one who plays the role of a snake-charmer. The Sabha has vulgarised public taste by trying to please only through the effects of the grotesque or the bizarre. The Sabha is also corrupting the morals of the town. It has persistently maintained its quarters in the centre of the Dancing Girls' Street. The secretary is, we learn, an ardent reader of 'Lady Cardigan's Recollections' and his great

ambition is, we learn, to run a Parrot Club at Nidragiri. The boys of the local schools have also been frequently drawn upon to sustain parts, especially those of girls, in the Sabha's performances, and this has ruined their further educational progress. The members acting in the dramas are acquiring morbid manners, and female coquettishness has, we learn, become prominent in the vakils' room in law-courts. It is a shame that the municipality should pamper with a free grant of land an institution which is really a temple of vicious practices." The most interesting aspect of Venkataraman's attack was that he himself was a member of the Sabha. When asked about his attack, Venkataraman said his only motive was to bring Andiappa Chettiar into disgrace.

"He is a brainless idiot, you know, it is time the fellow's glories ceased. I care precious little for the morality of this town, it has been rotten for ages. I don't believe myself in morality," says Venkataraman.

"But you have written about this Parrot Club—" asks his interlocutor.

"I like to cover vice with the refinement of learning. Some have described me as a Bhishma in chastity, but I am not wanting in virility, I indulge in a variety of tastes. This ignoramus of the Sabha's secretary has not read a single English book. It was I that introduced him to Lady Cardigan's book and I have given him an expressive term to designate the activities of the Sabha," says Venkataraman. Venkataraman was a master of emphatic expression. The secretary of the local tennis club used to live in perpetual terror of him, for Venkataraman's usual reply to any remonstrance from him was, "Look here, I shall pulverise your bones."

It is not our business to chronicle here the fierce controversy into which Nidragiri was plunged as a result of Venkataraman's attack on the Sabha and the Municipality, in the newspaper. We shall pass to the great dramatic societies in the city of Madras which have been the obvious model and source of inspiration to the mofussil sabhas.

The Joy of Powder and Paint

Imagine the sensation of glory imparted by powder and paint. Think of the marvel of transforming faces dark as negro into fair, angelic complexions. It is a rare pleasure to recollect the long hours of making up in the green room, when the men chatted incessantly and made jokes to one another. It was the time when electricity had just come into use and the brilliance of the electric light and the power of the electric fan were equally dazzling. Ganapathi Aiyar, on the wrong side of forty, manager of an important government office, was extraordinarily enthusiastic about acting. Looking at his weird features and staring eyes, one would think him least intended by nature for acting on the stage. Yet what assiduous efforts he made to deck himself to be transformed into a woman! Something near applause



was omitted for his appearance on one occasion when he personated a regretful gipsy-woman. Yet some remarked that gipsies were usually very handsome, and Ganapathi Aiyar was of the low begging variety. But it was a certain fact that Ganapathi Aiyar was thinking only of his next appearance on the stage during half the period of his office hours. It is a privilege to look into the kit-bag which he carries with him, full of wonderful trinkets which he puts on when made up into a woman. And then, the rich saris which Ganapathi Aiyar and his friends managed to wear, in the days when the sabha was not rich enough to buy its own stock of clothes. It was understandable that men borrowed saris of their wives or sisters, but how did 'Scissors', who was a bachelor and lived alone, manage to wear the most splendid specimens of the saree world?

Scissors, the Star Actress

Reader, do you want to know who Scissors was? 'Scissors' was also 'Kathri' to his friends. His real name was Kadirvelu Naicken. He was a star actress and he was said to have been the pupil of the most reputed dancing girl of the city, in the practice of the art of dancing. 'Scissors' used to call for extraordinary applause when rendering the dance. Alas, Scissors, where art thou gone! The gaiety of nations has been destroyed in thy loss. Nobody can tell us now what became of him. It is assumed that he is dead. But the legend also exists that he was transformed into a woman and has since borne children. Poor Scissors, he took to acting the woman's part so seriously.

Where Ambitions Converge

Acting makes indeed for the noblest comradeship. The highest and the lowest are united together in their common devotion to the great art of acting. It did not matter if people said that Sambasivayyar, Manager of the Seal and Wax Office, lusted for a Rao Bahadurship, and so started the idea of founding a residential school with the money earned by the dramatic sabha working under his lead. As for the clerks and typists, who were accustomed to wait with bated breath to receive orders from their bosses, was it not an exhilarating freedom to turn amateur actors? Kittu, the account clerk at the English Oilman-store Company, felt convinced about his rare genius for acting from the day he figured on the stage as a humble follower of Nandamar, the Harijan leader. Why was Ramu so punctual in attending the rehearsals, turning up at two o'clock in the afternoon on Sundays? It was obviously his devotion to the histrionic art. Unkind tongues said that having lost his job as clerk in the shipping office, Ramu had not means to get his lunch and was beholden to the free lunches given to actors.

Again, it was a great joy to act when one's own kinsfolk were present among the audience. A middle-aged woman tells her neighbour with a touch of pride, "Mudhar is a member—that is her way of rendering 'member', and the impersonal 'Mudhar' refers of course to her husband. It is a great satisfaction for an amateur to be seen by his kinsfolk, when transformed into a beautiful girl. Harold's wife must have explained this fully. It is equally satisfying to personate the great Siva

himself, though for an hour, or a great king or a great general wearing the glittering clothes of surpassing value. Amateur acting also earns newspaper publicity for the actor. It does not matter what the intrinsic worth of your acting is, you can always count on getting publicity in proportion to the greatness of the personage, under whose patronage the drama is performed, or of the charitable cause in the aid of which you have done your bit. In all ways it is inestimable good fortune to have stood before the footlights for a shorter or longer period of time.

British Taxation.

The sabha offers other pleasures when it assumes an itinerant character. It was a rare holiday to tour from Ootacamund to Colombo visiting all the beautiful cities and towns between them. How the actors were feted in each place, and Sambasivayyar garlanded everywhere! How did the small town of Gullipoor allow itself to be gulled of five thousand rupees in one night by the Seal and Wax Sabha, while all the time the Gullipoor Girls' School was starving to death for want of a couple of thousands? People said the manager of the Seal and Wax office was a potent official who wielded mysterious power over government servants, to whatever department they belonged, revenue, police, judicial, educational or engineering. Not over officials only, but over non-officials as well, the Seal and Wax office exercised enormous influence.

The Collector of Gullipoor was talking to the Manager of the Seal and Wax office in his drawing room.

"So you are resolved to get Rs. 5,000 from this town. How shall we raise it, shall we try the rich people?" asks the Collector.

"No, that is not sufficient. I believe in the British principle of taxation. Large revenues must be derived from all, both rich and poor."

The Collector regarded Sambasivayyar as an astute administrator and rendered him all necessary help. In later years, the Collector visited the Sambasiva institution and found it on a par with Dotheboys Hall.

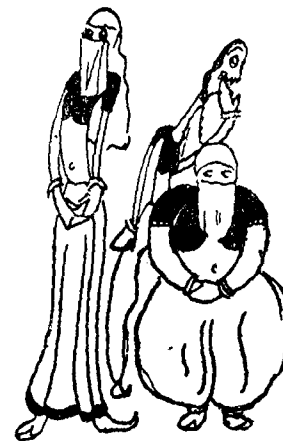
Exit the Man-Woman

How is it that amateur dramatic societies do not catch public enthusiasm now as they did fifteen or twenty years ago? The Whip of Nidragiri says, that Sabhas have all been found out. They are not such public benefits as they were considered once. Sambasivayyar's Dotheboys Hall does not turn public opinion in favour of sabhas either. Now that real women are appearing on the professional stage, the old stars of the Scissors type have gone out of favour. Venkataraman says it is disgusting to contemplate the shaven surfaces showing themselves on the faces of made-up women, in spite of powder and paint. And then Venkataraman thinks sabhas exhibit such phenomenal lack of brains. People are surfeited with the dramatic pleasure derived from neglected wives playing in disguise the role of faithful nurses or servants to their husbands, or of bald stories of widows bearing children by clandestine amours. Yet Venkataraman believes in a great future for the stage and for amateur acting thereon.

ADAM'S SON



If I had a harem, dear
I would make it very clear
To my wives to behave themselves
And stack the babies on..... the shelves.



Fat ones, thin ones, all may join
Long as they bring me some coin,
In the form of dowry for,
Stocking up my harem more.

All creeds, and castes, and countries too,
Imagine dear the hullabaloo,
And don't you think it would be nice
To restock my harem once, or twice?

But perhaps, and after all
Rememb'ring dear old Adam's fall
I'll not marry, for because
Think of the lot of ma-in-laws!



When Eve before the apple rocked
I'm sure poor Adam's knees....they knocked,
And now it's gone and been and done
The Devil to pay.....I'm Adam's son!

—"DIAL"

A CONFESSION

(G. PANCHANADAM)

WHEN he wrote *A Confession*, Tolstoy wasn't in College. In fact he never stepped into a graduate's shoes at all, probably because his feet were rather large, or because, doing so wasn't worth the while.

The following words represent a confession, wrung out of an unrepentant heart, like lime-juice by a housewife. You need not be a bearded white-robed earthly Saint to hear it. I give you as much assurance. You may reserve your benediction to whosoever may like it and beseech it on bended knees. I need none such.

If it will make a very short story shorter still, I will say it at once. I put it down on paper and in a nutshell that I am no longer,

A whining school boy,
With satchel and shining morning face,
Creeping like snail unwillingly to school.

That was long before Sarasu chose to be my wife, or to put it more correctly, Sarasu's mother chose to be my mother-in-law. I am now in college, spending most of my time fluttering around pretty 'co-ed's. It is three years since I was mercifully declared eligible for University course on secondary consideration. Would it interest you to lend your ear [if you have a surplus of those "side-intelligencers"] to the hearty and artless confession of a Collegian?

I am supposed to be very strong in English, at least by my father to whom my occasional requests for the monthly allowance are a nightmare. So I took the matric paper in English with a veteran's unconcern and "banged". A bit of my stuff? Here it goes.

Q. X. [compulsory] Analyse the following sentence into clauses giving the construction of each:

The principal being very angry at the misbehaviour of his subordinate, he ordered him out of the school compound at once.

My answer may seem to you to savour of madness. But there's reason in Bedlam if you will pause to think on it.

Ans.—*The principal being very angry.....* is the principal's clause. *At the misbehaviour of his subordinate.....* is the subordinate's clause, disagreeing with the principal. *He ordered him out of the school compound at once.....* is an adverbial clause of punishment modifying the adjective "angry". The whole is a "compound" sentence. (*vide* "school compound")

If you feel fatter after perusing this answer, there is no reason to regret it.

It is thus that I entered College, with a fair knowledge of English, my grandpa's khaki coat and my tuft. It was no easy matter leaving the coat, for it was a faithful servant with a good tradition behind it. Like Keat's nightingale, it was not born for death: immortal coat, and no angry generations could tread it down. And so one fine July morning, I sallied forth out of my East End home with the coat on, my plaited hair wagging like an elephant's tail, and an aluminium tiffin-box.

But life at college for an up-country novice is not easy till he settles down. And it takes pretty long to do so. With his eyes wide open, more open than necessary, he stares at the bare knees and the half-shut bosom of a pretty "co-ed" and sniffs like a buffalo at the atmosphere

reeking with the smell of paint around her. It was also the case with me; and to tell you the truth, I wondered for a long day—and longer nights too—how it was possible for Miss X. L. Blackie to have naturally such vivid, vermilion lips. I wondered, and wondering, fell.

I fell. Oh, what a fall! It was all due to Miss B. She was true to her name. And when she said she wanted to see me—*me*—privately, I thought she would be true to her word. So she was, no denying that. And that evening after College hours, I took myself upstairs in a trice and practised steps with a jaunting air before the ladies' room. I went up and down. I was jumping with excitement. Miss Blackie to see me! Gee—that's life! There she is; and now, brace up, dear chap. After all, you are pretty, and you can attract a lady!

All that I said to myself and went to her. With a smile she said she wanted my Logic notes, Pooh—I yielded it up at once. Her smile broadened still more. "Thank you," she said. I grinned. She smiled. I grinned, she smiled. And then she said, "I think you will look much better in a suit, Mr. P." and vanished.

So, my pretty little minx, you think I look well and will look much better in a suit, eh!—how is knowledge thrust upon slumbering men! Long ago, Eve showed the way to knowledge when hubby Adam was blinking with ignorance. Now Miss B. hinted how pretty I was and told me how I could be prettier. Shall I lose the chance? Would you have lost it? I bet ten to one—No!

So then, there began trouble in paradise. If daddy had been wise enough, he would have questioned me why I wanted extra money on the 15th of the month. But the unquestioning, easily yielding gentleman that he was, [Mamma also knows that and takes many an opportunity to prove it] he gave me the money I wanted promptly. I got myself a new suit and all accessories. I squeezed my hitherto unpressed feet into leathern boots. I put on collar and tie, pants and coat. I was, tip-top—except my top. I took my hat and put it on and stood before the mirror to admire myself; and most prominent of all appeared my shining tuft of hair unwilling to be thrown into obscurity. My God! I forgo that. There was to be no cropping the head, for that was beyond question. Grandpa, with his half-yearly clearance of an unstinted growth of hair would never allow that! I was perplexed. What to do? Gosh, dash it all. Necessity is the mother of invention, I wouldn't be disgusted. And as a last way out, I went to college without any other covering for the head but my black thick hair, with my pigtail wagging at the back, coat, trousers, and boots.

Unostentatiously I went to Miss B. to take back my Logic notes and on seeing me, she laughed.

"Burst it!" said I, ran home, and went to sleep.

Mind you, this is a confession and there is no playing with truth; and when I told grandma what I have told you now, she blushed. Yes, she did! and visibly too. So, for my edification and Sarasu's own benefit, I have requested grandma to train Sarasu to blush at eighty.

MY FIRST SHAVE

(AN INCOGNITO M.A.)

THERE are certain things the first performance of which always ends in sheer disaster. I am yet to hear of a young husband's first meeting (clandestine, of course) with his wife that did not end in a fiasco. Either the lovers do not take sufficient care to ensure they are not watched by a jealous virgin widow or an unmarried youth, or the old grand-mother breaks in, in the middle of the stolen joy, or at least the awfully reddened cheeks of the girl betray that they were kissed too many times. So too trembling hands and scratching pens are common in University Examination halls. The first operation of the driver at the steering wheel is an hour of peril for the occupants of the car. And so on. It is no wonder therefore that my first shave ended in a fiasco. It was a catastrophe. One would have thought it was even an attempt at suicide by slow torture.

In common with students in Madras, I was an early convert to the band of the 'auto-shaves'. But the presence with me of an old orthodox cousin had prevented me for long from putting into practice my cherished principles. But fortunately my cousin was retiring in a week and was leaving Madras for good. The only obstacle in my way was about to be removed. Before starting to my father-in-law's for Deepavali, I purchased a shaving set,—razor, brush, soap, strop etc. My plan was to initiate myself into the band of the 'auto-shaves' while in the sacred precincts of the father-in-law's.

I really prided myself on my courage of conviction. For my cousin had dinned into my head, times without number, his pet arguments against self-shaving or shaving only the face. His barber used to call on him once a quarter, and after an hour's study of the calendar and a detailed scrutiny of the position of stars and planets, he would ask him to come a fortnight hence. But unfortunately my cheeks were not so barren as my cousin's. His were almost a woman's. Mine, on the other hand, were as fertile as the soil in a delta. Nature was bent on asserting herself in me with a vengeance. Two days after a clean shave, my face was again a black forest of hair. It did not even have the grace of a uniform growth. The right chin was more productive than the left, and in the middle of the luxuriant growth were knots and bushes, not to speak of the oppressively prominent single white hairs here and there. My cousin used to say that Nature never brooks opposition. A hairy face in man is Nature's gift and to seek to run against Nature's ways always ends in her asserting herself in horrid forms and hideous shapes. There was some truth in his remark. I had a fairly shiny complexion, but in contrast to it was the dark paint on my cheeks. If Nature was tearing me by her exuberance and abundance, the barber who shaved me did worse. He clean forgot that the head and face entrusted to him were living organisms with sensations and feelings. He thought them to be only articles of wood which he could plane and chisel as he pleased. My barber was really a 'carpenter of humanity'. And for a whole day after a shave by him, my eyes were two balls of fire, and my front

head emitted invisible flames, with the result I came to the conclusion that God never intended the skull at any rate to be close-shaven. I was moving fast in the way where all tufted students move—to a crop.

