

WINNING STORIES—See Pages 489 & 513.

*The* **MERRY** 46691 **MAGAZINE**

Vol. I

MADRAS, 10th JULY 1933.

No. 13

Seizing An Opportunity. 21/8



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# THE MERRY MAGAZINE

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# THE MERRY MAG

Vol. I.

MADRAS, 10th JULY, 1933.

No. 13.

## SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

Siam has had two revolutions within one year. She must try much harder to become the Mexico of the East.

The *Madras Mail* objects to adult suffrage on the ground that it would merely lower the cash value of the vote.

We should like to see a statutory provision safe-guarding the interest of the voters.

Addressing the students of the Law College at Poona, Mr. Sastri is reported to have said that he was firmly convinced that the connection between Britain and India has been divinely ordained.

If so, we are equally convinced that he has been divinely ordained to expound it.

The Police Service memorandum to the Joint Parliamentary Committee says, ".....it might be best to wind up the Indian Police immediately."

We couldn't have summarised the incompatibility between Swaraj and Police Raj more neatly.

Incidentally, it would be the only reparation for *their Past*.

Manchuko has chosen for its national emblem the Kaoliang, a species of maize plant, growing to a height of five or six feet.

The appropriateness of the choice will be evident when it is remembered that the plant is familiarly known in Manchuko as "the bandit's friend."

A family-tree of the World Economic Conference with its numerous sub-committees has been issued for the benefit of the delegates.

This makes it certain that the delegates will not return with empty hands.

Sir Samuel Hoare says that 99 out of 100 charges against the police 'have been gross and unscrupulous fabrications.'

It looks as if Pandit Malaviya has caught hold of the 100th charge!

Mr. Macdonald stresses the fact that international conferences are necessarily slow in their work.

But not necessarily sure.

Mr. Sastri says that lawyers should not take up the advocacy of a case in which they do not believe.

We agree that it is a politician's privilege.

Addressing a Welsh gathering, Mr. Lloyd George declared that they would blunder through eventually.

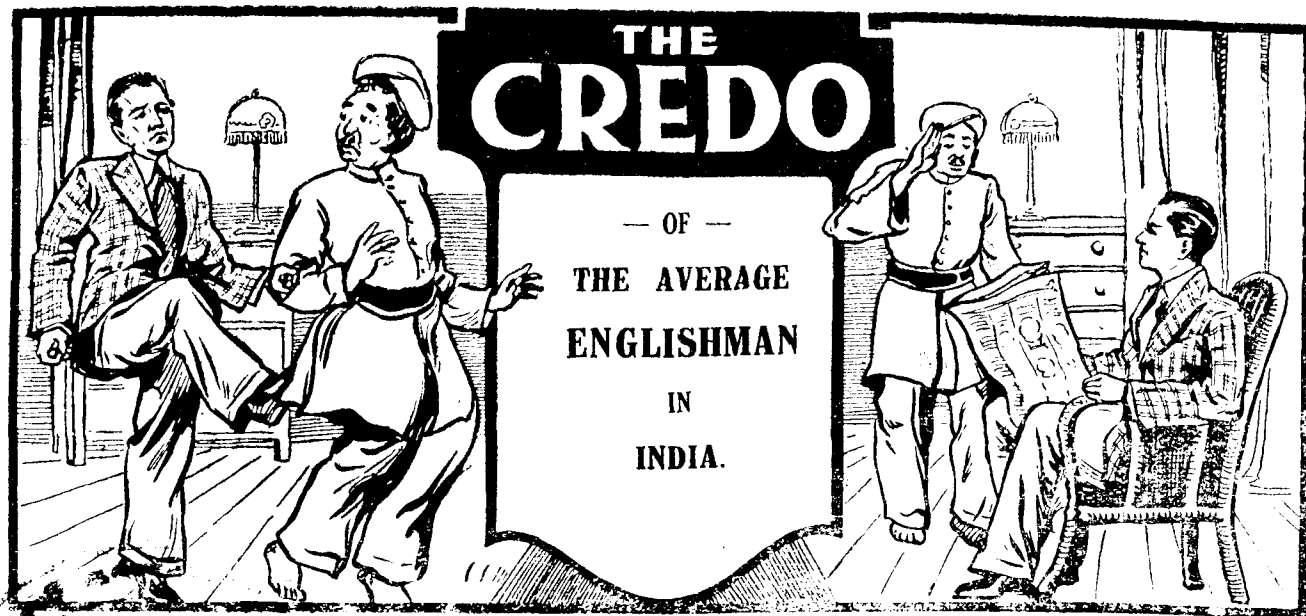
He didn't say whether with or without his help.

A gossip-writer says that Mr. Churchill has formed a cabinet with himself as premier.

It only remains for him to find a parliamentary majority.

The Rajah of Bobbili deprecates the movement for a separate province for the Andhras.

Then it is high time for the Tamils to take it up.



(Not an Over-serious Sketch)

(P. P. SAMUEL.)

By the 'average' Englishman in India I mean the smooth-chinned, sleek-haired, well-tailored, well-kept British businessman who looks forty-five, but may really be fifty-five years old. He is not as well-educated as the Civilian or so unlettered as Tommy Atkins. He is a member of an exclusive European club, subscribes to an Anglo-Indian Daily and a couple of British magazines, and has credit in a wine shop. Nothing worries him if golf is followed by a whisky-and-soda or a bottle of beer, and dinner by a cigarette and Edgar Wallace. He "takes life in both hands and eats it." And he occasionally goes to church to bless the Lord, for there are benefits to be thankful for.

He hasn't completely forgotten the lessons he had learned at Sunday schools and on his mother's knee: they do come back to him like the catch of an old song. "Love thy neighbour as thyself!" But he has no neighbour worth the name—all the people round his bungalow are vegetarians. And God knows he does love his neighbour when he has one. He is God's own child and he agrees with the Nazārene that "children's bread is not to be cast to dogs." The English are the children

of Jehovah and Mr. Rudyard Kipling is the High Priest. Hear him sing:

"For the Lord our God most high  
He hath made the deep as dry,  
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of  
all the earth."

India is the land promised to his progenitors when Britain "arose from out the azure main". And as long as he has "a hand to grasp the world with, and a foot to stamp it flat" he is not going to leave India. He fails to understand his more idealistic countrymen who assert that they are here "to deliver the land from errors' chains" and may be to turn the hearts of the people from wood and stone to the cult of the machine gun and the top-hat.

He does not dislike India though the climate is 'beastly' and he is 'stewing' all the time. Why get the hump? Beef is cheap, eggs cheaper, and if beer is costly, money is not hard to come by. Butlers, boys, and peons are at his beck and call, all day, and every day, with a never-failing 'Sa-a-a-ar.' And they are such nice lads. Even if one kicks them in the seat of the trousers, they groan and vanish, only to return with a grin and a salaam. And it does his white heart good.