The Deepavali day was to me a red-letter day. It was so in more ways than one. I had that morning managed to have a five minutes' 'aside' with my wife, (a buxom lass, chubby-faced and smooth-skinned) and in the process of being kissed by her, very innocently of course, I felt that her maidenly lips did not quite appreciate the contact with the rough cheeks of mine. If it was a moment of disgrace for me, it was also one of decision. I brushed aside the lingering echoes of my cousin's harangues and resolved to be my own barber, and to shave my face day by day, not caring for the caprices of stars and the movements of planets.

That evening at four, after tea, I shut myself up in my chamber, took out my shaving set and sat before an old mirror on the wall. The mirror did not quite faithfully reflect my face, but as if mocking at my maiden attempt, showed me faces. It exaggerated my face by lengthening it and shortening it, now horizontally, now vertically, now slantingly. This damped my enthusiasm a little, but I cheered up and commenced my operations. I moved the brush on the soap for five minutes till half of it was consumed, and then applied it to my cheeks. It gave me a very pleasant sensation. As the brush moved up and down with the lather, I felt the real joy of auto-shaving. In fact, lost in the bliss, I did not notice that much of the lather was falling on my clothes and on the floor. I then sharpened the razor till it was shining white. All the time the mirror was playing pranks with me. It showed that my moustache grew on my forehead, and that my nose reached to the chin. However, feeling where my right cheek was, I applied the razor and swiftly drew it along. I do not know if it was a wizard's razor, but its march on my cheek was a gory one. Thrice it cut my cheek, and small pools of blood were formed. And the lather mingling with the blood gave me such a fine sensation that I thought hell's agonies themselves would be pleasanter. But the razor did its work all the same. A small path was made in the middle of the bushy growth, but it gave me a horrid burning sensation. I dropped the razor, took it up again only to receive more cuts and bruises. My fingers trembled and refused to handle the suicidal instrument. I was floating in mid-air.

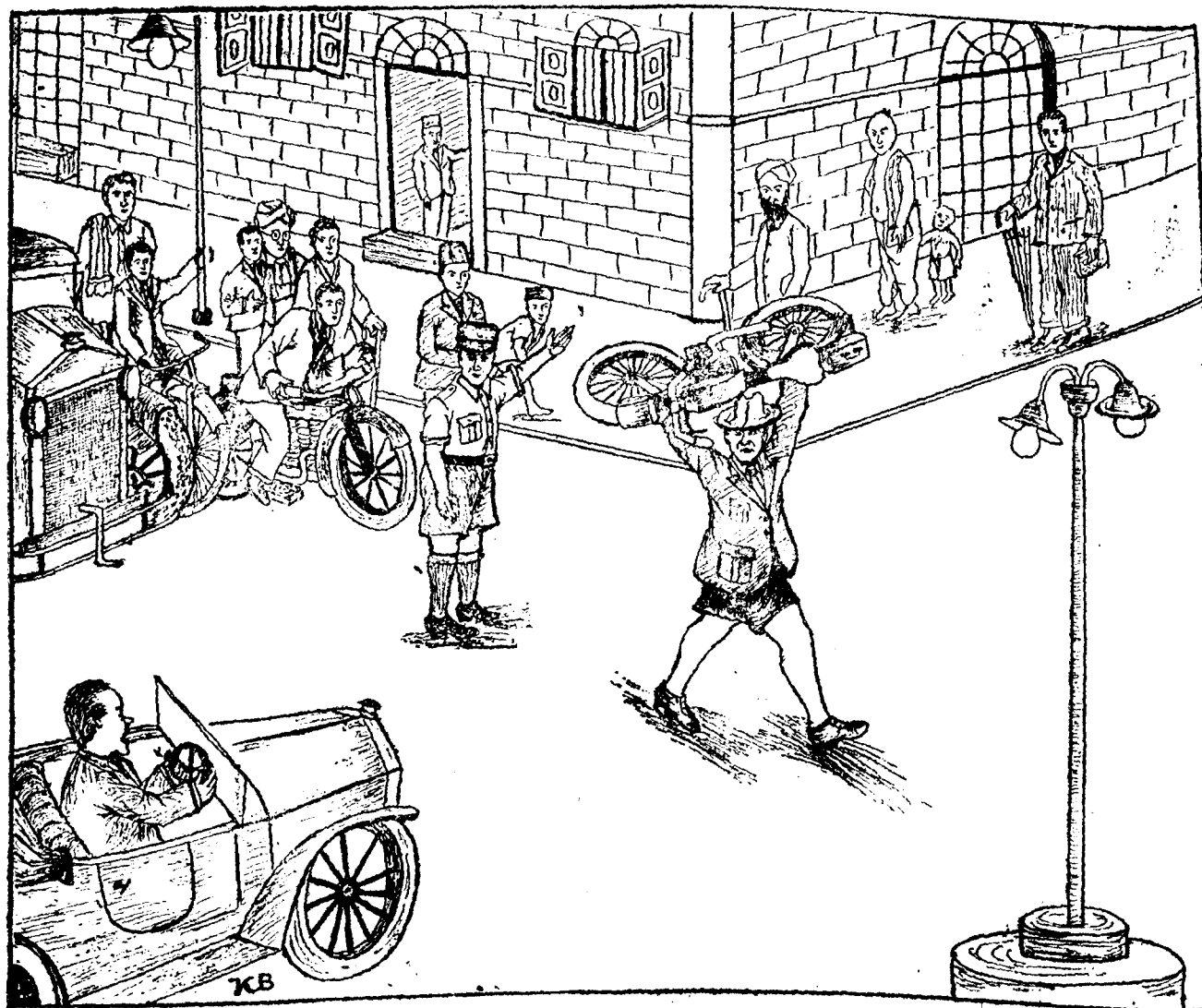
That evening at five I had fixed up a tennis match with a friend. It promised to be a nice game, and several friends had been invited to watch my play. And here I was oozing blood, oozing lather, oozing tears, with half-shaven and blood-red cheeks. My agony begged description. It was a new-moon day, and to fatherless me, a shave on that day was a crime. My grand mother-in-law would pour a solution of cow-dung, if she knew of my shaving myself on a new-moon eve. I thought of the fabled Tirupati barbers who used to shave men by halves

at a time, to ensure custom. In all that house, only my wife would sympathise with me. But obviously she was not a hair-dresser and could not complete the work I began so disastrously. Nor was she a carnivorous animal to kiss away the drops of blood on my face. And how to send for her was a great problem. So I bit my lips and kept quiet.

When it grew dark, I stole down, ran to a saloon, got a shave (after confiding the happenings to the master of the saloon), and when I returned home, I complained of sudden and severe cold and wrapped my head and face with a thick flannel muffler. I escaped detection, as it was night time and my father-in-law's house was by no means well-lit either by day or by night, and this was of considerable help to sons-in-law hunting after their wives. I also suddenly changed my whole

programme and said I was leaving the place that very night. I was not unaware that this abrupt termination of my stay gave a rude shock to my wife; nor did I fail to notice that from behind the door of the dark store-room, she was beckoning to me by facial contortions and knittings of eyebrows and whispered monosyllables, evidently to dissuade me from leaving or at least to give and receive parting kisses.—'kisses, one as long as twenty, and twenty as short as one.' But I avoided her. Poor girl! how could she know that when love and love's kisses are placed in the balance along with the possibility of escape from a humiliating situation, it is the latter that weighs down?

And now when anyone asks me why I do not shave myself, I proudly answer, 'I am not so mean, nor so poor as to be my own barber'.



The professional strong man overcomes the delay caused by a traffic hold-up.

A STRANGE DREAM

(R. V.)

IN the B. A. class, while we were reading *Pippa Passes*, the famous lines of Browning, 'God is in Heaven and all is right with the world' afforded us opportunities of endless discussion, between the lecturer and us, and afterwards amongst ourselves; and always we came to the conclusion that the note of robust, incurable optimism sounded in those lines was justified in spite of innumerable cases of seeming injustice and purposeless sorrow which we come across in this world. We were young at that time; rich, warm, youthful blood was coursing through our veins; our creature comforts were being looked after by our parents; there was no economic depression, no unemployment scare, no family cares and troubles, and no bodily ailment. It was not surprising, therefore, that we heartily endorsed Browning's optimistic view of the Maker and His world. Much water has flowed under the bridge, since then, and

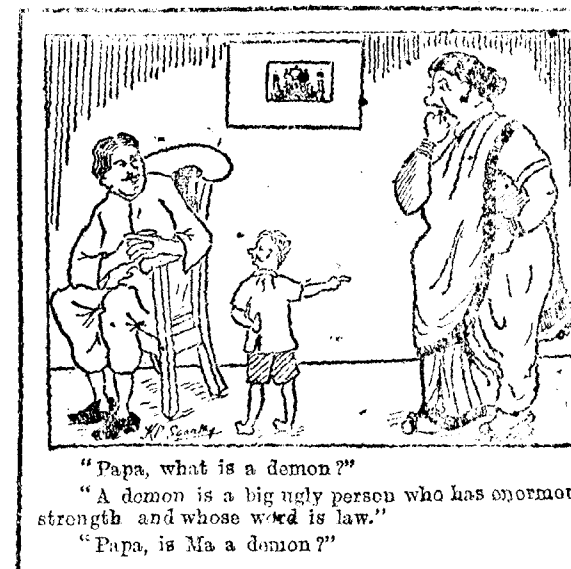
most of us have passed and are passing through the troubles and turmoils, frenzy and competition, the disappointments and failures which make up a large part of the life of the ordinary individual in modern days. Some days ago, therefore, when I came across the above lines while I was reading a recent issue of the Merry Magazine, I wondered if I or any of my friends, who, in our College days, so enthusiastically stood by Browning in our debates, would still stand by him. The question roused a long train of associated thoughts, and for well-nigh half an hour during my evening walk, I pondered deeply over it. My mind was

so greatly exercised over the matter that, in the night, I was subjected to a very queer but very vivid dream. I thought that I was sitting for the Modern Poetry paper of the B. A. degree examination again, and that the very first question appearing in that paper was, "Discuss fully Browning's statement, *God is in Heaven and all is right with the world*, with special reference to the following relevant questions. (1) Is there a God and if so, what is His nature and what are His attributes? (2) What and where is Heaven? (3) Is God in Heaven? (4) What is the world? and (5) Is all right with it?" And I dreamt that I very foolishly took up this question first and devoted no less than two hours to answering it with the result that the bell rang just when I took up the next question and my answer paper was literally snatched from my hands by an over-zealous hall superintendent. I subjoin below, for whatever it may be worth, the answer which in my dream I supplied—an answer which like all happenings of a dream, contains an incongruous admixture of the feelings

and thoughts of my student stage and those of my present one.

1st Sub-division:—"Is there a God and if so, what is His nature and what are His attributes?" My answer was:—The first part of this question has never been conclusively decided. From the beginning of creation there have been three sets of people, the theists, the atheists and the agnostics. A small fraction—a very small one—of the first set claimed to know His existence by superphysical means, but the rest believed traditionally that there is or must be a God. The second set denied His existence and attributed all phenomena and all life to the action and interaction of mere material forces. The third, in my opinion, were the most honest of people. They simply say they do not know and I would in all humility

rank myself amongst them. With regard to the second part of the question, the greatest of philosophers, metaphysicians and devotees have failed to give an answer which will command general acceptance. The Hindu philosophers usually define Him by negatives such as, 'He is not this, He is not that,' a definition which must be admitted to be scarcely illuminating to unsophisticated, uneducated people like me. My view is that, supposing there is a Maker, we should with the Buddha refuse to try to measure the immeasurable. Frankly, then, I would say that no honest chap can ever venture to say who or what



"Papa, what is a demon?"
"A demon is a big ugly person who has enormous strength and whose word is law."
"Papa, is Ma a demon?"

God is and I would much rather be in the company of such honest fellows, though I run the risk thereby of being dubbed an ignoramus than pretend to be learned by essaying a definition of a Person beyond my ken.

II Sub-division:—This question—What and where is Heaven?—though not so baffling as the previous one, is still far from being simple; for no two individuals in the world have the same conception of Heaven. The drunkard, for example, is cocksure that it is a place where he can command full convenience in the matter of the satisfaction of the one craving of his life. He can, the moment he thirsts for a drop of that soul-satisfying beverage, be in the toddy, arrack or high-class liquor shop according to his taste and the length of his purse, and without paying a pie—and mind you, in these days of financial depression, money is so scarce—he can get bottles and bottles of that delicious liquid, and the most gratifying part of the whole affair is he could drink and drink without ever getting

intoxicated. To the sensualist, Heaven assumes a different shape. He only, in that happy place, be surrounded by and revel in the embraces of the most beautiful maidens of the earth or of the celestial world. Menaka, Bamba, Urvashi and Tilottama would all languish for a smile from him; there will be no jealous husbands to reckon with and no courts of law. To the man with a big family, who is earning exactly three-fourths or even less, of what he has to spend, Heaven is a place where either he is not bothered with wife and children and other dependants, or if he be at all surrounded by them—and a fond father may perhaps like to be so surrounded—he will find food and clothes and jewels and other necessities as well as luxuries growing in trees—as the first item at least was believed to have done in the days of the world's infancy, before the naughty Pandora and the not less naughty Epimetheus let loose on the world the host of troubles and worries kept confined in a box till then; or probably, there will be no hunger to satisfy and no need for food or clothes. Ambitious lawyers will, in their respective Heavens, get millions and millions of rupees without being constrained to pore over pages and pages of law books and journals or illegible documents or to argue before sleepy or sleeping judges. For a Munsiff's place or even a High Court Judgeship, there will be no competition, or rather there will be as many Munsiff's posts and High Court Judgeships as there are lawyer aspirants. A poor schoolmaster will, in his Heaven, be rid, once and for all, of all bother of stultifying information on all kinds of dull and insipid subjects in the minds of inattentive, unresponsive pupils. He will have no Government or University Examinations to coach up his pupils for and his increment and post will not depend on the percentage of passes he is able to manufacture in his school. As for the editor of the Merry Magazine, though I have not trained myself in thought-reading, I can declare, without fear of contradiction, that in his Heaven the number of subscribers to his journal will run not merely to four or five figures but to six and even seven, as some of the daily papers in the west are said to do; and his fond ambition of banishing all gloom from a tired and sorrow-laden world will be completely realised.

As regards the second part of this question, namely 'Where is Heaven', I am sorry, I have to say I do not know. If the examiner is over-curious about the matter, let him purchase or borrow and peruse any book on Theosophy and he will have abundant information on the point.

When I came to the third sub-division, 'Is God in Heaven', I chuckled, for this was the easiest to answer; and I straightway wrote—and I was, in this respect, in the

company of members of the Treasury Bench of the Provincial and Central Governments, whose answers to most of the supplementary questions put by Hon. members of the Legislature are laconic.—'The question does not arise'. 'In view of the answer to the first question, this question does not arise. For, when the very existence of God and His attributes are undermined, how can one essay to solve the problem, whether 'God is in Heaven'?

As regards the fourth sub-division, 'what is the world?', I wrote, 'one would think that, with regard to this question at least, one is on solid ground. For we may not know whether there is a God or Heaven but we must be sure at least of the world in which we live. In spite of its seeming simplicity, however, the problem is far from being easy. In the first place, the term 'world' may refer to anyone of many things. If it refers to the geographical aspect of the world, we need not suffer

for want of kind instructors. For geography has of late become so important a subject that a host of eminent experts have laboured and produced—no mean mind you—but wonderfully erudite text-books on the subject, anyone of which is sure, on reference, to enlighten you on the geography of the world; only I am afraid you will be so greatly bored and perplexed, on perusing even the first page, that you will be constrained to give up the attempt of going through the book in utter despair, and you will exclaim, "D—n these wretched geography experts! But if the term does not concern

itself with the geographical aspect of the world, difficulties crop up. For 'tis it not the fact that each and every living thing in the world, from the tallest and biggest giant to the tiniest worm, lives in a world of its own, a world entirely different from that of every other living thing? For example, is my world and the world of the examiner the same? Does not the sword of Damocles hang over my head by the flimsiest of threads at the present moment? If this answer pass and my degree, but if, for any reason, he is dissatisfied, woe for me! Is the examiner in a similar plight now? Decidedly not. How then can one say that his world and mine are the same? Our philosophers say that every man creates a world of his own by his thoughts, desires and actions and I may add that his friends, relatives and others with whom he comes in contact, also create a world for him, very often, not over-pleasant. Evidently, then, the question, 'what's the world?' is as baffling as any of the previous ones.

The last one—'Is all right with the world?'—was next taken up by me. I prefaced my answer by suggesting to the examiner that the question, to permit of a suitable

answer, must be modified to, 'Is all right with the little world which each man creates for himself and in which he lives, moves and has his being?' I can answer this question only so far as it concerns me; for clearly, not being omniscient, I am not qualified to say how other people fare in their worlds. As for me, I should say I get on indifferently well. Often, of course, the world seems all wrong with me. When my morning coffee is delayed by an hour, either because the milk-maid is unpunctual or more often because my better half is out of sorts, when my official superior frowns on me, when my creditors—and I have a host of them—dun me for the money I owe them, when my wife bothers me for the diamond nose-screw on which she has set her heart, when, on my father's Shradda day, for the sake of my ultra-orthodox mother, I have to fast till two o'clock in the afternoon, with this hopelessly antediluvian mother of mine keeping vigilant watch over me, lest I should go to the nearest hotel and take some coffee on the sly, and last but not least, when I am in my doctor's hands; and being on the wrong side of forty with a very unsympathetic digestive apparatus—I say unsympathetic because it always non-co-operates with my palate which craves for all sorts of good eatables—I have often to be in his hands, I say, on all these occasions, the world does really seem to be all wrong with me.

But I have my consolations and compensations. For, when my wife, mightily pleased with the new silk saree which I had purchased for her the previous day, gets up at 5-30 in the morning and is ready at six, just when I plan to rise from bed, with a cup of hot, steaming coffee, when again at 3 P.M. after a hard three-quarters of a day's work in my office, I get my evening drink consisting of a cup of finely prepared orange pekoe tea which thrills and warms me to such a degree that I feel kind even towards my co-clerk

Little Bobby returned home from school looking very much the worse for wear.

"I have been fighting," he replied to his mother's question.

"But why?" she asked as she bathed his damaged eye.

"All because I allowed a boy in the class to copy my sums," replied Bobby.

"What!" exclaimed mother. "Do you mean to say that this boy fought you just because you allowed him to copy your work?"

"Yes, mother," said the boy miserably. "you see, they were all wrong."

"I'm sorry, madam," said the passport official, "but there has been a mistake made in your application form."

"What's that?" she asked.

"The colour of your hair has been put down as dark instead of fair."

"Oh," she said, with an obliging smile. "will you alter it or shall I?"

opposite, whose one business in life is to carry tales against me to my officer, when again my official superior, the manager, who is never over-pleased with me because I am not enough of a flatterer and because I am next to him in seniority waiting to get into his shoes, the moment he retires from service or the world, whichever happens earlier, is snubbed by our officer—I am human after all and I frankly confess that I really exult when my teasing manager is teased in his turn,—when I am invited by a friend to a marriage feast, a friend who, in the ordering of the various items of the menu, is considerate enough to consult my particular likes and dislikes, and last but not least, when my town agent, Vembu Iyer, places in my hands the much-longed-for Merry Magazine, and I retire to my room immediately, shutting the doors so as to avoid interruption by my nagging wife and my boisterous children, and forgetting myself and all my worries burst into laughter every 13 seconds, to the great bewilderment of my better half, who could never understand why I make myself ridiculous by laughing while alone, on such occasions, I do positively feel that the world is all right with me; and finally, would I not feel that the world does most honourably play the game with me, if the editor of the Merry Magazine, after perusing this precious article of mine, takes it into his head—most unreasonably, though it may seem to many—to deem it worthy of publication in the next issue of his magazine, I say would I not, in such a contingency, dance with joy and ardently, like an infatuated lover, hug—hug what?—hug the world—if that big, unsentimental thing would allow itself to be so folded within the embrace of a puny creature like me—, and would I not then cry out that the world is all right as far as it concerns me, howsoever it may use others?

A Frenchman quarrelled with a Scotsman and challenged him to a duel. The challenge was accepted and, in order to keep the affair as quiet as possible, they both took a train into the country. The Frenchman took a return ticket, but his opponent only booked a single.

"Sapristi!" exclaimed the former. "You expect not to come back, eh, my friend? I always take a return!"

"Oh! I never do," replied the Scot. "I always take the return half of my adversary."

"I am happy and all that, of course. Still I wish my husband would not talk so much about his last wife."

"Forget it! Mine's always talking about his next."

"Now, children," said the teacher, "write down all you have learned about King Alfred, but don't say anything about the burning of the cakes; I want to find out what else you knew."

Half an hour later wee Jeanie handed in her effort.

"King Alfred visited a lady at a cottage but the less said about it the better."

MUSINGS ON MAIDENS

(G. VENKATACHALAM)

(i) The Chinese Girl

"WHAT strikes you most about the Chinese girl?" asked my young hostess, a pretty, English and typically modern Chinese girl, as she poured fresh, fragrant Chinese tea into delicate, dainty little Chinese cups, in the Chinese room of her palatial mansion, overlooking the beautiful Singapore harbour. "Their gold teeth," joked I, half in fun and half in seriousness. My friend did not quite relish the remark, though she joined in the general laughter, but simply said: "Yes, it's a pity." Now that's the first thing that strikes you about a Chinese girl—her gold teeth—when she opens her lips to greet you, to welcome you or when she smiles at you. The Chinese girl is really pretty, attractive and even beautiful, with her marked features of slanting eyes, high cheek-bones, short flat nose, full lips, mobile mouth, dark hair and yellow complexion. She is perfectly charming too with her quiet dignity, cultured courtesy and inherent nobility. But, most unfortunately, it is her gold teeth that first obtrude themselves on your sight and obstruct all her charming qualities from your first impression. This momentary mental prejudice soon vanishes when you speak to the first girl you meet and realise her physical, mental and moral excellences. The Chinese children are exceedingly fond of ice, and it is a common sight to see even street urchins, not to talk of the well-to-do ones, eating and munching, all day long, ice creams of all sorts, sweetened and unsweetened, flavoured and unflavoured, hand-made and machine-made, and this excessive use of ice in their young life has a great deal to do with their rotten teeth, apart from the coarse, putrid meat and fish, they love so much to eat.

The modern Chinese girl is about the most westernised of eastern women. Not even Japan, with its hundred per cent modernisation in trade, industry, war and murder, can lay claim to such a progressive womanhood. Young China wants to copy America, not only in such external things as improved architecture, intensive agriculture and extensive co-operative work but in attempting to democratise its ancient aristocratic civilisation, just as Japan wants to copy Britain not only in its trade, and commercial exploitation but also in its diplomacy and imperialistic policy. The women of Japan, like the women of England, are exclusive, conservative and intensely nationalistic.

New China looks to America for inspiration, for progress, for democracy; and the young Chinese girl is getting very much Americanised in her life, fashion, mode and manners. She dances the latest "Blues", sings the latest jazz, smokes the best cigarettes, drives the latest models, reads the latest fiction and is quite "at home" with the latest Hollywood scandals. She bobs her hair, powders her nose, paints her lips, scents her body, drinks ices and chews candies as provocingly as her sister across the Pacific. She reads Shaw, adores Huxley, admires

Gandhi, and has a passion for the latest information on science, sex or salvation. She can not only teach, nurse, doctor, stenograph and write, but can fly, fight, make ammunitions, drive lorries, dig trenches, and swear at her enemies. Though she is more international and more cosmopolitan in her outlook than her class in Japan, she is equally self-sacrificing and proudly patriotic.

The modern Chinese girl, like modern girls all over the world, goes to no temple, worships no god, believes in no religion, follows no prophet, but withal remains an ardent Confucian and a bigoted Chinese. She, like the Hindu girl, has no love of adventure, no passion for outdoor life, but loves books and has a prodigious memory. Romance plays very little part in her life, as in the case of the Hindu girl, and marriage is still a sacrament and a serious obligation. The so-called Shanghai girl is neither Chinese nor of Shanghai, but an American importation into that city for Speakeasies and Night Clubs.

The village girl in China has her own native grace and old-world charm. She is richly endowed with nature's gifts. Strong, sturdy, silent, hard-working, patient, vital, she loves her home, hearth and children. She is highly productive in more than one sense. Like the Hindu village-maid, she possesses a consummate moral nature and makes a good wife and mother. She is gentle but not timid, assertive but not aggressive, shrewd but not subtle, alert but not quick-witted, learned but not wise. She is an aristocrat with "plutocrat feeling" and a democrat with an aristocrat taste. She has a restrained dignity and an innate courtesy towards high and low.

She is extremely clever with her fingers and uses them deftly in creating beautiful objects of art and utility. She is the mainstay of many a thriving cottage industry in that vast country. Amidst poverty, dirt, filth, squalor and ignorance, she, like the Indian peasant folks, spins, weaves, and embroiders exquisite textiles; cuts, carves, colours and creates marvellous wooden, metal and stone works of art, with such wonderful dexterity and innate artistic skill and aesthetic sense that they even amazed trained artists and experienced connoisseurs. It is her race-heritage, a divine gift of the Celestial Daughter. She is like an ancient, deep-rooted tree, which catches all the passing winds of heaven to strengthen its roots, to help its growth, but itself remains unshaken and unmoved.

"China is doomed; China is a menace to the world. China is not fit to rule herself; China is not a nation, and must be dismembered and divided among the civilised nations of the world," cry the modern apostles of militarism, death and destruction. The challenge to this cry is the modern educated Chinese girl, who dreams, plans and works for a United China that will yet be a saviour of these so-called civilised nations.

What shall it be about?

(ADHDHI)

THE sheets were lying clean on the table except for a 'Sri' at the top; the pen, for the 75th time dipped into the half-empty ink-well, was taking on its 75th deposit of dry ink on its yet unused tip; the short-story books or novelettes, if you prefer to call them so, were lying on the side-desk left open at indifferent pages; and I, the author of all this dull confusion and clumsy idleness, have been reclining in my chair ever since my wife went inside, a hundred and twenty minutes before, after giving me the usual after-dinner betels, leaving me to attend seriously to my literary work,—now with half-closed eyes trying to follow and catch some precious idea that

appeared before my mind but eluded its grasp, probably afraid of being tortured into words at my hands, and now looking at the tempting invitation of the Editor to the Average Reader to contribute, in black and white, a record of the perambulations of his mental faculty. In vain did I tickle my mind and in vain did I attempt to nail down any one of the hundred themes that flitted across it, for any that I actually did succeed in catching I had to let go by—because it happened to be either a fly too common and hated in every house or a parrot which had already repeated itself a hundred times through as many pens of as many dreamers like myself.

Now it was the dream of the young son-in-law on the eve of his departure to his father-in-law's house for the first Deepavali after his marriage, his scrupulous equipment for the occasion, the pleasing scenes which he conjured up in his mental vision like the chance glance at his girl-wife or at the door from behind which she would no doubt be devouring him with her eyes through its chinks; and the mischievous urchin of a brother-in-law who mercilessly discovered to his elders the hasty retreat of his *Athimber* from his sister's hiding room.

But no, this is already too boring; the Deepavali month is long past and no bridegroom would care to take valuable hints from my causerie to guide him in his behaviour at his wife's father's house.

Shall it be, then, of the enthusiastic propagandist expounding to the bewildered rustic, in the learned phrases of his college texts and the 20th century Ciceros, that the whole country was being crushed by Economic Depression and starved by the neglect of the Cottage Industries and that before it was too late, he should realise the danger, face the problem boldly in the face and

willingly lend his shoulder to the wheel to counteract the overbearing weight? Here again, our propagandist is only too well-informed to listen patiently to my learned homilies. He is thorough enough with Rural Economics and the problems of the labourer and the agriculturist to tackle with the rustic himself and goad him to apply his energies to the obstinate wheel.

Or, shall I turn to the miraculous discovery of the sterling virtues of tobacco, the charming ways in which its different manifestations serve man to the point of can't-get-on-without-it, supplemented by a short, crisp note on

its origin from the first of Hindu Triad and on the history of the development of its innumerable promises during the centuries, triumphing over the wretched and contemptible homilies of its iconoclasts? But the worshippers of Brahma for his rare blessing, either know much more of the history and development of tobacco than ourselves or they are rather more interested in the actual enjoyment of the manna than plunging into a cold research regarding its origin and such other dry and disjointed details about it.

Then, say, shall I leave aside the stories, the heavy problems of the day and abstract enquiries into the origin of the luxuries and invite the reader to smile and sigh with me at the pandemonium reigning inside the S. I. R. third-class compartment on the metre gauge trunk line—at the divided attention wrangled from the wretched old man in front, by the prior occupants of the compartment refusing to yield him an

inch of space to stand on his toe, and, in the rear, by the flooding crowd from the just then arrived feeder shuttle pushing him into the carriage—as they stuff cotton into the pillow-case—not indeed in sympathy with his miserable plight, but merely to find room for themselves, if that were possible, in the carriage already packed a dozenfold, with mutilated human forms and wagon-loads of crumpled trunks and bags; or, at the curses showered by the old septagenarian at the corner seat, on receiving flat on his head the heavy steel trunk thrown, unwittingly perhaps, by its owner from a good distance on the platform to establish first possession of the seat; or at the adamant sleep of the long-distance passenger whom the shouts and kicks of a dozen hoarse throats and pairs of shod legs would not persuade to fold his fully stretched leg on the bench; or again at the unperturbed resumption of her complaint by the old lady on the opposite bench to her friend of a new acquaintance



"Good gracious! What have you been doing?"

"This is what comes of taking the doctor's advice."

"Doctor's advice! But I don't understand."

"Well, my doctor told me to go for a tramp every day. I came off the best the first three days, but the blighter I tackled yesterday was an ex-pugilist."

at the last station, re the monstrous boldness of her brother's daughter who was found sitting square on the floor in the presence of her husband in the same room; or lastly, at the impatient engine which, with a cry turned hoarse by constant wailing at its fate in having to helplessly witness these miserable sights, sighs out of the platform and commences to gallop headlong into the fields in the cool night to forget all the world and its sins?

Yet, I dare not touch on this topic, for my pictures will receive scant attention beside those of my readers still warm with personal reminiscences.

Or shall I content myself to subside into a giggle at the charming idiosyncrasies of the all-potent ruler of a wife who will have everything her own way, who won't sit by her husband's side in the tramcar or the rickshaw, who won't go to the market with her purse hanging by the wrist, who won't show herself at public teas or social parties, who, even in her toilet, won't deviate an inch from the primitive limits set up by her old mother-in-law, but will heartily curse the *anacharam* of the day which is speeding the world headlong into Hell?

Here also the track is beaten flat, and if my disappointment at the cold rejection of my article by humbled friends is not chilling enough, I shall also have, waiting in store for me, the positively colder reception at home which will make me beware, as long as I shall retain body and soul together, of further attempts at trespass on the sacrosanct domains of the 'gentler' sex!

Oh! these elusive themes! Shall I announce a new departure, create a small sphere of mine own, peopled with a few persons, and set them up in action after hanging on them, or rather distributing among them, my list of typical human characteristics, and observe how they mix with each other or clash one against the other?

But this experiment will fare no better: the denouement of this drama will be simply as I shall wish it, and who will take my word that this is a representation, in

Two young ladies entered the tram and found only standing room. One of them whispered to her companion:

"I am going to get a seat from one of these men."

She looked down the row of men and selected a sedate gentleman. She sailed up to him and boldly opened fire: "My dear Mr. Green, how delighted I am to meet you. You are almost a stranger. Will I accept your seat? Well, I do feel tired, I admit. Thank you so much."

The sedate gentleman—a perfect stranger, of course—looked, listened, then quietly rose and gave his seat saying:—

"Sit down, Pane, my girl. Don't often see you out on a washing day. You must feel tired, I am sure. How's your mistress!"

The young lady got her seat but lost her vivacity.

miniature, of our bigger world and that these types of my creation are the formulæ representing all human actions? Even now I feel the hiss of the critic and I dare not, for the love of my skin, take up this line either.

Are all avenues closed? Is the case so desperate then? But how account for the litter of papers and novelettes around me just warm from the press?

Ah! you have hit it. Why care for the topic? Simply find out your own peculiar way of telling the thing—no matter if it be the same as have been released from the clutches of others,—put down your thoughts—be they in the form of a story, essay, this or that, old or new—as they occur to your mind—a day-dream if you will have it so!—and leave the reader to accept it with all the sympathy he can bestow on, and all the patience he can muster in going through, your scribbled thoughts, and receive, with the best grace, whatever appreciation he may choose to take it with!

According to its mellowed definition, your essay is but a record of the 'sally of the mind'—let loose and tickled into a race on the track pointed out by the observations of the eye and the ear. So long as these two reins guide the charger along adequate tracks, she need have no fear of a slip.