But he is sure he does not love the people. They are mostly mystics, sentimentalists, water-drinkers and vegetarians. He can understand a man who drinks whisky, beer or even windy soda, but plain water and toddy are just sub-human. And how can a fellow who goes about half-naked and plays no cricket or golf have a soul? If by any chance he has one, it must also be 'overdone' like his body. Oh! their fanaticism. Everything to their Gods; none to Caesar! Not so the Maharajahs. They are robust, upstanding, two-fisted, large-hearted sportsmen. And they own diamonds as big as golf balls and rubies as large as cricket balls. One can very well shake hands with them and even address them 'Sir,' if it comes to that.

Why, O why should the Indian cackle when he has been given peace, railways, telegraphs, an efficient postal system, English education, safety razors and sunlight soap? That is not cricket! Neither golf, I should say! When fellows do not play the game you must talk to them in the rat-tat-tat of the machine-gun. India must be ruled justly, beneficially, and firmly. But that Irwin has made a mess of the whole thing, and that wily Scot at home is certainly not a Robert Bruce.

Should men who call themselves 'ENGLISH' fear Gandhism? Blood—not Satyagraha—is the "price of admiralty, and Lord God, we ha' paid in full." O, they make a lot of that Gandhi. Perhaps he is not a bad man, but it is time he went to his dentist and his tailor—that is, if he has any. It will also do him good to go to Chicago and see for himself the terrors of a sans-beer atmosphere. An anna off the bottle, please! These dunder-headed wind-bags! They do not see that it is the level-headedness of the English that has made England, "The Island Queen that sways the floods and lands from Ind to Ind."

The world is but a greater England designed by a Celestial John Bull for the comfort of His Chosen People. What are the Indians that they should have grievances? Why should the heathen talk of self-respect? Self-respect is a virtue in an Anglo-Saxon and perhaps even in a Frenchman, but in a tur-

baned biped it is just d.....d presumption. Lord God, I thank thee, for I am an Englishman!

Has this average Englishman in India any philosophy of life? Yes, high living—le. e thinking to the dickens. All the mental sustenance he desires is an occasional Edgar Wallace, with perhaps a Wodehouse by way of change. Surfeit and high thinking seldom go hand in hand. High living engenders nothing higher than a dinner-mood—a cramped charity which extends no farther than the protrusion of the tummy.

By the by, let us formulate his creed. Pass the Book of Common Prayer. Thanks. Here goes:

"I believe in England, the almighty, the ruler of the waves and in.....er.....er.....Yes, and in the English, the only sons of our Lord.....I believe in.....God Gun who paints maps red, and dominion everlasting. Amen."

Wanted—An Excuse.



Boy:—Tell me, doctor, in plain language what I am suffering from.

Doctor:—L-A-Z-I-N-E-S-S.

Boy:—Tell me now the medical term for it. I have to report my absence to the school.

# LETTERS FROM LALITA

I

Courtallam,  
5th July, 1933.

MY DEAR SARASA,

I arrived here alright, but oh, my dear, I am in a frightful temper, and sore of heart. You know how hard I had to plead, before the beast would agree to take me on a holiday. Well, there we were in the *coupe* compartment; the first bell was over: friends who had come to see us off had left, and as I noticed that he was leaning back with closed eyes, I thought he was resting and so opened a six-penny shocker which I had picked up at the book-stall. I had not read twenty lines when, my dear, I sensed a lack of light and looking up, saw him completely blocking the window.

Do you remember, Sarasa, that old sinner who used to teach us Physics at the Queen Anne's? I am sure you remember, dear, all about Newton and his first law of motion. "Every body continues in its state of rest.... except in so far as it is compelled by external force to change that state," and all that sort of bunkum.

He, my hubby I mean, was in a state of rest. What was it that impelled him to motion? He had risen and walked to the window and was occupying all there was of it. I threw the book aside and stepped gingerly to his side and what do you think I saw! It was a brazen young slut, all chintz and voiles and she was walking up and down the plat-



*I thought he was resting.*



*What was it that impelled him to motion?*



*Occupying all there was of the window.*

form with demure downcast eyes, like one of those coy young things over which some of our heroes rave. I nudged him aside to have a better look and he shot out like a stone out of a catapult and landed at the other end of the seat. I had a good look at the girl and then turned to confront him. He grinned sheepishly, shifted in his seat, and would you believe it, he tried one of his smiles on me—on me, please note. That was the limit. I went and sat by his side, determined to give him a piece of my mind and to enquire what sort of a holiday it would be if he was going to trail everything that wore a chintz saree.

"Well," I asked him, "aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Look, look! What a pretty saree!" said he. I turned and saw, framed in the window, the vixen looking at us from the corner of her eyes.

"You will look topping in such a saree as that and that is why I looked so long at it, so that I may not forget the pattern," said he.

Men, my dear, are deceivers ever. And I am so sore at heart and feel like competing with the falls and shed a bigger torrent of tears.

Yours ever in love,

LALITA.

P. S.

I hear the falls, my dear, but I haven't seen them yet. I am so disappointed. This place looks like one of those villages from which our aunts arrive in the city. I have had no time to go out, what with unpacking and keeping an eye on him, and 'more in my next' as they usually say.

"L."



*What do you think I saw?*

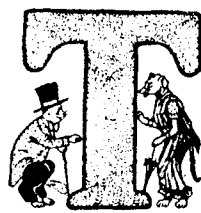


*Turned to confront him.*



*"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"*

Title: The Bone of Contention. Prize Winner: Mrs. Rose M. Ariyaratne.



**T**O begin with I am going to be disappointing. I cannot imagine that what is happening is really a quarrel between a man and a woman. It looks rather as if the man has swallowed a fish bone and his loving spouse is trying to pat it down into his nether regions. Just look at the picture again. Could they possibly be quarrelling? Very improbable. The man is young and hefty and yet he flings his arms helplessly to the side, allowing his wife to do jujutsu stunts with his gullet! How macaronic!! True, the end of her saree is a little dishevelled, but her lips are sweetly restful and her poise is undoubtedly dispassionate.

Now to the story. It was a warm evening. On his return from the city Velusamy disengaged himself from his stiff collar and tie and found himself in a twill shirt and dhotie. Some kindly neighbours had during the day given his wife a piece of fried fish left over from the family dinner the previous day. It proved so savoury that Kamala tasted its merits by gnawing off the fleshy part. All that remained of the tempting morsel when she had finished, was the sides with the bones sticking out.

Kamala knew how to domesticate her husband. In fact, Velusamy had been made so tame that he was known to take food out of her very hands. So then the problem that presented itself now was no difficult matter. She put before him a complete course of dinner and between serving and cuddling she worked him up to such high pitch of romance that he forgot he was doing such a prosy thing as eating. He cared not if he ate the vegetable curry or the very leaf on which it was placed. Coming from her sweet lips, the latest pieces of scandal sounded like the lyrics of the

angels and the way she dissected her neighbours was a rare treat.

Absorbed as he was, he did not watch which end of the fish he was tackling, when, lo! a stubborn ass of a bone stuck him where all the singing come from. He jumped up and raved. He stood on his hands. He stood on his head. All to no purpose. He swallowed balls of rice and drank copious draughts of water. Still the bone stuck. Sadly he remembered the warning given in his horoscope. There it was plainly said he would meet his end stabbed by a fish bone. Had the time come? His face was a pathetic study.



Kamala was visibly alarmed. If only she had not munched off the rich part of the fish. If only she had curbed her greediness. It was her watering mouth that had now brought disaster to her husband. She prayed to all the known gods. Then to the unknown gods. Still the bone would not come out. Nothing happened. The bone stuck home and would need more forceful measures than peaceful persuasion.

At school, Kamala recollected, they used to tickle each other's neck. She had once swallowed a four anna piece and when it stuck in her palate, it was some form of ingenious tickling that brought it out of the deep caverns of her throat, only to drop again into her stomach. Some such manipulation could work wonders now. For the first time in her married life, she must handle her husband roughly but with a tenderness all the same. She must seem to pounce at this throat. But never mind, the end justified the means. She tapped his throat, squeezed, pulled and stretched. Twisted Velusamy's head this way and that. At last the bone did give way its secure perch and everything ended happily.

Now both Velusamy and Kamala are strict vegetarians.

## TICKLERS

(TUT-TUT-TUT)

### 1. Annotate :—

- His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.
- Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words  
without knowledge?
- "But what good came of it at last?"  
Quoth little Peterkin.  
"Why that I cannot tell," said he;  
But 'twas a famous victory."

### 2. Write short notes on :—

- Quid Pro Quo. (b) Bombing as a police measure.
- (c) The Kipling Society. (d) The Statutory Railway Board.

### 3. What do you know of :—

- Dolfus.
- Sir Vepa Ramesam.
- Mr. B. G. Horniman.
- Mr. T. M. Krishnaswami Aiyar.

## ANSWERS

- Sir M. O'Dwyer repeated his libel that Indian Officers were often guilty of bribery and corruption, although three former viceroys contradicted him. We knew that he was ever in the wrong, but we had hoped the stiffness of his opinions would wear off in the obscurity of retirement.
  - Gandhiji's plaintive cry on the eve of the fateful decision re: Congress policy. Advice comes to him from all and sundry, from his natural enemies as well as erstwhile supporters. The fleshpots of Egypt are again reasserting their sway over the minds of our weaker brethren. May God give them courage!
  - British trade with Russia is to be resumed. It is announced that the British prisoners, Macdonald and Thornton have been released and the trade embargo lifted. We do not vouch for the correctness of the sequence of these events—which precedes which. In England it will be in one order, in Russia in another. But the main question is who has gained or lost by the childish events of the last two or three months?
- This is a Latin phrase which means something given for something received. This is, of course, the foundation of all sound business. We may cite as an interesting illustration of the truth of it, the presentation by the Kumararajah of Chettinad of a mayoral chair to the Corporation of Madras. It will be generally agreed that this precious addition to the glories of civic life in Madras would not have been possible but for the self-sacrificing devotion of the Kumararajah in agreeing to be elected, though a nominated councillor, to that exalted office last year.

- One of the cruxes of the Disarmament Conference, now adjourned. All the nations of the world were for banning aerial bombing, but Britain alone objected to it, on the ground that the far-flung empire could not be policed more cheaply, and humanely. The alternative of giving up the empire has been suggested, as a way out of the deadlock. It has been pointed out, *per contra*, that future disarmament conferences would be rendered impossible, if there were to be no subjects for consideration by them.
  - An association (formed in 1927) of retired Indian Army officers and other persons of detective intelligence, distinguished by admiration and affection for Kipling who has done so much to make them more important in fiction than they are in fact. The society has now joined the other crusading parties in England with a view to save India and its barrack-rooms for the British Tommy in perpetuity. There are only two conditions for its membership. You must believe that India does not change, and does not want to change.
  - Nobody knows anything about this yet. It is likely to be an extension of 'city' influence on Indian Finance. The Indian Railways are to be saved from the political influences of the White Paper constitution, and brought under the safeguards. The British investor will thus be guaranteed his dividends.
- He is the Chancellor of Austria; and plays the part of David to the Goliath in Germany: is the one man in Europe who is engaged in the gallant, and seemingly unavailing, fight against Hitlerism. We can only say Godspeed!
    - The acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court. Is a great authority on dietetics and birth-control. But if rumour is to be believed, his motto in regard to both seems to be: 'Do as I say, and not as I do!'
    - The talented editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. An Englishman with the proverbial love of liberty, and a journalist with a remarkable flair for sensational head-lines. As editor, published a photograph of Gandhiji breaking his historic fast, which was entirely synthetic, and which landed him in a controversy with Mr. Desai. He has promised to give us in the fullness of time a fitting answer to the query which has remained unanswered for two thousand years, viz., What is Truth?
    - A flourishing advocate of the Madras Bar, who found that the more he was indifferent to his practice, the more it grew! While clients came to him with their cases, he would be found stumping the streets of Mylapore leading bhajana processions. Has done much to popularise community-singing. Is a pillar of orthodoxy and Varnashrama. He will not touch a panchama or allow him to enter the temple. But he would appear for him in court, and take his fees, after washing the pollution off it. In short, he is—an anachronism!



The Principal was taking the distinguished visitor round the College. Indulging by habit, in contractions, the Principal, before the Mathematics Class, enlightened the visitor, "This is Maths. Hous."

Then to the Physical Laboratory was the visitor taken and was told, "This is the Lab."

Before the Botany class the Principal said, "Inter. Bot."

And before the Zoology Lecture Hall, with the students assembled, he said "This is the Zoo."

—V. Ganapathi, *Triplicane*.

Man:—(to a boy) Why are you weeping?

Boy:—I had an attack of small-pox and so I have not attended school for a month.

Man:—Now you are cured. Then why are you weeping?

Boy:—Because I have to go to school.

—Syed Dastagir, *Vellore*.

Patient:—As we have known each other so long, doctor, I do not intend to insult you by paying your bill. But I have left a handsome legacy in my will."

Physician:—Very kind of you, I am sure. Allow me to look at that prescription again. There is a slight alteration I should like to make in it."

—K. Venkateswaran, *Mylapore*.

He had bought a boat and had taken her out to show how well he could handle it. "What a nice boat," she remarked. "But there is one great shortcoming, dear," he said "If you try to kiss a girl in this small boat, there's a great danger of upsetting it."

For a long time the girl sat meditating. Then a brilliant idea struck her. "But darling," she said sweetly "You ought to know I can swim."

—M. R. Khan, B. A., *Madras*.

"I am finished. It is all over with me." "What on earth has happened to you?"

"I have just had a warning of approaching death."

"Goodness gracious! What do you mean?"