For, from the mighty jockey who holds the breath of a hundred nobles and chiefs, down to the tiny pin humbly functioning its simple duty of holding two sheets together—which theme will fail to be elevated by the graceful trot of the mind? But the grace—how to get at it? Need it be said that it develops from the training it receives on the familiar track?

Ah! my mind is still after the moths, leaving the sheets still blank; and there my wife is coming with the afternoon lunch and coffee! But no matter; if my sheets are blank, I have nevertheless caught the clue. Au revoir!

Manager:—"Have you seen the cashier this morning?"

Clerk:—"Yes, he came in without a moustache and borrowed the railway time table!"

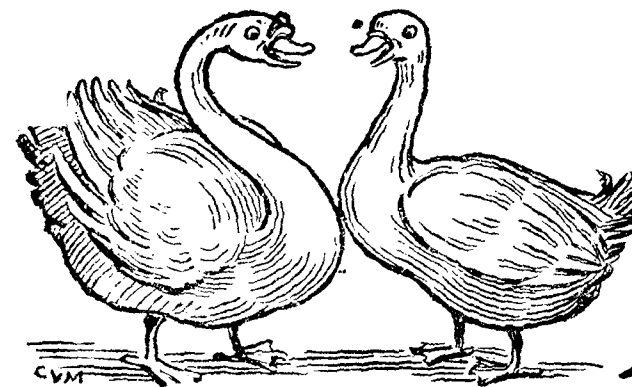
He was a genuine temperance enthusiast. Unfortunately, however, his face belied him and gave rise to doubts in people's minds.

Towards the end of the lecture he squared his shoulders and prepared to drive home his main point.

"Friends," he said, "I have lived here all my life. In this town there are fifty public-houses, and I am prepared to say that I have never been in one of them."

He paused to let his point sink in. Then from the back of the hall came the sound of a voice.

"Which one is that?" it asked.



SENSE & NONSENSE

Here is an amusing story about Mr. C. B. Cochran, the greatest of English theatrical producers. He was visiting a certain provincial town, and was invited by the manager of the local music-hall to pass an opinion on a comedian who was appearing there. Mr. Cochran sat through the turn without moving a muscle, though the house rocked with laughter. Later on, the manager asked Cochran for his verdict. "A splendid turn!" he replied. "I must get him for my forthcoming show."

"But," said the puzzled manager, "I thought you were disappointed with him. You didn't laugh once."

"Laugh!" exclaimed Cochran. "Laugh when he knew that I was beside you in that box! Why, every smile would mean that he would ask for another five pounds a week when it came to engaging him."

One smile makes a flirtation. One flirtation makes two acquainted. Two acquainted make one kiss. One kiss makes several more. Several kisses make an engagement. One engagement makes two fools. Two fools make a marriage. One marriage makes two mothers-in-law. Two mothers-in-law make a red-hot time.

A verdict of murder in the first degree had just been brought in.

"Your Honour," said the prisoner's counsel, rising and addressing the court. "I demand a new trial."

"On what ground?" asked the Judge.

"On the ground that some members of the jury are incompetent to render a just verdict. Among them are an undertaker, a rope manufacturer, a florist and a dealer in mourning goods."

A new trial was granted.

A wealthy American once obtained an interview with the Pope. He gave His Holiness the glad hand, and remarked, "Very pleased to meet you, sir. I had the honour of being acquainted with your father, the late Pope."

The house was advertised as being "within a stone's throw of the station." The man who came to view it found he had to walk two weary miles before he reached it. On arriving he took the advertiser where he could look back on his track and said: "Would you mind introducing me to the man who threw that stone?"

The scene of a new film was being performed, and the producer was very cross with one young lady who was supposed to be resisting the attempt of a young man to kiss her. The effect was most unsatisfactory. "Think now," said the director, "haven't you ever tried to stop a young man from kissing you?" "No," was the frank reply.

A man who was wanted by the police had been photographed in six different positions. The pictures were sent to the chief of police in a small town where the fugitive was thought to be hiding. After a few days, headquarters received the following reply: "Sir, I have arrested five of the six men whose photographs you sent me, and the sixth is under observation, and will be secured shortly."

Kemble, on one occasion being interrupted by the crying of a child in the gallery, at last came forward, and in his deep solemn tones addressed the audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, unless the play be stopped, the child cannot possibly go on."

Punctuation amounts to a good deal at times. For instance, what a world of difference there may be between a woman who is happily married and a woman who is, happily, married. And another instance. The man who proposed the toast observed: "Woman—without her, man would be a savage!" and the next day, he was horrified to read in the papers: "Woman without her man, would be a savage."

When Sir William Anson, who was recognised as the greatest living authority on constitutional law, was elected to the House of Commons, "He knows more about Parliament than any of us," said an M. P. to the Speaker. "Ah, he will soon get all that knocked out of him," was the reply.

The foreman of the mill instructed one of the new hands to test the incandescent gas mantles in the weaving sheds and discover how many required renewing.

Eventually the man returned with his report: "Ninety-seven new mantles are required," he said.

"What?" exclaimed the foreman. "Why, we've only got ninety-seven lights altogether."

"Well, I tried 'em all," said the new hand. "Every one I squeezed was rotten and fell to bits."

The Merry Magazine

The telephone bell rang in the fire-station office. The duty fireman picked up the receiver.

"Is that the fire-station?" asked a timid voice.

"Yes, that's right," replied the fireman eagerly.

"Well," continued the voice, "I have just had a new rock-garden built, and I have put in some new plants—"

"Where's the fire?" asked the fireman.

"Some of these new plants are very expensive and—" the voice went on.

"Look here," said the fireman at last, "you want the flower shop?"

"No, I don't," said the voice. "I was coming to that in a minute. My neighbour's house is on fire, and I don't want you clumsy firemen treading over my garden when you come here."

The conversation had changed from one thing to another, finishing up with high buildings.

The American thought he had the man beaten when he said there was a building in New York so high that it took a person at least twenty-four hours to get to the top.

"Bedad," said Pat, "there's a little building I was working on some time ago in good old Dublin, when one Saturday morning about eleven o'clock I dropped my hammer from the top, and sure and begorra, when I went to work on Monday morning the thing hit me on the top of the head!"

Brilliant people have often very queer ways. One of the strangest whims was that of Mr. John Galsworthy who recently passed away. He had a desk constructed high enough for him to write at it standing. Most of his great novels were written at this desk.

Princess Montagu Montluc Siena, a member of the French Royal House, narrates this amusing story in her autobiography, *There's Rosemary*. "Once when the Maharajah of an Indian State was driving to a levee in all his oriental splendour, the traffic was stopped, and a couple of young men looked into the coach. 'My eye, John!' exclaimed one of them, 'Look at that!' The Maharajah smiled and said: 'Yes, look, my good fellow,' whereupon the second sightseer opened his eyes and mouth, and finally whispered in awed accents: 'It speaks English!'

And here is another of her amusing recollections "The Business Barlett-Cottle, who was a famous figure at that time, once found an old Irishman leaning on the step of her coach and staring right into the windows. A shocked policeman came hurrying up, but the Business, instead of complaining, looked at the officer with an Irish twinkle in her blue eyes, and said: 'Och, how did she get lost then?'

A Spaniard, an American, and a Scotsman were discussing what they would do if they were one morning to discover that they were millionaires.

The Spaniard said he would build a bull ring.

The American said he would go to Paris to have a time.

The Scotsman said he would go to sleep again to see if he could make another million.



Patient (who was kept waiting for a long time):—"Ah! doctor, I had even forgotten why I came here."
Doctor:—"Why, of course, loss of memory."

This delightful story about Mr. James Barrie is found in "The Journals of Arnold Bennett."

The famous author was entertaining Asquith and Birrell to dinner one evening and by way of a joke he had arranged with Asquith's daughter-in-law and a woman friend that they should dress up as housemaids and serve at table.

The two ladies disguised themselves with wigs and neither of the guests recognised them. But after dinner, in the drawing-room, Asquith said to his host, "Do you know, Barrie, one of those nudes of yours is extraordinarily like my daughter-in-law."

A very lazy worker went to a famous doctor to be examined. The doctor tested him and asked questions, and discovered what was wrong with the man.

Next morning, to the amazement of his fellow-workers, the man was discovered working feverishly. They began to tease him about the sudden change, and the man, stung by their gibes, retorted: "The malingering, and that the only way I could cure myself was by working hard in the open air."

Alas, the story has a sad ending. The roar of laughter from his workmates sent him rushing to a dictionary. When he discovered that he was "feigning illness in order to avoid duty," he lapsed back into his old ways.

The policeman at the House of Commons was once asked by a visitor if the chaplain prayed for the members. "No," was the reply, "he walks into the House, takes a look round at the lot, and then prays for the country."

OTHER PEOPLES' HUMOUR

The new office boy had an indifferent memory. His employer, tired of reminding him of his duties, instructed him to make a note of everything important he had to do, and to keep it beside him on his desk.

The next day the employer was glad to see a large note prominently displayed on the boy's desk.

"At last!" he murmured to himself. "My warnings have taken effect."

Complacently, he walked over to look at the note. It read, "N. B. Leave office at six o'clock sharp."

Tit-Bits.

About 2 a.m. a man knocked up a doctor in a small village, and asked him to come immediately to a place about ten miles away.

The doctor dressed, got out his car and drove quickly to the destination.

His caller asked: "What is your fee, doctor?"

"A guinea," replied the doctor, in some surprise.

"Here it is, then," said the man handing over the money, "and cheap, too. The garage man wanted 30s. to drive me over. You see, I missed the last train."

Pearson's Weekly.

An old Shakespearian actor was engaged at a music hall to give tragic readings from Shakespeare. His reception was anything but complimentary.

When he came off the stage, he was approached by a kindly cockney comedian who had been watching his performance from the wings.

"Don't take any notice of 'em," he said sympathetically. "I've been watching your turn, and I think you're darned funny!"

Humour.

Movie Director:—"Now, here is where you jump off the cliff."

Nervous Actor:—"Yeah, but suppose I get injured or killed."

Movie Director:—"Oh, that is all right. It's the last scene in the picture."

Screenland.

A youngster who had just joined the staff of a newspaper and had been warned by the editor of the awful consequences of making ill-founded statements, was sent to report a church bazaar.

"The bazaar," he wrote, "was opened (so it is said) by Mrs. Brown, alleged to be the wife of Councillor Brown, commonly supposed to be a more or less highly esteemed tradesman of this town. She was dressed in what some would describe as fashionable and decent attire, and was supported on the platform by the so-called vicar and other reputed ladies and gentlemen."

Edmonton Bulletin.

Employer:—"Do you know shorthand?"

Applicant:—"Like a native, sir."

Humorist.

Benjamin Franklin wrote: "Only two things in this life are certain—death and taxes." What the taxpayer resents is that they don't come in that order.

Saskatoon Star Phoenix.

Recently there was a distinct earthquake shock which disturbed a small western city and rocked the municipal building so that the councillors, then in session, left without the usual ceremonies.

The clerk, a man of rules and regulations, was hard put to it to give his minutes the proper official tone. Finally he evolved this masterpiece: "On motion of the Town Hall, the Council adjourned."

The American Boy.

An English bishop received the following note from the vicar of a village in his diocese:—

"My Lord, I regret to inform you of the death of my wife. Can you possibly send a substitute for the week-end?"

Sydney Bulletin.

Jim sought his ideal and found her,
He tackled his wooings with vim.

Alas, charming Sue,
Had an ideal too,

And it wasn't the least bit like Jim.

College Humor.

James returned home from work very late one evening and informed his wife that he had received a straight tip to back Princess Charming next day.

At breakfast, the following morning, he could not remember the name of the horse and appealed to his wife.

"Just look at me, dear," she said coyly.

James looked hard at her for a moment and then an uncertain half-smile came to his face.

"Was it . . . er . . . Ugly Duckling?" he asked.

Novel.

A young cadet was being put through his paces by an old sea captain.

"What would you do if a sudden storm sprang up on the star-board?" he asked.

"Throw out an anchor, sir," said the youth.

"What would you do if another storm sprang up aft?" asked the instructor.

"Throw out another anchor, sir," said the cadet.

"And if another terrific storm sprang up for'ard what would you do?" persisted the captain.

"Throw over another anchor," came the reply.

"Here, hold on!" said the captain. "Where are you getting all your anchors from?"

"From the same place as you are getting your storms," said the youth.

Answers.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BALA, THE BAD WOMAN

BY DEESVI.

VIII. THE ELOPEMENT



"Where are we going?" "To the Land of Happiness."

In the preceding seven instalments.

Bala is given in marriage to a man old enough to be her father. She attains age and comes to live with her husband. He is an orthodox man and somewhat erratic. Bala's married life is very uncommon. To all intents and purposes her husband behaves like a father to her. He tells Bala that her horoscope is bad and that the indications are that she would lead a "husbandless life". He has no faith, however, in what the astrologers predict.

Looking idly out of the window, one day, Bala sees a girl (Radha) run over by a car in the street. She renders first aid to the child.

Going out in the car another day, a strange man smiles at Bala. This man appears in Bala's dream and makes love to her.

Bala sees on the Marina, her dream-lover and Radha walking hand in hand. She learns that he is Radha's father. Bala takes Radha home in the car and on the way Radha tells a story from which Bala further learns that Radha's father is really in love with her. The dream supports Bala's inference and she makes up her mind not to have anything to do either with Radha, or

her father. But destiny takes her to the beach and while sitting all alone near the water's edge one evening, Radha's father accosts her, enquiring for the whereabouts of his child. Bala takes him to task for telling stories to the child, but he takes her in his arms and strange to say, Bala doesn't repel him.

Says Bala, "We forgot everything in the glory of that ecstatic kiss. In that wild bursting of long pent-up emotion, reason and honour were swept away. It was a whirling, strangling, mad, sweet world that contained only us two. All else ceased to exist."

When Bala goes home after the heavenly evening behind the boat, she repents and resolves to stop "her silly romance", as she calls it and arranges to leave the city for a short stay at her father's place. Her father arrives in the city and while Bala and her father are seated in the train ready to depart, Bala's lover walks up the platform and introduces himself to Bala's father as her doctor. Bala keeps quiet. Her lover hands over an envelope to Bala, saying that it contains powders to soothe her. She opens the envelope making sure that her father is fast asleep and finds a letter therein. It runs thus:

"I feel I must say something about myself. Till I saw you, I lived only for Radha. I had no other interest in my life. Her mother was a good comrade, of very sweet disposition and I had great affection for her. She died within 24 hours of Radha's birth. I vowed not to marry again and to devote all my life to Radha. That day when she had an accident, I very nearly collapsed when I heard about it. If anything had happened to Radha that day, if I should have lost that child, I couldn't have survived the shock. You were the kind angel that ministered to her, in her hour of distress. I had conjured up a wrong picture of you—of a matronly woman with plenty of children of her own. It was Radha's description of you and the consequent curiosity that brought me to your door. And when I saw you and your flushed face and the anger that flared up at my unconscious but well-meant smile, I realised that a great yearning had grown in me to know you better. I see the hand of destiny in the motor-accident, in your dream and in that heavenly evening behind the boat. Do not think I am profane when I say that in our love, I even see the smitten of an All-forgiving, All-merciful Providence, who knows.

"I know your husband is a very religious and God-fearing man. I have very great respect for him. But in my own humble way, I feel I have also seen God in the sheen of a rose-petal, in the fragrance of a jasmine, in an evening sunset, and in the crooning lullaby of a mother over a cradle. I have searched myself inwardly, vivisectioned my innermost feelings and I do not find anywhere within me anything to make me ashamed of myself in my feelings towards you.

"You ask me to forget and forgive. The first is impossible. I wonder if even death can efface the memory of the ecstatic moments you have given me. As for forgiving, I am overestimating, hopelessly, in your debt: you have made life sweet, enchanting and gracious. There is nothing, therefore, to forgive.

"The test for all great things, my dear, is sacrifice and suffering. I am content with the thought that there is another heart in His Universe beating in unison with mine. Another soul that is part and parcel of mine. I ask for nothing more. "To have loved and lost is better than never to have loved at all," though a much hackneyed saying, is true. If you are afraid, you need not move one step forward, but do not, I pray you, think unkindly of me. It would hurt me terribly. If you command, I shall not see you, I shall not come near you, but please, please, let me keep the great treasure I have found—my love for you."

* * *

After reading this letter that night in the train, all the good and pious resolutions I had made about forgetting my lover were scattered to the four winds. I found myself actually planning how I could get away from the parental roof and join my lover. We could perhaps go away to some distant land and there live a joyous life. Had my lover the money to make a start and would he be able to earn enough to keep us above want? These and similar questions worried my mind, all night.