"The other day I bought a 'Life time Pen' and now it is broken."

Chandrakant, *Madras*.

Old Student:—Sir, Please give me a character certificate.

Teacher:—Why? Are you applying for any job anywhere?

Old Student:—No, Sir, I am answering a matrimonial advertisement.

—V. Subburatham, *Melisharam*.

It was a big Harijan meeting. The lecturer was in the middle of his eloquent denunciation of untouchability as being a relic of barbarism, when a well-aimed and very rotten banana struck him full in the face. "This," he said calmly as he produced his handkerchief and wiped his face, "is a striking evidence of what I have told you so far, that pro-untouchability arguments are always rotten."

—P. Shanmugham, *Cuddalore*.

A little girl who disliked small boys declared that she would never marry. A few days later referring to the same subject, she said, "Mother, I have changed my mind. I think I will marry after all because if I don't, my children won't have a mother."

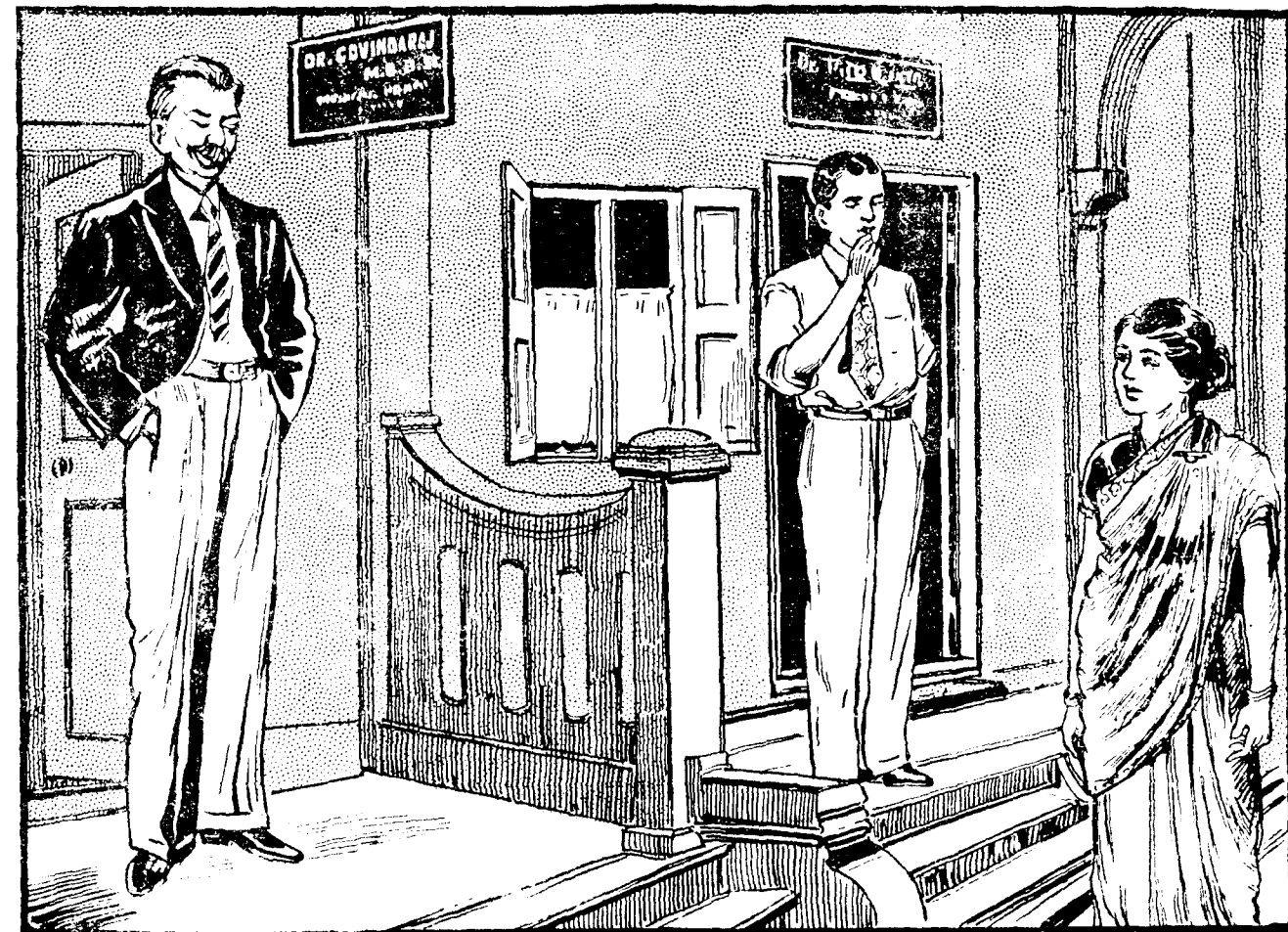
—A. R. Srinivasan, *Triplicane*.

Send only original jokes. We pay Rs. 3/- for the best joke received from our readers.

This fortnight, the prize for the best joke is awarded to—

P. SHUNMUGAM, *Cuddalore*.

## PRIZE STORY No. 1.



.....this high and mighty sauce-box put on his big looks and tipped her a wink.....

## SO, THAT'S HOW AND WHY!

(ELMER DELVILLE.)



OME inquisitive guy has lately been poking his bally nose in the mustard about my affairs. He is wondering, I am told, how, where and why I acquired my better half. It is nobody else's business of course, but in case it strikes this babler to sniff about my drains again, I give the whole story here and now for his benefit and for those of his ilk.

I can assure all at the outset that I did not find her mislaid after use and forgotten; nor did anybody throw her at my head; nor was she bequeathed to me in a will; nor did I win her in a raffle. I admit she is no masterpiece of creation, but she serves her purpose just as well as a comelier yokesmate. In the days of her youth—now, alas, as extinct as the dodo—she must have been a credit to any looking-glass. What with a generous consumption of dhall, ghee, vitamins A, B, C and D, and the worry of

children she did not have, no wonder she became kneaded into an unweildy mass.

Friends do hint sometimes that she is rough and cross-grained as a nutmeg grater and therefore only fit for the dust-hole, but I am too romantic to think of consigning her to such unofficial places. True, she is thick-set and stubby as a rope and cannot twist herself and wriggle about; she is really all horse-power and no tenderness; she often bristles with quills as the fretful porcupine; but from her very cubical contents one should be convinced that her heart too must be large and downy as a pillow. Besides—that is the gist of my story—she came into my possession in the most quixotic manner and I attach to her therefore a sentimental value. Now to the how and why.

Cackling like a fool-hen may be a quaint way of discharging hot air about oneself, but I have promised to tell you the whole story. It is your duty now to fold

your ears above your head and to listen with patience. I must begin at the zero hour of my own nativity, for without me, I could not have married her. Well, as soon as I was born, my parents decided I was something of a pocket genius and in this—between you and me and the gatepost—they made no mistake about it.

Before I could cut my wisdom-tooth and look things up, the hand that rocked my cradle kicked the bucket and my father, the dear old bean, popped off soon after. Thinking I was just a rattle-brained, squealing child, they laid me on the shelf, for the time being. One cannot, however, light a candle and cover it with a bushel. My genius began to assert itself, even then. I could, for instance, cut blocks with a razor and tell easily a cucumber from a sausage. I could peep into our neighbour's bedroom through the key-hole and distinctly remember everything I saw. I tried once to prove how convenient it was to sit on a boiling pot to keep the steam in, but the foolish people in the house would not let me.

An uncle, who, people unkindly said, was occasionally troubled by rats in his upper story, noticed the unusual size of my headpiece—no doubt a sign of the stuff that was within—and decided to educate me. From his very first look at me, he knew I was hatched purposely for the medical profession. He swore I was born with a stethoscope in my mouth—(the old fossil must have meant the ears presumably). Anyway, he had me ground through the university, cajoled a diploma and a licence and set me up in practice in.....Road.

Members of my glorious profession were at the time making fortunes out of patent decoctions and pills, than from legitimate prescriptions, and I joined the merry game. My pills for all ills were simple but effective. I first soaked dried blackberries in a thin solution of gum arabic, rolled them in powdered white lime and filled pill boxes with forty in each. They sold like hot iddies, and as far as I know, nobody went off the hooks because of my course of treatment.

My neighbour at my business premises, I gathered from his elaborate tog-up, was another doctor—Dr. Govindaraj by name. He was an elderly man, but from the little eccentricities of behaviour I suspected he must be one of those who longed for perpetual youth. One day there was a lull in business. We were both standing outside, each in his own province, of course. He was chewing his moustache with a relish, which proprietors of such rigging alone can appreciate, and I was picking my teeth in the most orthodox manner. A youngish-looking lady decked up in all her finery alighted from a shaky jutka and looked intently at both our signboards as if trying to make up her mind where to go. There is all this nonsense about professional etiquette, I know, but when this high and mighty sauce-box put on his big looks and tipped her a wink, I could stand it no longer.

"You dirty carpet-knight," I roared as I pounced on him, "take this for your insolence," and suiting the action to the word, treated him to a lion-brand knock-out.

As he fell, I noted that his starboard toplight was in mourning and his other optic was shut. A repeat dose

and he would have been a casualty. I felt sorry for him, but he should not have offered an affront to a lady.....

O, horrors! the lady goes down on her knees beside this fallen sport of fortune, rapping out the meanwhile an unending assortment of loving terms, one of which disclosed that she was no other than the doctor's own wife! What could I do? Lighting a cigarette and parking it at a jaunty angle, I tried to look unconcerned. With a stare that was calculated to wither me completely, she had her stupefied husband removed home. That is what comes of trying to be gallant!

With my rival temporarily out of the way, business comparatively improved. Two days after the foregoing incident, a pretty, buxom girl of sweet seventeen came to my dispensary for some castor oil and requested that it be mixed with something that would disguise the nasty taste and odour. If I were not a medical practitioner, I might have immediately bloomed into a poet, if only to sing her praises. But that is neither here nor there. As I was fiddling about with bottles and measuring glasses, I asked, "Do you like soda-water?"

She replied coyly that she did and I handed her a glass. After drinking it she still lingered. Perhaps—perhaps I had kindled a spark in her heart! I was not ugly to look at, you must know, and many have tumbled over each other to snare this lady-killer.

"Can I do anything else for you?" I asked pleasantly.

"Where is the castor oil I asked for?"

"Why? You've just taken it. I seasoned it with soda-water and lemon."

"What have you done!" she moaned in such an agonised tone that it nearly broke my heart. "I wanted it for my father, who is sick," she added by way of an explanation.

To say I was flabbergasted is to call a steam-roller a pram. The bravest girl we know can perhaps face a cannon with her eyes open, but will she willingly go about the town on a morning after a dose of castor oil? Here was a case for tact and diplomacy.

"Where—er—who is your father, may I ask?" I blustered.

"Dr. Govindaraj," was the reply.

If there was yet a single thread of nerve still hanging somewhere in me, it gave way at that moment. I sank speechless in a chair, as if I had gone the way of all *au* only resting in the hope of a glorious resurrection. Blessed consciousness returned, my very much *when* fairy was not in sight.

I was destined, however, to come across this wench before long. A few days later, I was wa along Broadway, wondering where I could out constable for a paltry eight annas, when I saw *Am*—for that was the name of my butterfly. Her was stilted and jerky, like the evolutions of *ap*

that tries to climb a hill on second gear with a choked carburettor. One comprehensive look was enough to tell me the cause of the trouble—she and her high-heeled shoes were new acquaintances.

As a chip of the haughty old block, she was blowing the gaff alright and was holding her nose in the air. She did not even deign to notice me. My eyes followed her every movement and drank in every detail of her form and figure. A sickly banana peel on the pavement looked inviting and when she put her right foot on it, I knew she was heading for disaster. As I feared, she sat down suddenly without calling for a chair and measured her whole length across the pathway.

Gone were her splash and swagger, for she had unceremoniously come down to earth with a rude shock. She and her upholstery were compromisingly mixed up and she looked the pathetic picture of a moon-calf. She beckoned to me. I went tamely to her like a dhoby's ass towards a peck of oats and, at her request, I held her in my arms as she struggled into the intricate folds of her sari. In the meanwhile the eight-anna piece I had borrowed, found an outlet in my trousers pocket and to

retrieve it, I had to shake it down my leg. While the combined kinematics were thus going on, who should come on the scene but my friend Dr. Govindaraj! It was his move against my two checks. He owed me something, no doubt.

"Hah! a fitting spectacle for the market-place, eh!" he sniggered like a bear with a sore head, his false teeth clicking in chorus, "Now that you've proclaimed your idiocy to the world, you will be good enough to crown it and have the marriage registered forthwith."