Bala, the Bad Woman

I do not know how many times I read this letter over during my stay beneath the parental roof. The result was disastrous. I was always moody, absent-minded, careless of my looks or appearance, dreaming day and night of my lover and cursing the fate which had tied me to an old man for life. My parents were greatly agitated over my "ill health". They tried their best to keep me in good spirits. Mother made the most delectable delicacies but they turned to dust in my mouth. Father borrowed a car from one of his friends and would implore me to go out in the evenings for a drive. But I preferred darkness and solitude. He asked me if he might write to my husband and ask my favourite doctor to be sent over. He meant, of course, the pseudo-doctor, my lover. I paled and forbade him from doing anything of the kind. At last, much against my will, they called in a local doctor. Mother's complaint to him was pathetic.

"Oh, Doctor! Something has happened to this child," she wailed. "She doesn't take any food and keeps waking all night. She was always a cheerful child, but now she is always morose and moody. See! her cheeks have sunk and she is losing flesh. What will her husband think of us if he sees her like this?"

The doctor turned to me and felt my pulse, examined my lungs and did all the usual routine things a doctor usually does. He asked me some questions about the condition of my internal economy to which I replied in monosyllables. He was grave. "I think this is a case in which I should like to have the opinion of a lady doctor, after a thorough examination," he observed, in the best professional manner. Father was duly impressed, while mother gasped with fear.

"No, please. I don't want any lady doctor," I said very firmly. "There is nothing whatever the matter with me."

"But, Bala, you look so bad," my mother protested.

"I am not as bad as I look, mother," I retorted, smiling, but only father caught the point and smiled.

"I was talking to the doctor who was attending on her in the city," said my father to the local doctor, "and he did say something about her ailment being peculiar to women. "Perhaps, a lady doctor would be helpful."

"I see, that doctor, whom you met in the platform, has been saying a lot of things from his imagination. If I don't get better in a fortnight, then you can bring in as many doctors as you like, of any sex you please and I promise to take all their mixtures, pills and powders. Just now, I don't want any treatment. I am going to treat myself—a great treat, in fact," said I and that ended the consultation.

I knew what medicine would cure me and what treatment I craved. I could have it for the mere asking. But I lacked the courage. I was afraid of the inevitable consequences. But I couldn't possibly go on like this.

One day, I threw discretion to the winds and snatching a piece of paper, scribbled the following lines and posted it to my lover.

"Am ready to go anywhere with you. Take me away soon."

By return post I got his reply. But it was enclosed in an envelope on which was printed the name of my

husband's shop and its address. That "was very clever. My father thought it was a letter to me from my husband. Mother was anxious to know its contents. "What does your husband say?" she asked me. "Nothing much in that letter," I told her. "I am wanted: that is all!" But the letter I received was short and sweet.

"Arrangements well on way. I swear I will not make you regret. Am in Seventh Heaven."

Every day brought a small message to me from my lover and these notes kept me in good humour. But mother was wondering why I never replied to these letters. I put her off saying that no reply was called for. The last note I got from my lover ran thus: "Am coming there tomorrow. Shall be your doctor, of course. Hope to restore you. All arrangements made. Courage!"

A big sedan drew up in front of our house early the next morning and out jumped my lover, bag in hand, stethoscope in pocket. I couldn't repress a smile at the sight. Father was agreeably surprised. "It is a kind angel that sent you here, doctor. We are greatly worried over Bala," said father. Greetings over, the pseudo-doctor examined me. Pulse, temperature, lungs, the usual routine was gone through without a flaw.

"I had an operation to perform on the Zamindar of Erizapur and I remembered that on my way back I could look you up. That is the Zamindar's car there outside. I am really glad I came. She isn't looking as well as she ought to and I am afraid I must lend a hand. This change has not done her any good. If anything, it has made her worse."

"What exactly is the matter with her?" my father asked him.

"Nerves: Heart weak: low resistance."

"You mean high resistance?" I asked him.

"It all depends on what is sought to be resisted. There is resistance to disease and resistance to a cure. Your case, as you know, comes under the latter category."

"What would you advise?" asked my father.

"I shall have to think it over. I am sorry I have to go away. How I wish I could keep her under observation for a few days!"

"You don't mean to say you are going away immediately?"

"I am afraid I must."

"That won't do! You must stay and dine with us."

"I am sorry. You must excuse me. I have got to see the Zamindar again in the afternoon. And to-night, I must start for Madras."

"You can't leave me like that, doctor," I protested.

"Well, let me see. I shall return to-night and we shall then discuss what to do. In any case, I must be off tomorrow afternoon."

"We expect you then tonight for supper?" Father asked him.

"If you please."

He returned in the evening in the Zamindar's car. The car was not sent away. Mother exerted herself and

made special dishes and, after supper, all of us assembled in the courtyard. Father and my lover were lounging in easy-chairs and discussing my "illness". The discussion was polyglot—English and Tamil, interminably mixed. Mother and myself were sitting nearby and mother couldn't understand all of the conversation and frequently turned to me for enlightenment. My thoughts were far away, wondering what his plans were. When finally we retired for the night I was still left wondering. Mother and myself slept together and I took the precaution of bolting the door of the room. I couldn't sleep. Mother was snoring. There was a very dim light in the room. Something hit me sharply. It must have been thrown through the window. I went and looked out. There was nobody near the window. I brightened the lamp and searched for the missile that hit me. It was a small piece of stone wrapped in paper. I unwrapped the paper. There was a message in it. "If I suggest tomorrow morning that you have a lonely drive in my car, don't raise any objections," the note said. A lonely drive in a car belonging to a Zamindar whom we never knew! What for? My wonder grew.

Next morning, when coffee was over, my lover remarked to my father: "It is a glorious morning. Why don't you send your daughter out for a drive? The car is there. She ought to fill her lungs with the crisp country air, twice at least a day."

"Why don't you, Bala?" asked my father.

"There is nothing wrong in using that car, I suppose?" I asked him.

"Not at all," replied my lover. "You may treat it as mine."

"Will you come with me, father?"

"Well, if you want me, I will. But I want to talk to your doctor. He wants to go away, this afternoon."

"Alright then," I said. My lover went out and instructed the driver. In a couple of minutes, I had changed my sari and was speeding along the road. My first surprise was the driver of the car. He was a Maharajan, young but grave. I overheard my lover addressing him as Abdul.

About ten miles away there was a toll gate. The car slowed down near the toll gate. The engine spluttered, coughed twice and came to a dead-stop. Abdul, the driver, got down and lifted the bonnet. He tinkered with the engine, frowned and divested himself of his coat. He took the engine to pieces and laid the parts in a neat row on the road. I didn't talk to him or ask him what the matter was. I felt a little nervous. It was getting late. There was not a soul thereabouts. My father would be wondering why I had not returned. Perhaps, he was getting anxious. A voice behind startled me. "What is the matter, Abdul?" It was my lover. His face was flushed and there were drops of perspiration on his forehead. Abdul grinned. "Something wrong, sir," he said.

"Something is always wrong somewhere. Well, here I am, a doctor, setting right human machines and what is a motor, after all, before such a complicated machine, as a man, or say, a woman? Now, my lad, have you verified if she has the fuel? I mean, you idiot, the motor and not the lady. I had to have a cross country

jaunt as I knew you couldn't be trusted to look after her—I mean the car again—properly."

Abdul walked back to the rear of the car and came back grinning. "Yes, sir, no petrol," he said.

"I told you so. Shove in those gadgets inside. Fill her up from the spare cans and let us then feel her pulse."

In about ten minutes the engine was humming. My lover climbed into the front seat.

"Let her rip!" he commanded. Abdul let her and she was soon leaving my native place behind, at 45 miles an hour. Was it the beginning or end, I wondered, of Bala.

Thirty miles off, there was a small railway station. The car swung into this station. From the waiting room of the station, came porters, who loaded inside the car and in the luggage-carrier, trunks, suit cases, beddings etc., and the car again turned to the road. Not a word passed between me and my lover.

The sun was overhead. We had crossed a small stream. My lover turned to me and asked, "Feeling hungry?"

"No," I said, "feeling inquisitive."

"Well, I can satisfy both. Abdul, stop!"

My lover got down and explored the ground. He selected a shady spot near the bed of the stream and carried from the car cushions and a lunch basket. Having set these down he came and opened the door for me and bending low in mock ceremony, said, "Your majesty, Queen of hearts, luncheon is served!"

"No questions, please, till the stomach is filled!" he admonished me, as I sat and looked around at the ideal Elysian surroundings, while he got ready the lunch.

I didn't relish the food, but I was really hungry and bolted down whatever he gave me. I offered to help him to wash the dishes but he wouldn't listen. When the lunch basket was packed, he reclined on the grass facing me. "Now, ask as many questions as you like," he said.

"Where are we going?"

"To the Land of Happiness."

"Do, please, be serious."

"I am seriously bent upon seeking happiness. Would you have it otherwise?"

"Well, I won't ask any further questions if you are frivolous."

"That is sensible. 'Ask no questions' is a golden rule. Now, shall we make a move? We must be in Bangalore before nightfall."

"That at least is a place I have heard of," I said rising.

This time he sat beside me, inside the car. After about an hour or so of fast driving and silence between us, I felt a little pain in my hip. Soon it became acute and I was fidgety. He looked at me once or twice and seeing the agony in my face, came nearer and putting an arm around me asked, "What is it?"

"Oh, oh, it is paining here, here, I don't know why?"

He pressed me close to himself. "It is that horrid lunch. I ought not to have given it to you. Now bear up, dear. We will fix it up as soon as we reach Bangalore. Abdul, step on it, lad! Amma here is sick!"

But the pain grew worse. I couldn't sit. With my head on his lap I lay down while the car hurtled along at a tremendous speed. He soothed me with many endearments and caresses, but I shed silent tears.

It was dark when we reached Bangalore. The car was directed to the residence of a popular lady doctor. Luckily she was at home and could attend to me. I was assisted into her rooms and was asked to lie down. My lover, in a few words, explained the situation.

"I understand," said the lady doctor. "Kindly wait outside. I must examine her."

She asked me a question in Canarese. I smiled and said, "For mutual understanding, we have only the King's English left." She almost gasped.

"Now, I am going to like you better and make you better." She started probing here, there, everywhere while she kept up the conversation.

"What is your name?"

"Bala."

"Musical name, dear. What does it mean?"

"Young one."

"True too."

"Hallo, my dear!" This as I repelled her. "Why this shyness? Never been examined like this before?"

"No."

"It is necessary. Think I am your mother. Wish I had a daughter like you. You are beautiful, dear, and I am sure that man outside is lucky. Ah—thank you—Now then—turn—this way. Good! Bless me! Just a minute! Well, of all the—"

Her arms on her hips, she stood staring at me, in a puzzled way. I didn't realise then, what she had discovered.

"How long have you been married?"

"About six months."

"Which is your native place?"

"Madras."

"Where are you going?"

I didn't like the cross-examination. "We are on a motor-tour, Mysore, Ooty and back."

"Honeymoon?"

I nodded assent. "Funny," she exclaimed and added "I must talk to that man. Excuse me."

She went out. I was puzzled. What was she driving at? They were conversing in low tones outside. She came in after a while, smiling.

"There is a lot to be said in favour of the social customs among you Indians," she remarked cheerfully. "Now, don't think I am a meddling fool, but it surprised me to find you a virgin. You can come in, Mister," she called out, to my lover. He came in. His face was tense and there was a strange glow in his eyes.

"I don't think it is entirely indigestion. I am afraid I must keep her under observation. I shall let you have a draught. Give her two doses tonight and let her starve. And tomorrow we will have another look at her."

"Thanks very much. What have I to pay?" asked my lover.

"I shall tell you tomorrow."

We got into the car and after skirting the city, it drew up in front of a small cottage. I was helped out and taken inside and made to lie on a cot. Abdul was busy unloading the luggage. My lover measured out a dose of the mixture and held it to my lips. It was bitter. I was tired and lay back and closed my eyes. The long drive had covered me with dust. Then I remembered, with a shudder, that I had no other clothes except what I was wearing. It was a funny state of affairs and I smiled.

"Why the smile?" my lover asked me. His voice was tense. His face was grave. He was sitting far away and was looking at me intensely.

"You haven't told me anything. Here I am, at Bangalore, while I ought to be with my mother. How on earth do you expect me to live the rest of my life with one saree and petticoat, covered with dust?"

He rose and brought two big leather-cases and opened them. I stared with astonishment at their contents. Heaps and heaps of new lovely sarees, and petticoats etc., were crammed inside.

"I apologise," I said meekly. "I ought to have known that you would have thought of everything."

"You are wrong. Life is full of surprises."

"For instance?"

"Your illness. I never foresaw it—and the other news."

"What news?"

His mouth set in a hard line and he turned and looked out of the window.

"If you won't tell me, I shall come there and cajole it out of you."

He was silent. I rose and walking up to him laid an arm on his shoulder. He sprang aside, as if an electric current had passed through him. I was worried at the agony in his face.

"Don't touch me, dear. I feel so unclean. I am not worthy of you!"

I was alarmed. I thought he was teasing me. But I could see he was serious. What could it be? I pulled him towards the bed and made him sit on it and sitting by his side with my arms around him said, "Dust or no dust, illness or no illness, you deserve a kiss. Will you take it or do you want it to be given to you?"

He covered his face with his hands.

"Well then, if this is a taste of what is in store for me, I might as well warn you that I propose crying, here and now." I threatened.

"Bala, my dear, extreme happiness sometimes makes one sad. I never dreamt, dear, that you would be a virgin."

"I see—but how did she—?"

He explained it to me. "Imagine a beggar who expected a few coppers, but was given untold millions."

Abdul coughed outside. "Alright, Abdul, you can take the car and get some food for you somewhere. Then bring back the car and garage it."

"But master———" Abdul hesitated.

"Oh, I am not feeling well and do not propose take any food." We heard the car being started and driven away.

"There is a wash-stand in the adjoining room. Won't you have a wash and change into some of these?" he pointed to the open leather-cases.

I went into the adjoining room and he brought the two cases and left them inside. He brought another small case which contained soap, toilette requisites and towels and leaving it open he went out, closing the door.

The pain in the hip was not so acute and I washed and brushed up and changed into fresh clothes. I was surprised at his taste in the selection of clothes and the snug fit of the petticoat. How well he had planned and thought of everything—the car, the lunch, the cottage and the clothes.

I found him in the verandah, sitting in a deck-chair. There was another chair for me by his side.

"Now, sir, I am ready to reward or be rewarded."

"Sit, dear," he commanded and I obeyed.

"When a fast is broken, it should be done gently," he said. "The temptation usually is to gorge to one's satiation. All the more, if the plates are luscious. Result inevitable disorder."

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Plain truth.....God, give me strength!"

"What for?"

He ignored the question and went off at a tangent. "How did it come to pass?" He asked.

"Another conundrum, I suppose. I am ill and my brain is fuddled. Can't you talk in plain language?"

"Oh, well. You have been that old man's wife for six months and yet the doctor says you are a virgin. Can't understand it."

"Oh, you silly! That old man is a darling. I love him. If he were like you, I wouldn't be here answering your silly questions. On our nuptial night, he slept on the terrace, the poor dear. An affectionate pat on the back and hey presto! he had gone. Subsequently, on diverse occasions, I gleaned that he married a woman because it was imperative that there should be a Sumatran girl in the house and he swore that he would keep me a virgin for life!"

"What a man!"

"Rather, what a husband!"

"I feel that way too."

"Good God!"

"You are so divine that to defile you would be sacrilegious."

"He called me the representative of his Devi and was saying something very much like it."

"You look it, every inch."

"Well then, you might just as well start building the shrine."

"It has been built and graced with the divine presence," and he laid his hand on his heart.

A motor-horn tooted outside. It was not our car. Two men got down from the car and approached us. The taller of the two spoke without much ceremony.

"Is that lady's name Bala?" he asked of my lover.

"Your business please, before I answer your question," replied my lover. "Who are you?"

"Oh, we? We are Policewallahs."

"I am honoured, I am sure. What do you want?"

"Nothing much. There is a complaint about a lady, by name Bala, having been kidnapped."

"Indeed!"

"We wonder if that is the lady."

"Supposing she is the lady, what do you propose to do?"

"Why, take her back, of course!"

"Very obliging and kind of you, gentlemen. I suppose the lady has no say in the matter." Then he turned to me:

"Here is another surprise," he said with a wry smile. "I never foresaw this one also."

(Some more surprises in the next instalment.)



"Thank you, gentlemen, I could never have stopped it myself. This is the first time I have driven a car!"