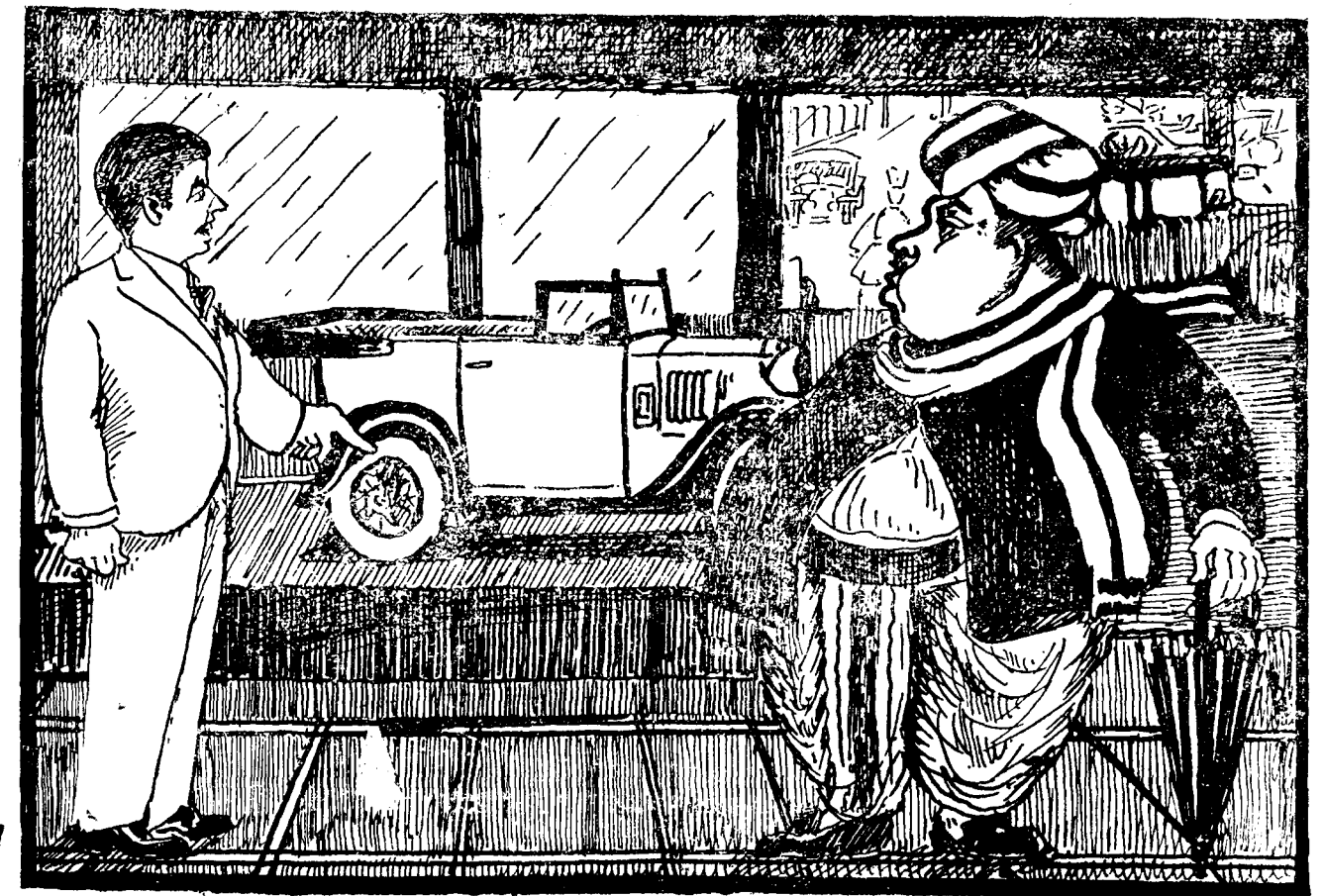
"Marriage!" I echoed. If there was a thought that kept me awake at nights, it was that of being spliced to a wife for a lifetime.

"Yes, marriage to Annapurni of course," went on the old Joker, "You don't expect any other man to marry her after this scandalous exposure of—of—. Hurry up. I can't stand any argument. Come straight away."

There was no mistaking the tone, nor denying the truth of what he said. And so I went with them.

That was how and why.

## TOO LATE!



Motor Salesman :—You have seen that car. You know our guarantees and the price. What do you think?  
Prospective Buyer :—If only I had seen it 25 years back, I might have thought it roomy.

# COMING EVENTS

by  
Deisvi

It is said that coming events cast their shadows before. He is a wise person who guesses from a study of the shadows the nature and extent of the approaching event. Though Mr. Saptarishi sniffs and suspects, yet, even he finds himself not infallible—*Biditor*.

**Place:**—Verandah adjoining an open-terrace on the second-floor of a house in Thambu Chetty Street. It is a spacious verandah carpeted and elaborately furnished. A stair-case to the right leads on to the verandah while a door-way to the left opens into the bed-room and other rooms beyond.

At one corner of the open terrace is a water-closet. On the parapet walls are potted-croton plants.

A solitary electric light dimly lights the verandah. A pale moon of the first-quarter faintly illuminates the open terrace.

In the verandah, on a table, is a plate containing luscious apples, oranges and bananas. Near this plate is another containing nut, betel leaves and flowers. A silver-stand in which is struck numerous incense-sticks is also on the table and the smoke issuing therefrom fills the verandah with a pleasant aroma.

Somewhere below a switch clicks and suddenly the verandah is ablaze with light. Sound of ascending footsteps is heard at right, over the stair-case, and presently Mr. Saptarishi enters. He sniffs the air and looks bewildered. He goes to the table and expresses surprise at the sight of fruits and flowers. He takes an apple, sniffs at it and lays it down. He takes an orange, sniffs again and replaces it also on the plate. He sniffs at the incense stick-stand and finally with a shrug, picks up a newspaper and drops into a chair. Fumbling in his pockets, he takes out his glasses, wipes them, puts them on, spreads out the newspaper, leans back and begins to read. A child starts crying somewhere in the adjacent house and keeps on crying. Mr. Saptarishi throws down the paper in disgust.

MR. S.:—Boyee! (Voice somewhere down below, "Coming, master!")

(Enter Boyee)

MR. S.:—Shut that window!

BOYEE:—But, master.....

MR. S.:—SHUT—THAT—WINDOW!

BOYEE:—Amma said all windows must be kept open hereafter.

MR. S.:—I say that all windows—no—that window must be shut, now!

BOYEE:—As master pleases! (Boyee shuts the window and is about to leave.)

MR. S.:—Boyee!

BOYEE:—Aiyah!

MR. S.:—Has amma come?

BOYEE:—No, master.

MR. S.:—Where has she gone?

BOYEE:—She went in a car.

MR. S.:—I asked where.

BOYEE:—I don't know.

MR. S.:—You know nothing! Go away! (Exit Boyee)

(Mr. S. again attempts to read, but the child's cries have grown louder. He throws the paper away and goes out on the terrace and looks over the wall into the adjacent house-top. Enter Mrs. Saradha Saptarishi. She is dressed elaborately and her face is flushed and beaming with pleasure. She looks around the verandah and frowns.)

MRS. S.:—(Turning towards the stair-case) Boyee! You said your master was here!

MR. S.:—(From the terrace) Yes, I am here.

MRS. S.:—Oh! How silly of me! What are you doing there in the open terrace? You will catch a cold.

MR. S.:—Where have you been? I couldn't read a line because of that child's howling in the next house. I asked the Boyee to shut the window but that brat could howl through a fort-wall. I wonder what will put an end to...

MRS. S.:—Sh! Don't say harsh things about babies.

MR. S.:—(Coming into the verandah and dropping into a chair) Why indeed?

MRS. S.:—There are reasons.

MR. S.:—Let me hear them—one by one, or all together.

MRS. S.:—All in good time. Had you your meal?