ONE MINUTE STORIES

Some recruits were undergoing musketry instruction on the barrack square, when the sergeant-major noticed that one of them was paying very little attention to what he was saying.

Striding up to the indifferent one, the infuriated N. C. O. snatched the man's rifle away, and proceeded to give him a lecture on the mechanism.

The recruit listened without showing the slightest interest, and at last the sergeant-major cried:

"Do you understand what I'm saying? You look as dull as ever. What was your trade before you joined the army?"

"Gunsmith," was the bored reply.

The new manager was a tyrant, and before he had been at the mill a fortnight he was pretty generally detested and wasn't long in finding it out.

Wishing to know the reason why he was disliked, he called an old weaver to one side and said: "William, how is it that the hands here don't seem to like me? At the last place I was at, they presented me with a silver teapot when I was leaving."

"Only a silver teapot!" said the weaver. "By gum if you'll only leave here I'll bet you'll get a gold kettle."

A pompous old gentleman drove into the inn of a country village and said to the ostler.

"Extricate my quadruped from the vehicle, stabulate him and denote him an adequate supply of nutritious aliment, and when the aurora of morn shall illuminate the oriental horizon, I will peculiarly compensate you for your amiable hospitality."

The ostler ran to his master and said, "Come out, there's a Dutchman in the yard."

A squad of young recruits were out with an officer who was putting them through an observation course.



Coming to the top of a hill the officer pointed to a distant party of soldiers.

"Private Smith," he said to one of his squad, "how many men are there in that digging party over in that field?"

The party was so far away that the men appeared only as tiny dots, but unhesitatingly Smith replied: "Sixteen men and a sergeant, sir."

The officer put his field-glasses to his eyes and counted the distant party.

"That's quite right, Smith," he said. "But how did you know that there was a sergeant there?"

"He's the one not doing any digging," said Smith.

The commercial traveller signed the hotel register and being very tired went straight to bed. At ten o'clock he was awakened by a knock on the door.

He got up, unlocked the door, and saw the swaying figure of an intoxicated man who stood with a key in his hand. The drunk stared at him in surprise, said "Pardon—hic—me" and went swaying down the corridor.



The traveller got back into bed and went to sleep. Thirty minutes later he was awakened by the sound of a key in the lock. He got up, opened the door, and there was the drunk again.

The fellow gave him rather an annoyed look, said "Pardon-hic-me," and staggered off.

Six times during the next two hours the same thing happened. The last time, the commercial traveller was furious. He leaped out of bed, jerked open the door, and confronted the drunk.

The latter stepped back, a look of disgust on his face. "Heavens!" he said, "Have you—hic—got all the rooms in this hotel?"

A certain barrister was notoriously soft-hearted. He was sitting in court one day when a struggling member of the Bar undertook to read a petition in a divorce suit, and speedily got himself tangled up in a confused maze of legal phrases. The judge attempted to put the young man right, but the only result was to tangle him worse than ever. The judge was showing signs of losing his temper when the barrister arose.

"I hope," he said, "your lordship will bear patiently with our young friend here. He is doing his best."

"I know that," said the judge, testily, "and I intend to bear patiently with him. I am merely trying to give Mr. Blank an idea."

"Your lordship," said the barrister, "don't do it. He's got no place to put it."

A French woman proud of her limited knowledge of English, and an American woman proud of her limited knowledge of French, were introduced at an evening party. The French woman insisted on expressing herself in bad English and the American woman would talk nothing but bad French.

When the guests began to depart they were still at it. At last they rose to go, and here is their watery farewell:

"Reservoir," said the fair American.

"Tanks," responded her new friend.



THE CREAM OF THE JEST

A nervous old lady booked a passage aboard a tramp steamer bound from an East African port to Karachi.

After a few days at sea a terrific storm broke, and the ship started to plunge and reel in a way that greatly alarmed the worthy dame.

Clutching her way along the deck, she eventually reached the captain's cabin, and there she found that individual poring intently over what appeared to be a piece of dirty canvas.

"Are we safe, captain?" she gasped.

"Madam," replied the shipper, "you see this thing I have spread out before me. It is a chart of the Indian Ocean. On it, you will observe, are a number of little black dots. Now, madam, if those dots are fly-marks we're all right; but if they're rooks, ma'am, we're bound for kingdom come."

Sergeant-Major:—"Did you shave to-day?"

Private:—"Yes, sir."

S.M.:—"It was a bad one if you did."

Private:—"I had to shave with a candle this morning."

S.M.:—"I see, well, try the effect of a razor in future."

A doctor mentioned the other day that people who stammer can often sing perfectly and proved his statement with this story:—

A deck-hand who suffered from an impediment in his speech came running to the captain on the bridge during a storm and started "P-p-please, s-s-sir....."

"Oh, sing it," ordered the skipper, irritably.

The deck-hand took a deep breath and began. "Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind, the first mate's fallen overboard and he's half a mile behind."

"So your boy has come home from college. Does he take any interest in the farm?"

"He is beginning to. He's been showing me where we could have a fine golf course and how easy it would be to turn the barn into a garage."

The secretary of a big store, obviously upset, dashed into the manager's office.

"Good gracious, man," snapped the latter, "What-ever's happened?"

"It is Jones, our traveller," the secretary explained. "Used most insulting language. Told me to fry my face, and said you could go and chase yourself."

"He did, did he?" said the manager. "We'll fire him without ceremony. Let's see, he's been with us five months. What business has he done?"

"A hundred pounds the first month," said the secretary, reading from a book, "£ 500 the next month, £ 3,000 the next, £ 9,000 the next."

"H'm," murmured the manager. "I often think I ought to take a little more exercise and I daresay the caretaker will lend you a frying pan."

Two Jews were separating when one said, "Au revoir."

"Vat's dat?" asked the first.

"Dat's good-bye in French."

"Vell," said the first, "carbolic acid."

"Vat's dat?" asked his friend.

"Dat's good-bye in any language."

A short-sighted old lady had the misfortune to go to the theatre without her spectacles, and as a result, her enjoyment of the good fare provided on the stage was not as keen as it would otherwise have been. She poured her woes into the sympathetic ears of the man sitting on her right, and at last he took pity on her and handed her his binoculars with the remark, "Will you share my glasses?"

The old lady took the binoculars, and furtively hid them under a handkerchief in her lap. Then, when she thought she was unobserved, she surreptitiously raised them to her month.

"Oh, you nasty man!" she cried a moment later. "What a cruel trick to play on anyone. There isn't a drop left in either of them."

His better half (regarding him from the bedroom window): "Where you bin till this hour of the night?"

"I've bin at me union, considerin' this 'ere strike."

"Well, you can consider this 'ere lock-out."

"THE TALKIE"

(T. R. PARTHASARATHY)

MY heart sank, directly I saw him get into the carriage and sit himself down in the corner opposite me. I knew his type. He was a confirmed "train-talker," I am not. I hid covertly behind my paper, but it was not the slightest use. If I had hidden behind all the volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, I could not have stopped him talking.

All that I could do was to put up as good a defence as I could. I may say that I have had a good deal of painful experience of intrusive train-talkers, and I have evolved a series of methods of shutting up chatty passengers by means of more or less peaceful persuasion which have rarely been known to fail. I prepared for action now, and I had not long to wait.

"Nice morning," said the other.

I looked frozenly at him and said not a word.

"Ha," he said. "Deaf? Bad luck. Never mind. I'm well up in the deaf-and-dumb language. Here goes."

Here he went, too! He carried out a series of gesticulations with his hands that made my blood run cold. It was worse even than being spoken to. I decided to stop being a deaf mute.

"What," said I coldly, "gave you the idea that I was deaf?"

"Nothing," he said cheerfully. "Spotted your little logpull all the time, but you can't take in Ramu. Nice day, oh?"

"Outside it may be," I answered.

Luckily Ramu was not quick in the uptake.

"That's what I mean," he said. "Can't be a nice day indoors."

"It can't," I said feelingly.

"That's right," he said heartily. "I like a bit of conversation to my railway journeys. Don't you? Improves the mind to get other people's ideas."

"Um," I answered, hoping he'd be able to extract a bit of mind improvement out of that one. He was not in the least deterred, but went on to give me a long

exposition of how exactly his mind had been improved in railway carriages, and how other minds, as well, had been sharpened up in the process.

I decided that the time had come to unmask my hidden batteries.

I took a small parcel from my pocket and handled it in a meditative kind of way.

"What's that?" he asked with interest.

"Gold brick," I said. "I want to sell it."



Customer:—"Well, you said the book contained all about 'Men's Knowledge of Women.' But I find it's all blank."

Publisher:—"That's exactly the knowledge of men about women."

"Jolly good idea," he went on breezily. "Don't want one myself, but a genuine gold brick would fetch a good price in these days, what with Gold Standards and America and France and all that kind of thing."

I sadly returned the parcel to my pocket. I had rarely known the gold brick gambit to fail before.

Ramu went on talking. I brought out a pack of cards and arranged them. He merely asked me if I liked patience. I decided that I didn't. I pulled forth a large clasp knife and looked longingly at its keen, shiny blade. He congratulated me on carrying a sensible knife and not a toy.

I then fidgeted with a small ladies' revolver. He looked at it affectionately and said that he had used one like it in France throughout the War. That explained, I should imagine, why the War took so long to finish.

My bolt was shot.

He continued to talk. I let him. Gosh! How he talked. He began a lecture on racing. I gazed at him helplessly. Was this the face that launched a thousand tips?

Suddenly a ticket collector appeared among us. My loquacious friend did not notice him.

"A word in season—" he went on expansively.

It was his mistake. It was a word on seasons that followed.

His season ticket proved to be out of date!

And the collector actually had the last word!

A Subscription List and Its Mysteries

("SATYA KANTHA")

ONE of the worst calamities that can ever overtake you or me is to be asked to go around with a subscription list and collect donations. I was a victim several times from my High School days onwards, and a sort of public life still brings me on the track now and then.

It was a High School Debating Society Anniversary. Many of us—members—felt we had a right to tax the donating public. An appeal was drawn up and was signed by the Headmaster, the President of the Society. I, the industrious Secretary followed by my two admiring members started on our campaign. My colleagues thought that the list should be led by the most prominent citizens of the town. Those were days of Hon. of the provincial and Imperial Legislative Councils and not mere M. L. C. or M. L. A. Even the Ex. Hons counted in those days, though I feel that our present Ex. M. L. C's and M. L. A's do not really count. As a caustic critic usually observes, they are 'Ex'—Extinguished M. L. C. and M. L. A's. To come to my experience, I accepted the suggestion of my friends. We approached the Hon. Member's residence. He was of the usual lawyer class. The pial was occupied by the gumastha prying into old account books and fee-ledger. The Hon. gentleman between Madras and.....his place could not possibly attend to professional work or rather the professional work would not attend on him at his convenience. The result was that the Hon. Member had to prefer sittings on Select-Committees—a more paying affair than a mere Hon. Membership—to a rapidly developing briefless attendance in court. All the same, Hon. Membership is a dignity in the town. We sent word, we three students of.....High School had come. The Hon. Member, it appears, had smelt the object of our visit and said "Oh! subscription! when will this cease? Alright, let the devils come." The messenger beckoned us to enter, of course without informing us of his master's closing compliments.

"Namaskaram" we entered, uttering. We were shown a long back bench. We sat down. I stepped forward and with great modesty extended to him the subscription list. "Yes, boys, I am prepared to help you. But you see there are half a dozen high schools in the city. Yesterday I gave a cheque for Rs. 25 to that.....school secretary who came in for the sports anniversary celebration, another for Rs. 15 for Ramakrishna Anniversary, so on and so on." We kept silent and put on a pathetic look. Before we mustered courage to urge our appeal, he began again, "Yes, how much do you expect from me?" I picked up strength, rose up and submitted, "A cheque for at least Rs. 15." He smiled. My colleague thinking he has already conquered him said, "No, sir, you ought to give us Rs. 30, beating the other sports anniversary celebration hollow. We belong to a Hindu institution. You ought to give Rs. 5 more than that you gave to a Christian institution." Vanity was pricked, the Hon. Member scratched his head and assumed the attitude of a budget debator. I said again, "You have been approached first, you ought to give a decent lead in the list. You ought to

come to our rescue. We solely depend on you." "That I shall" he said and took up the list, wrote his name and put "Rs. 20" against his name. My colleague chuckled and stared at me to show how stupid I was to have suggested Rs. 15. I confessed by a return look I was a blatant fool and a bad canvasser. We got back the list, waited in patience to get the cheque. There was no move on the part of the Hon. Member towards satisfying our expectation. It looked he had finished us. We coughed to invite his attention. No, he remained steeped in his Council Proceedings Reports. (Obviously there was no necessity to look into any law reports.) He would not look at us. All of us created a bit of noise and stood up. The Hon. Member did not pretend ignorance even then. "Yes, good morning" he said in a dismissing tone. I muttered 'cheque.' "What?" he began. "You wanted me to lead decently, I have led, it is done, you may go." "Money, sir," I said prosaically. "I have done what you wanted, you did not want money."—"Thanks sir, yes, we want the money you have subscribed."

"What, boys, had you told me you wanted money, I would not have signed," he said.

"We thought that everybody who signs, pays also"—I replied.

"That is not what you said. You wanted me to lead. I have done. Alright, boys. I do not want to disappoint you. Yes, you go. I shall ask my gumastha to pay you a rupee. You may go."

"You may correct the list, sir, and strike 'Rs. 20' and put 'Re. 1' instead."

"What an unintelligent set of boys you are! Let it stand as it is, others will sign and give you Rs. 15 or 10. You ought to be wise in these matters. I thought you knew this, when you asked me to lead decently."

"Yes, sir; No, sir;.....our headmaster would take us to task. He will ask us to pay down Rs. 20 thinking we have collected it from you."

"If your headmaster is not wise, I can't help you. My signature and the amount will help you, that is all I would say; alright go. I can't spend any more time.—Venkatram, (calls the gumastha) pay these boys a rupee."

Thus dismissed with a good but doubtful if not a tragic lead, we came out and stood plaintively before the gumastha. There is a Tamil proverb, "What Gods desire to give, the priests spoil, if not prevent." The gumastha pretended to search for this or that and summed up by saying, "Key is not with me, the assistant—the devil is always late—he has not come; alright, boys, you come in the evening and take it."

We descended down the steps to ascend again elsewhere. Rai Bahadur Gopal Desikan was just standing at his pial expecting somebody. We were not really expected. We climbed up the steps and showed the list. He approved the draft of the appeal. He stared at the 'Rs. 20

of the Hon. Member and his lead and confessed, "I shall not subscribe such big sums. Go to other big-wigs and come to me later." I hinted he might start on another page and put down what he felt right. He felt caught, but summarily insisted on our going out then and coming last to him.

We then repaired to the only "Brahmin Zamindar" of the place. A liveried servant stopped us, got our cards and showed us in, a few minutes later. We have heard of the zamindar's frugality but we desired to know it ourselves. Without much ado, he peeped into the list, took his own pen and put down Rs. 10 saying, "I always feel that, when my Hon. friend does anything or approves of any object by his taking the lead, I should subscribe my portion. You may come to me on the 18th (15th instant was the anniversary day) and take the same from my manager." Immediately after, the zamindar entered the zenana—I hope he called it usually so, that is the local repute.—We came out happy, cursing the world which called the zamindar frugal.

It was two hours after our start. We had 30 Rs. on paper, none on hand! We thought it wiser to go to ordinary men and get something. Of course number of boards with B. A. B. L., or M. A. B. L., or B. A. M. L., or M. A. M. L., are hanging. They did not indicate any capacity to pay, or as my friend would put it, any capacity to earn. They sometimes indicate generally something the other way. We felt there were still some who felt prestige of a 'B. L.' was hanging heavily on them and that the same could be kept up only by some payment. That was our success. We deliberately resolved to get in and out of every vakil's house, just like Vydiks on Avani Avittam days, and gather what little they could give. Our idea bore fruit. We collected a few four anna pieces, a couple of rupees, a dozen half rupee coins. On the whole we reached a good figure of Rs. 15—three-fourths of the suspicious lead given by the Hon. Member!