MR. S.:—Look here! What is all this fuss about? Instead of a cold meal, the cook spreads out a feast. I ask him why and he says it was you who ordered the revel. Fruits here, smoke all round, you in gala dress—what is the idea? And where have you been?

MRS. S.:—To mother's place.

MR. S.:—Anything special over there?

MRS. S.:—No.

MR. S.:—Why then the glad rags?

MRS. S.:—Don't you like them?

MR. S.:—Sure I do and you too, of course. But why so grand a dress just to see your mother?

MRS. S.:—I wanted to tell her something special. It is great news.

MR. S.:—Is it a great secret also?

MRS. S.:—Yes—in a way.

MR. S.:—There used to be a saying that women can never keep secrets.

MRS. S.:—You ought not to say anything uncomplimentary about women. From now on, you must be careful in your thought, action and speech,—I must be kept in a pleasant frame of mind.

MR. S.:—Must?

MRS. S.:—Yes. Must. Scrupulously. Else, things will miscarry.

MR. S.:—Miscarriage! Let me see! Are you by any chance saying that you hope to present me with a son and heir in the near future?

MRS. S.:—Yes: but it will be a daughter.

MR. S.:—How do you know?

MRS. S.:—I feel that way. Call it intuition, sixth sense, whatever you like.

MR. S.:—Absurd! I suppose I can also feel, intuit and own a sixteenth sense. If there is going to be a child in the house, let us make it a boy.

MRS. S.:—A boy cries lustily. A daughter pipes delightfully. That child there, in the next house, is a boy and see how he cries and tries your temper.

MR. S.:—Stop! Don't you compare my boy with that nuisance! My boy, if heredity is going to have any say in the matter, will be a strong, silent chap. Years of married life has made me forget the use of my larynx. He will inherit the tendency. Make no mistake about it!

MRS. S.:—Are you insinuating that I do all the talking in this house?

MR. S.:—You said a mouthful.

MRS. S.:—I told you just now that I must always be kept in a pleasant frame of mind. And you are insulting me and making me cry. It is bad for my girl-baby.

MR. S.:—Don't be absurd! It will be a boy!

MRS. S.:—Certainly not! I would love to have a girl.

MR. S.:—You are not the betting kind. Otherwise, I would lay you 10 to 1 it will be a boy.

MRS. S.:—...And when I was going in the car, I thought of all the names by which we could call the baby. I have hit upon a great one! We will call the baby, Saroja-Kantha.

MR. S.:—Don't! Parents have a great responsibility in naming their progeny. Look at me! Every minute of my life, I am regretting my name. In my school-days when the Monitor used to call-out from the attendance register "Saptarishi!", invariably a wag would answer, "Only one here and he too not a rishi" or "Six absent" or things to that effect. In the club, they pun on "Saptha" and call me Mr. Sound and Shadow—and the inference, of course, is that I signify nothing. Sakuntha-Roja indeed!

MRS. S.:—Saroja-Kantha, not Sakuntha-Roja! Don't you see, I have coined a great name in which you can find Sarojini and Kanthi, two of the greatest patriots of the mother-land.

MR. S.:—Shout for that cook! The heavy meal has raked up a mighty thirst.

MRS. S.:—I have some iced sherbet inside. Let me get you a glassful. (Exit into the room at left)

MR. S.:—Iced Sherbet! What else?

(Enter Mrs. S. with glass full of amber-coloured liquid which she hands-over to Mr. S. The glass falls down and breaks, scattering the contents all over the carpet.)

MRS. S.:—That is ominous!

MR. S.:—Silly! I suppose tumblers will fall and glasses will break.

MRS. S.:—I shall get you another glass.

MR. S.:—No. Don't worry. I will go inside and draw from the source.

(Exit into the room at left. Mrs. S. proceeds to the water-closet on the terrace, opens the door and shuts herself in.)

MR. S.:—(Enters and looks round for his wife) Where has she gone?

[Mrs. S. opens the door of the closet, puts her head out and says.]

MRS. S.:—Call the Boyee!

MR. S.:—Why?

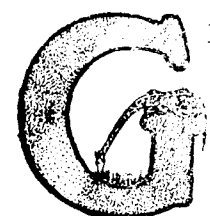
MRS. S.:—Call him—please.

MR. S.:—Alright! Boyee!—BOYEE! (Enter Boyee)

(Continued on bottom of page 496)

# ON GETTING DRUNK

(NEIL A' CANTEN)



GETTING drunk often reminds me of that worthy, Joe, for what he does not know about that art can be written on a finger-nail. The popping of corks is music to his ears and he can tell you the brand by the flavour. Joe believes that God created everything in the first six days and rested on the seventh to see if there was anything else that Joe might want. And then He remembered the brewery!

"How is your cough?" asked a Scots professor of one of his pupils. "It is getting worse, sir," was the reply. "Ah" gloated the professor, "let it get worse and worse, and at last let it die." The effect of drink on Joe at least, has got worse and worse until it is completely dead. Joe will tell you that he arrived at such a state through an interminably long probation, of which he has only a faint remembrance of policemen, lamp-posts, gutters and asphalt roads the tail-light of a disappearing car which wanted to occupy the same space as Joe did, and a bed in a hospital.

The strongest liquor is as harmless as lemonade inside his stomach, and he can address a Temperance meeting after a dozen glasses of Johnnie Walker. No anaesthetist can drug him with chloroform and if a cobra were to bite Joe, my anxiety would be entirely for the cobra. Poor thing! It would spread its hood and begin to dance on its tail. 'The snake it was that died,' and the verdict—death due to alcoholic poisoning. I remember an evening when a friend of Joe who had backed a winner took Joe for a booze. Poor fellow! He never knew that to stand Joe a drink was like inviting the Mikado into your house. Joe's friend poured out a modest two



.....a faint remembrance of policemen, lamp-posts, asphalt roads, the tail-light of a car.....

pegs into each of the tumblers. Joe got furious, leaned back in his chair and folding up his eyelids with his fingers, asked his friend to pour a peg each into his eyes! The poor fellow was wise enough to take the hint and by the time he had called the night off with Joe, he regretted he had backed a winner. On another occasion, Joe and I were returning from a week-end picnic at Pondicherry. Joe was a regular reservoir of liquor and was carrying two bottles as stepney. At the frontier, the excise official was asking for trouble and got it. Joe coolly broke the bottles on the rack. "To your health!" he says to the excise official, "I am writing a thesis on 'French Possessions in India'" and Joe's inside received the contents of the two bottles, and signalled an acknowledgement in the form of a hiccup. The face of the customs official was a study. That is Joe. He can easily put himself half a dozen glasses down in any drinking bout. The fellow who can coolly store up a dozen glasses in his inside, and like Oliver Twist still ask for more, is my hero.