The anniversary was celebrated with the I. C. S. District Judge in the chair. The Hon. Member was one of the earliest to arrive, was present with us to receive the chairman, to conduct him to the dais and did everything to see to his convenience. Rai Bahadur Gopal Desikan was not less interested in the function. He was with the Hon. Member to assist him in everything left undone by him. He helped the I. C. S. District Judge by taking the hat from the corner of his seat, picked up his fountain pen when it fell, and reminded him of his walking-stick hanging behind the chair. Of course he did not fail to make solemn and kind enquiries about the Mrs. at home and Master and Miss in Ireland. The Brahmin Zamindar too was there in time. He salaamed the I.C.S. in the oriental fashion befitting his dress, and volunteered to the headmaster, as one of the oldest residents of the city and sympathisers of the institution, to thank the chairman of the evening, a honour which should have gone to me. The other good B. L.'s who helped us with four annas and eight annas were also there punctually but were content to be backseaters. The function went off well. The I. C. S. congratulated us over the function,

paid a tribute to the headmaster, and warmed himself and us up by saying that a society which could boast of the active co-operation of the Hon. Member, Rai Bahadur Gopal Desikan and our zemindar friend was sure to be one of the model intellectual centres of the city. The I. C. S. got into his carriage with a lace garland and drove like a new bridegroom amidst three cheers called by Rai Bahadur and responded loudly by the Hon. Member and the Zemindar.

The anniversary arms were not over; the headmaster summoned and demanded us accounts. We said we should make the collections on the waiting list. We went to the Hon. Member's house again to see if the key was then available and whether the 'assistant gumastha' had at all turned up, a figure who eluded our grasp, inspite of several visits we paid in response to the chief gumastha's direction. The Hon. Member was inside. Noting our voice he called us in. We went hurriedly with a bit of exultation. "You have done well, boys, that day. The function is a success. Now it is over, you may not want my money, even one rupee. Yes, you may go." Between a hearty congratulation at the outset and a curt 'go' towards the close, we had to prefer the latter.

Rai Bahadur was approached as the 'last.' He smiled at us and took us to task for not having come to him again as suggested by him. We said we were doing it then. He retorted, "Oh! No, you boys. You do not know manners. You are coming to me after the function. I shall not give you any subscription. You go."

Thus dismissed again, we went to the zemindar. We saw the manager, told him of the fact of Rs. 10 having been subscribed by his boss. Without stating anything in reply, he showed us in to the zemindar. He received us with a knowing look and began with an admonishing air. "Very well done, boys. The District Judge liked it immensely. Yesterday when I met him in his bungalow—usual weekly visits probably—he told me in a disapproving way, the expenditure incurred in the anniversary celebration. Yes, your expenses were luxurious. Boys are not expected to spend like that. Our money is not for that. Besides you have not chosen to spend on that item which is necessary. You have not garlanded any of the big-wigs who attended. We did not come as ordinary spectators. To teach you a lesson this year, I shall not pay you anything. By the way, you ought to show me all details of accounts with vouchers etc. I shall enquire the headmaster, if you do not do so. You may go."

The waiting list in the Donation List was over. The accounts were submitted. The headmaster suspected us, and honestly believed we had made money in the bargain. Next year a similar function came. He understood the truth of the matter then and exonerated us from all blame—a year later.

There are several mysteries in a subscription list. Some have learnt, some are yet to learn! some have practised and some are yet to practise!

You'll like to Know

To certain Southern Chinese epicures the only thing not edible on two legs is a human being, and the only thing not edible on four legs is a table.

According to Mr. Holford Knight, K. C., M. P., "Trespassers will be prosecuted" notices are only "picturesque fudge and a piece of decorative inaccuracy, completely wrong in law and have no legal effect."

The screen version of Mr. H. G. Wells's "The Island of Dr. Moreau", in which Charles Laughton has the leading role, has been banned by the British film censor.

A machine which can measure the strength of love between two persons at any given time, is to be shortly installed in the Psycho-technical Institute at Belgrade.

The doctor's consent, as well as that of their parents, may soon be required by young men and women who wish to marry in Jugo-Slavia.

A woman at Stanford, Cape Colony, recently gave birth to a child which weighed 18½ lbs and was 27 inches long. The baby expired soon after seeing the light.

Statistics seem to prove that the younger sons of families are better equipped with brains than their elder brothers. Among the famous younger brothers are Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Nelson, George Bernard Shaw, Charles Darwin, George Washington and Marshal Foch.

The five essential elements in a child's diet are said to be Calcium, iron, iodine, protein and vitamins.

Although most human beings are born at night, the majority of cases of twins being born happen near noon, according to a German expert.

Doctors, says another expert, know too much to make really good parents, their knowledge making them very nervous.

Film fans who attend a cinema in Madrid are to be lent umbrellas if it comes on to rain. Attendants are also waiting to take patrons' cars to a special garage.

Printed weather forecasts for the next twenty-four hours will be supplied by automatic machines to be installed in Frankfurt, Germany.

Express railway locomotives use about two tons of coal for every hundred miles they travel.

Heel prints are taken of all babies born in the hospitals in many American cities to avoid the risk of mistakes in identity.

Concealed cameras which take moving pictures of workers are being tried in some Chicago offices. They expose at once any slackness on the part of the staff.

Cameras have been supplied experimentally to some of the Berlin traffic police in order that they may obtain immediate photographic evidence in street accidents or other occurrences.

The largest penknife in the world is now on show in London. It was made in 1851 and has 1851 blades. The knife weighs over three stones.

The most valuable animal at the London Zoo is the Indian rhinoceros; It is valued at 1,000 pounds. The most valuable birds are the King Penguins, valued at 75 pounds each.

The Maharaja of Patiala's palace is a quarter of a mile long, with an all-marble terrace along its entire length.

A cuckoo lays its eggs in the nests of other birds but only one in each nest.

The quickest acting muscles in the body are those controlling the eye lids.

In an Ohio (America) town, a law has been passed that any animal led or ridden by night shall have a red light "affixed to its rear."

The white half-moons at the base of our finger nails are a sign of good health, vitality and the power to resist infection.

The Shah of Persia never moves without a cube of amber which he wears hung round his neck. This luck-bringer dates back to the time of Mahommed.

India is equal in size to France, Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Bulgaria, Roumania, Hungary, Jugo-Slavia, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Latvia and Albania added together, and you could tuck Belgium, Switzerland and Lithuania into the corners.

Old felt hats can be made into excellent bedroom slippers or cut up into insoles for leather footwear.

In China a man shakes hands with himself when he meets a creditor.

THE LATHI

(A Foot-Note to Current History.)

IT is a well-known literary convention that *Arms* are at least as important as the *Man*, and that both should receive the same elaborateness of epic treatment. It is, thanks to this principle, that we know as much about the weapons of the gods and heroes of mythology, as about the gods and heroes themselves. Imagine how dull, unprofitable and stale would be the epic stories of the world, without the glorification of the Bow and Arrow, the Spear and Shield, the Club and Mace, the Conch and Discus! Or, coming to historical times, the truth is again borne out that the weapon adds a unique something to the personality of the wielder, which confers a kind of immortality on both. For example, you cannot think of Mr. Baldwin without the far-flung aroma of his far-famed pipe; of Mr. Churchill without his top hat, of Mr. Shaw without his beard, of the Rajah of Chettinad without his cheque book, or Vivian without his walking-sticks! Not without point, therefore, did the epic of the modern world begin with the song of *Arms and the Man*.

During recent months, we have all heard of a new weapon of offence, fashioned to meet a new menace. Most of us have seen it; some of us have felt it. But no one has yet celebrated the romance of its rise from obscurity to world-wide notoriety; I mean the *LATHI* of course; and, before it relapses to its original state, it may be as well to place on record, a brief account of it for the benefit of the future historian, who might haply live in an ampler, purer and gentler world, and to whom the very word 'Violence' would be as great an extinct curiosity as the Dodo and Dinosaur are to us.

There is, naturally, no agreement among scholars concerning the etymological affiliations of the word *Lathi*. I therefore feel emboldened to offer my own views on the subject, in the belief that if they are not correct, they at least deserve to be. The word is derived from *latha*—from Sanskrit, meaning a stem. This is common ground to all alike—to scholars and to me. I think further that it is cognate with *ludo* (in Latin) and *lata* (in Hindustani or Hindi.) The former means sport, while the latter signifies a quarrel. It may seem at first sight that there is little in common between these two ideas. But it will be found on reflection that many sports have ended in quarrels, while numberless quarrels have provided sport—to others. I conclude therefore that the distinction between the two is without much difference. Furthermore, the English word *Rod* is evolved from *lathi*, if you allow for the interchangeability of l and r (cf. the sutra—*la-ra-na bedbah*), and the conversion of the final *th* in English words to *d*.

I may now proceed to consider the subject anatomically. The *Lathi* is fashioned of the bamboo of special habitat and special characteristics. The bamboo wood which we use in our daily lives, practically from the cradle to the grave, for festivities as well as for funerals, is the contemned domesticated variety, of pale green colour that has no other virtue than the patient

endurance of the ass. But the *lathi* can boast of a more distinguished ancestry. It has been cut off in the prime of its untried manhood from amidst virgin forests hospitable to the python and the cobra, or from the clustering plumes waving proudly on the brows of mountains accessible only to the cheetah or the wild goat. It is core-hardened by wind and weather; while its dark-green lustre and glossy smoothness testify to its self-conscious and exultant pride.

Its specifications are more or less as follow. Length 1 yard, cross-section 1-1½", and weight about 80 to 100 tolas. About an inch or two below the top, a hole is drilled into it, through which is passed a thread of tough, well-greased buffalo-hide, the ends of which are tied in a knot for which those funny creatures, the boy-scouts, have some curious name or other. I can only say that it is like the Gordian knot, sturdy and sure. The fist can be slipped through it with ease, enabling one to grasp it at various points up or down, according to the exigencies of the situation. The beauty of this simple device consists in this, that it can never slip out of one's hand by any accident.

There is one further detail concerning it which I have reserved to the last, because it is not the least. At the other end of the *lathi*—intended for you and me if we don't behave—a rough ring of cast iron is welded in so firmly as to justify the impression that it is a natural accretion of the bamboo itself. It adds materially to the momentum of the swing, and takes off in one sting the force applied at the other end.

It looks at first sight like a curled-up snake, contemplating its own tail. It is altogether innocuous in appearance, but lingering in its effects. It is made in India, by Indians, and used by Indians for the benefit of Indians. I would fain believe for the honour of my countrymen, that it was also an Indian who was responsible for its discovery and use!

Such is the instrument devised by the latter-day humanity of *Pax Britannica* to disperse 'unlawful association' and scourge un-armed rebellion.

Hail to Thee! thou last resort of a mighty power condemned to forswear its faith in 'reeking tube and iron shard!' Art thou a faithful image of thy creator in thy core-hardened rigidity and unfeeling woodenness? How hast thou foiled the ingenuity of thy master, and emboldened thy victims to exult in their new-found strength! Like Aaron's Rod of old, thou hast swallowed their grisly terrors, and left their spirits free; like a potent wand in the hands of an inexpert magician, thou hast unchained a *Dæmon* which neither he, nor thou, nor any one else can exorcise. Thou hast chastened them out of their timidity, and fortified them with the joy of unmerited suffering. Hail and Farewell—ere you pass on to your appointed oblivion.

—PAM

Be Humorous

(V. GANAPATHI)

"Be brief, be original, be humorous," says the Editor in his "note to contributors." Just the thing that would go, to be sure. But you can't compel a man to be humorous, though you make a handsome offer. Just the desire to be humorous can't make it—nor a forced concentration. Spontaneity is the ruling factor. Humour flows out in voluntary, unconscious and natural profusion—of course, if there is stuff within. You cannot create a humorous section within you, just to let it loose upon demand.

Will the Editor please note that it is not like ordering a plate of fruit salad or Gulab Jan at Neo Komala Vilas? Humorous composition is not a thing supplied to order. One can detect humour—easy. One can enjoy humour—easier; and one can pass it on too! But to be humorous, well, there is the hard nut coming in.

This is the sad result of my attempts—honest attempts. I may tell you—at trying to be humorous. If only I produce something really humorous, I get Rs. 100. Not a bad bargain, you must agree—especially in these days of financial stringency and economic depression. Oh, these phrases! Obnoxious—they get right into my nerves.

Well, I did start with confidence. There is nothing like self-confidence, you know, that goes a long way towards achievement. But what with all my confidence and exertion—not to mention the sleepless nights, straining every bit of my brain to conceive something humorous—out came nothing.

I began with a reflection. My first conception was the aphoristic way, coupled here and there with something pithy and pungent, terse and ticklish, satiric yet simple, etc., etc. But it proved abortive. "If it is as easy to do as to say, peasants' cottages will be princes' palaces," said somebody. Am I right? Yes. Then my failure to do what I said I would, is not so very deplorable after all!

I abandoned this method of handling the task. I proceeded first to understand what was on hand. You can't be hasty and unsettled in mind—be calm, cool and collected, that is the tip to a writer. Well then, what is it? Humour. Can I write something in the way of a modern 'stunt'? No. Anything giving a surprising end to which readers were not prepared by the general tenor of the subject treated—you know what I mean? It is that trick which many adopt, of enjoying themselves letting the readers to accomplish a somersault at the end of the story. No, no, that too won't suit—too stale nowadays. Humour, humour, that is the key-word. Well then, will something bearing on the frailties and foibles and the idiosyncracies of human nature do? Oh, yes. I have caught the idea. Therein lies an undrainable ore.

The theme is splendid. But humour? Yes, humour, well, have a go at it, anyway.

There again creeps in another difficulty, insurmountable. I have ideas—all solid, substantial ideas. True. High reflective sentiments, each worth a piece of gold. But the element of humour? Oh, the stumbling block! The clock-work is quite O.K. just without the main-spring.

"Take a pause and think again," suggested the intellectual portion of my head. "Genius is unconscious of itself," great men have said. Even so may be real humour. I now begin to think I do possess a fund of humour. I have a store of real humour. The expression, the humorous clothing, who will supply? I am inclined to believe I possess a rather high style of humour—not easily understandable humour—too subtle and all that sort of thing. That is no good. I can't throw out my humour and then go about explaining it—or request the Editor to publish a summary of my 'humour' in a succeeding issue.

What? I claim to have amassed a huge volume of experience—my study of Nature—of the sun and the moon and the twinkling stars—of the running brooks and the passing clouds—Ah! what a store within me! My style of writing so erudite, elegant and elevated! Splendid and cogent chain of ideas! Just for want of that common, ordinary humour, am I to let all these precious things go waste?

A brilliant idea strikes me. I will offer my ideas and beautiful, poetic thoughts to the Editor who, I believe, is a hand at humour. Let him supply the humour part required. Yes, it is an idea. But no—"The page slew the boar and the Prince had the glory," was said of a heroic but meek man. Not for worlds will I do any such thing. Offer my sterling ideas for others to profit by? No, not I.

Dear Editor, you can be humorous if you like. You can find many contributors humorous. But please do not ask me to be humorous. I can't help it. It is not my fault. I simply cannot be humorous. If I want to be, I seem to see humour in everything—in seeing a man getting into a bus—another trying to get down—another dodging the innumerable cars up and down in the open street, and getting buffeted here and there—my friend trying to neutralise his wife's pugnacious temper by taking fruits and flowers every day when going home—Ramu trying to play the 'romantic role'—etc. There is no completion to this list. All life is full of humour. I am not in a humour for humour.

Really I feel saturated with humour. Only I can't give out any. May God forgive me for this selfish preservation of excellent humour!

Don't fail to sign your Insurance coupon

Mr. Editor

The most important feature, this time, in my opinion, is the Free Insurance Scheme that has been started in this issue. Elsewhere in these pages will be found an announcement on this matter and a coupon. I should like however to make certain things about this Insurance Scheme clear in this page. Firstly, this Insurance Scheme is restricted in its operation to the City of Madras, meaning thereby the Municipal Limits. Secondly, the Insurance Scheme Coupon must be signed. Thirdly, it must be on the person of the victim of the accident. It will be in force, of course, only for a space of 15 days i.e. the interval between the dates of publication of two consecutive numbers of the Magazine. In the unfortunate event of the death of the person who has signed the coupon, a sum of Rs. 500/- will be paid to his or her next of kin. In the event of permanent disablement also, as a result of an accident to a motor car, bus or tram in which the reader is travelling, this sum will be paid. It is proposed to extend the benefits of the Free Insurance Scheme to all places within India. It is unnecessary that I should dilate on the unquestioned benefits that are conferred upon readers by this scheme of Free Insurance. What it amounts to in fact is, that readers are insured in a substantial sum without any formality or what is more important still, without payment of any premium. There are no irksome medical examinations, the Insurance canvasser will not bother you at odd hours and odd places, and your friend will not be faced with the almost always unpleasant task of filling in columns on the confidential report about you. In short you pay two annas, you get many times the value of that two anna bit in reading matter of undoubted quality, humorous sketches, short stories, extracts, pictures, competitions etc., and over and above all these, in the extremely unlikely event of your being involved in a serious accident you are insured in a sum of Rs. 500/-. *Verbum sap.*

Bala, the Bad Woman

The regular readers of the Serial Story and that means all our readers, will read the present instalment with great appreciation. The story of Bala is now drawing to its inevitable close and I am certain very many of you do not know how it is all going to end. I am printing below extracts from a letter received from a reader, which is sure to be of interest to you:

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

I have been closely following the very interesting serial.....The story is a fine depiction of the most notorious and most inhuman custom obtaining in Hindu Society, where most marriages are arranged for considerations other than those that are relevant to the main issue, viz., the mutual happiness of the married couple. The story is intensely interesting, the events are described with a rare touch of realism quite unusual in Magazine writing. As a matter of fact, the story has already such a grip on the reading public that it has become a topic of conversation. I welcome the story as being profoundly illustrative of the deep cruelty which parental tyranny engenders in the life of innocent children.....It is not easy to guess what the author of Bala has in store for her. She

His page

may, if the story writer so chooses, go astray, become a public woman and then die of degradation and disease. There cannot be a more miserable conclusion for the story. On the other hand, she may withstand the onslaught of passion, but leave her husband's home in justice to him and herself and seek asylum in a charity home or an orphanage and lend a hand in the service of humanity and finally die a martyr to the cause of social justice."

Other Peoples' Humour

The readers' attention is drawn to some more new features incorporated in this number. There is a page of 'Other Peoples' Humour'. The best and juiciest bits are selected from a large number of other journals and are printed on this page.

You'll like to know

I have also opened a new column entitled "You'll like to know." There is yet another page of 'One Minute Stories', which are bound to prove interesting.

Lucky Numbers

This time also you have the Lucky Number Scheme, concluded from the last number. I must again caution you here against your lending your copy of the Merry Magazine or throwing it away after you have read it. Yours may be the Lucky Number.

Third Eye Prize Competition

The number of entries in this competition has been fairly good though I expected a much better response. Let me remind my readers here that they can send in answers till 30th April '33.

Short Story Prize Competition

I have not received as large a number of entries as I expected. Since this competition was originally started solely with a view to encourage and bring out the talent that, I am convinced, is lying dormant in many of my readers, I have decided to postpone the last date to the 25th of May 1933, so that you have still got another month's time in which to win the prize of Rs. 100/-. The reader may send in as many Mss. as he likes. In short,—No entrance fee and no limit to the number of entries.

Pictures from Readers

The reader will remember that in the last issue, I offered a prize of Rs. 5/- for the best drawing submitted by our readers. I very much regret to state that the pictures I have so far received have been very mediocre. I am continuing this offer of a prize and shall be glad to consider all attempts sent in.

Clerical Error

I regret that, owing to oversight on the part of one of our clerical staff, Mr. Chandrasekaran, a competitor in our 'Find the Errors' Competition, was not awarded a second prize, to which he was entitled. A Money Order has now been sent to him.

The prize of Rs. 3 for the best joke is awarded to MR. S. PATTABIRAMAN, *Mylapore*.



The Editor of The Merry Magazine undertakes to pay a sum of Rs. 500/- to readers of this magazine who become permanently and totally disabled on account of motor or tram accidents or to their families in the unfortunate event of their death, subject to the following conditions:—

1. The terms of this Insurance apply only to accidents to automobiles, tram-cars or motor buses.
2. The accident must have occurred within the municipal limits of the city of Madras.
3. The beneficiary must have been a passenger in the automobile, tram-car or bus that met with the accident.
4. Death or total disablement must take place as a result of the accident, within thirty days of the occurrence thereof.
5. The claimant shall at the time of the accident have the current number of The Merry Magazine, with the insurance coupon therein signed, on his or her person.
6. The claimant must have left at home in safe custody a set of six consecutive issues of The Merry Magazine, with the Insurance Coupons therein signed by him or her.
7. The claim for the accident benefit must be received at The Merry Magazine Office within a week from the occurrence of the accident.
8. If the accident be fatal, the legal personal representative or heir may send in the claim which must be accompanied by (a) the set of seven issues of The Merry Magazine (the current number and the previous six consecutive issues), with the Insurance Coupons in all of them signed by the victim (b) a succession certificate (c) a testimony to the occurrence of the accident by a Police Officer not lower in rank than an Asst. Commissioner and (d) a certificate signed by two respectable gentlemen attesting to the fact that the latest number of The Merry Magazine was on the person of the victim when the accident took place.
- (9) In case of permanent total disablement, the claim must be accompanied by a certificate to that effect from a Surgeon of the General Hospital, Madras, in addition to certificates (a) (c) & (d) mentioned above.
10. Should more than one claim arise out of the same accident, the assured sum of Rs. 500 will be equally divided among the claimants.
11. The Editor of this Magazine reserves to himself the right to decide if a claim satisfies all the above conditions.
12. This Free Insurance Scheme will be in operation until otherwise notified.

Rules for "En" Competition

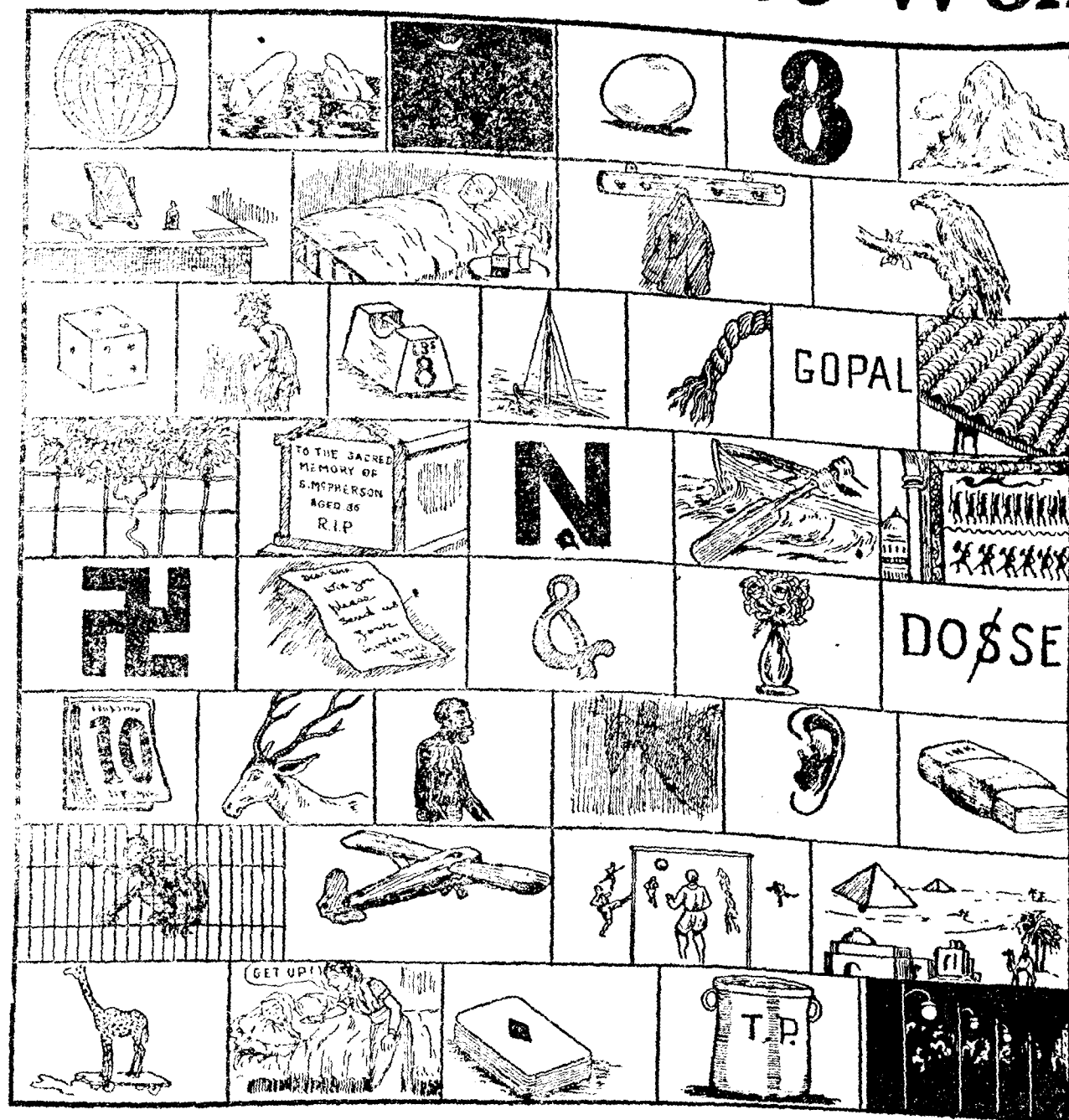
An entrance fee of Annas eight must be paid for each entry either by M. O. or in person. Other payments in respect of subscription etc. should not be made along with Competition entry. Solutions must be filled in, only on coupons found in copies of this issue of "Merry Magazine." Any number of solutions may be sent but each must be accompanied by an entrance fee of annas eight. Where copies of The Merry Magazine are not available, Competitors can send in their solutions on ordinary paper but an entrance fee of annas ten is payable with each entry thus submitted. Every solution not personally handed over must be accompanied by the M. O. receipt issued by the Post Office, failing which the entry will be disqualified. All entries must be received by last post on 3-5-33. Any received later will be disqualified. Entries from local competitors will be received in person at our office till 6 P. M. on that date. The first prize of Rs. 75, will be awarded to an all-correct solution and the second prize of Rs. 25 to the one which the Editor considers the next best. An all correct solution is one which agrees in all respects with the one in the Editor's possession. Failing a correct solution it will be awarded to the nearest correct entry. In the case of ties the prize money will be equally divided. A winning competitor can receive only one share in a prize. No responsibility can be accepted for any entries lost, mislaid or delayed. No correspondence can be entered into or interviews granted. The decision of the Editor on all matters relating to this competition is absolutely final and legally binding, and is an express condition of entry. Persons connected with the Merry Magazine and its associated journals are not allowed to compete.

Coupons must be filled in legibly and sent intact. No alterations or corrections whatever will be allowed. Competitors must write on the envelopes and M. O. coupons the words 'EN' Competition. All entries must be addressed to :—

THE EDITOR "EN COMPETITION"
THE MERRY MAGAZINE OFFICE,
2/140, BROADWAY, MADRAS.

"En" Competition

Rs 100 must be Won



How to Solve? :-

Each line of pictures represents a word when the letters 'En' are prefixed. The first line is illustrative. The first picture in the first line is *Globe*. Starting with its first letter G, we have in the next square *ice* which gives us *GI*. *Night* gives us *GIN* and *Egg* gives us *GINE*. Thus *eight* and *rock* give us *Gineer* and prefixing *EN*, we get *Engineer* which is the word required.

En Competition Coupon

1. ENGINEER

2.
3.
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Name.....

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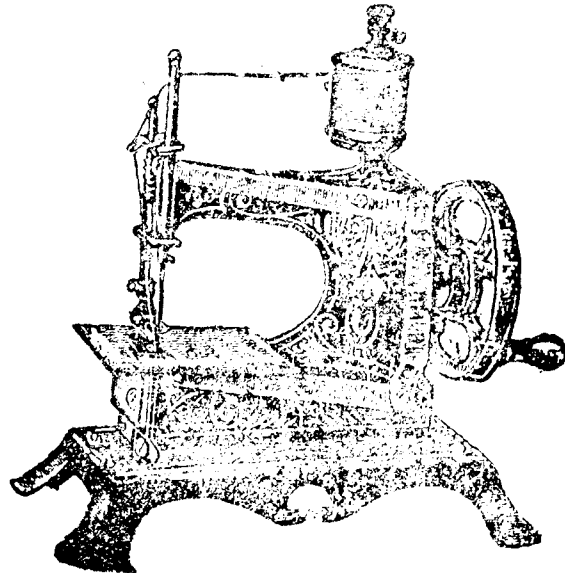
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These are just imported, measurement overall height 5 inches, length 5 inches, width 2 inches, made of sheet metal throughout, black japanned with litho, decoration; steel and nickel plated parts and attachments, and so scientifically constructed as to make it do the actual sewing, like big machines. Can Stitch Bod cover, Cushions, window-curtains, Cloths, Flag, shirts, Underwear, Jackets, Etc. Can be fastened anywhere. Every machine tested and ready for use. Simple enough for a child to operate. Every home should possess one. Each in a box complete with 1 Reel Thread and 1 Screw-driver.

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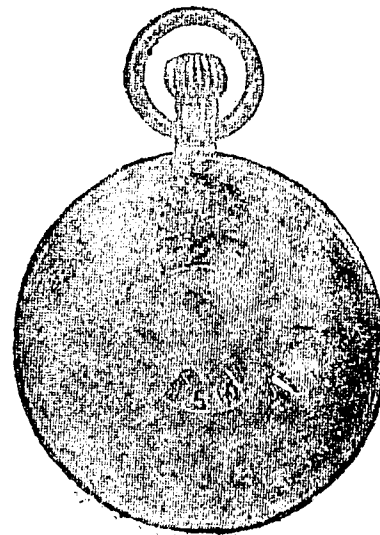
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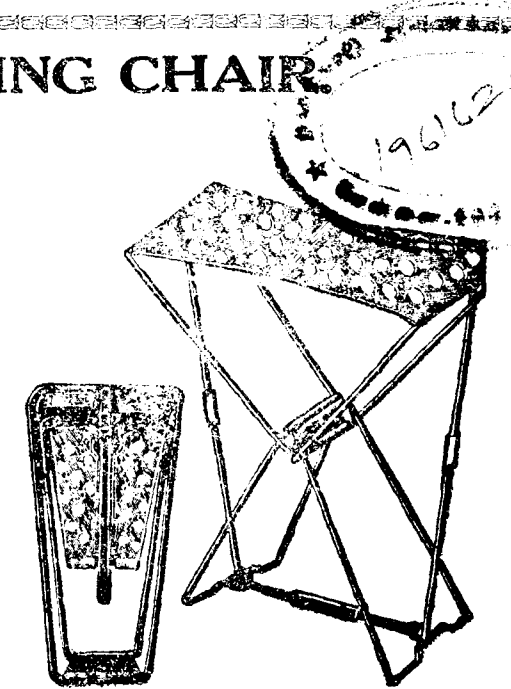
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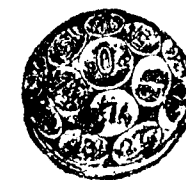
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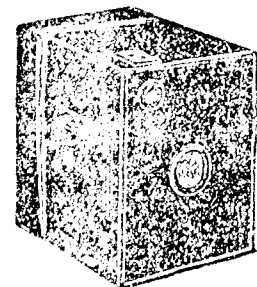
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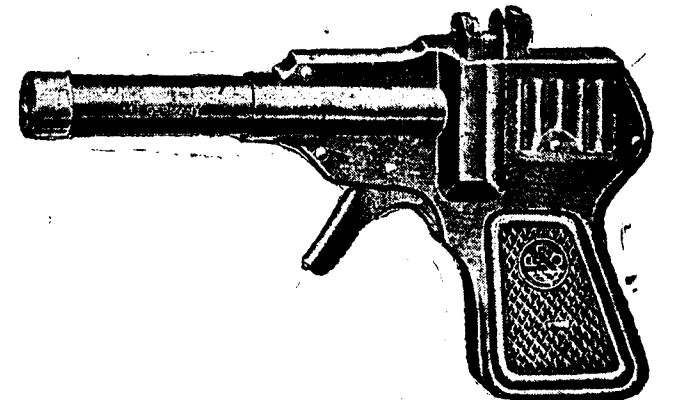


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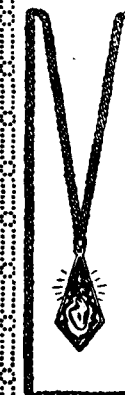


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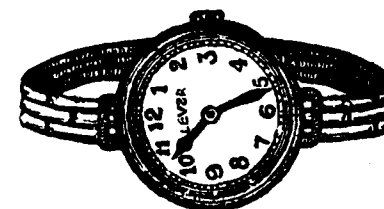


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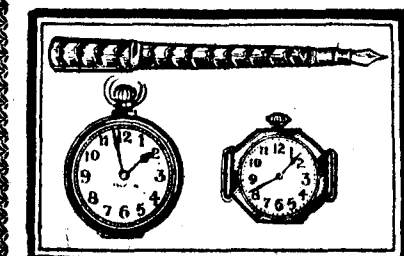
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