The first time I got anything like tight, was during a cricket match. I had mercilessly flogged the bowling all the morning, and piling up a decent total had remained 'not out' during lunch. When I had pushed off the last plate and lighted my cigarette after lunch, the wily fast bowler, whose averages I had spoilt that morning, walked up to me.

"Congrats, old chap," he said ingratiating himself into my favour, "what about a glass of shandy?"

A nice invitation as it was, I smelt a challenge in it. If there is onething the Neilish blood cannot brook, it is a challenge. And it was too late to begin scattering blots on the Neilish escutcheon.

"Game!" said I to the bowler. "Knew you were a sport," he smiled and drawing me to another room ordered a shandy.

I do not know how many glasses I was the worse for, when my skipper ferretted me out. Some of the oaths he gave expression to, when he saw me in that state, were quite new and inspiring, I remember. "And if you happen to see three balls at a time," the skipper sent out the parting shot when I was leaving the pavilion "mind, you hit the middle one." I took up my position at the crease, and looked round to survey the field. The umpires looked like two stout Johnnie Walkers in gowns, the bowler was twisting himself till he resembled a corkscrew. The bat in my hand looked like a beer bottle and the ball was a live mutton chop. I faced the first over after lunch. The fast bowler sent down an express; and now that I come to think of it, the skipper was right. For I saw three balls breaking from the bowler's arm as pigeons from cover. One broke to the off, the other to the leg and the third was flying straight at my wicket. I swung my bat for all that I was worth and had a go at the middle ball. But it was not with my middle bat! There was a curious sensation near my shins under the pads, eleven stentorian voices shouted something like 'Houzat,' and the Johnnie in the gown at the bowler's end had raised his finger at me. Out I b.w.; and as I was walking back to the pavilion the bowler bloke grinned from ear to ear and said something to the effect that everything was fair in love and in war. If that is the blighter's view on war and love, and if that is how he wins a match, let him give me his girl's address, and he shall rue it the livelong day. Yes, that was my first experience of getting drunk, and fancy—on shandy! But no one can make me shed my wicket by getting me 'tight' now. William Tell, sober, can cleave an apple with a shaft at a hundred yards' range, I admit. But he cannot, when he is drunk, drive a cricket ball to the off, for a clean four, when it is perched on the mouth of a beer bottle without spilling the contents. I can!

To be friends with Joe and not drink is as impossible as that a powder-magazine should remain safe with a fuse in it. One evening, I had accompanied Joe to a bar and Joe had ordered for his 'thimbleful'. When about four glasses of strong whisky had changed places, Joe began to wear down my defences.

"Come on, laddie, don't be a spoil-sport. Just have a glass. Fancy your going to heaven or the other place and being chucked out for a further lease of life by St. Peter. Or is it that bloke Chitragupta, the chartered accountant, who audits our vices and virtues? And all

because you haven't exploited all the experiences of life. Now take me as your model. I have already booked my berth in heaven. I have climbed the heights and fathomed the depths, and if life is a series of experiences, Lord God, I have lived it in full." Joe was waxing eloquent but finding me adamant, changed his tactics.

"Laddie," he whined, "we were at school together. Besides I saved your life once."

"No" I protested, "you didn't."

"Doesn't matter," Joe convinced himself. "It must be somebody else's then. Oblige a friend. Noblesse oblige, the motto, you know. Would you let a pal down?"

Now if I hate anything, it is letting a pal down. My barriers were down in a trice and Joe shouted for another bottle. The cork popped, the blood-red juice foamed into the tumbler and with a faintly-whispered 'For Friendship's Sake' was I baptised at the font of Bacchus.

"Don't drain the glass at one gulp," advised Joe. "One would think you are a kiddie gulping down castor oil; Sip it gently 'as if appetite had grown by what it fed on,' punctuating every mouthful with a mutton chop or an omelette. The fellow that quaffs the whole stuff at one gulp is no artist. He is like the boor who finishes a whole cigarette at one ravenous whirlwind puff. He has missed the subtler points of the art."

I followed Joe's advice and by the time I had finished my first glass, I could feel the juice coursing down my veins. I seemed to be shut up in a house on fire with no exits. But I was far from inebriated and I got up to leave when Joe shouted for another bottle.

"Count me out," I said. "I have had enough."

"Don't be silly," said Joe, "the fellow that stops with the first glass is a fool. Why, good whisky was never intended as a lubricant for the throat. If you had wanted only a gargle, there are better things that would have served the purpose than good whisky. No, laddie, that talk about the cup that cheers but does not inebriate is all bunkum, take it from me. If you taste a drop, get drunk like a man; that is the opinion of yours obediently."

That was only reasonable, I admitted. Joe can talk sense; and so I shared the next bottle with him. I knew that every glass I emptied raised me in Joe's estimate, and when the contents of the third glass had gone the way of the rest, Joe could not conceal his admiration. "Laddie," he exclaimed, "I am proud of you. I would put my last pie on you. You are the sort that



.....carrying two bottles as stepney.

wins your Blue in the first match. Now say 'The steam boiler burst' he added with a twinkle in his eye. "No, Joe," I protested. "I am not drunk, really," and lighting our cigarettes, we sailed forth into the streets. I was feeling really great and brave. I would have won the Battle of Waterloo then, challenged Carnera for a fifteen round contest, or assayed to stop an X.B. locomotive when it was dashing down an incline.

The gentle breeze in the streets fanned us into the seventh heaven. Talk of the opium-eater's dreams! They are but flimsy webs beside the sensation you experience when you get drunk. Taxis and trams were playing hide and seek and missed us by the proverbial coat of paint. The lights dispersed themselves into various beams. The lamp-posts looked like policemen and the asphalt roads seemed to be dancing to the tune of a slow-moving orchestra. The fellow that said that the earth was spinning like a top, must have made that discovery when he was one over the eighth. My feet seemed to be executing an unconscious foxtrot. The floor looked like the ceiling, and like Cortez's men I stared in wild surmise at some stars that are beyond even astronomy's ken. I grew oratorical and began to orate. But the funniest part of the whole experience was that I know that I was drunk, that I was talking rot, and that my agents of locomotion were none too steady. I knew all this and still I could not help it. All the while Mr. Hyde was behaving like a drunkard, Dr. Jekyll was having the laugh at him. Aristotle was considered the wisest of men, because he was the only man who knew he was ignorant. I was sober because I knew

that I was drunk. It was pretty late in the night when I fell asleep and lost all interest in the proceedings.

Two beings I envy and no third. First, the rat that was drowned in a pot of toddy and next, the Yankee who was drowned in the New York gutters that day America went 'wet'. I don't mind confessing it, I like to get royally drunk once in a way. He that meets me on such an occasion will see no confounded 'tot', I assure you, but one who cannot vouch for what he does and says. I am dead drunk, I speak parrot, squabble, swagger, swear and discourse fustian with my own shadow.

You, reader, are perhaps one of those who say 'get thee behind me, Satan' to a beaker of the warm South 'with headed bubbles winking at the brim and purple-stained mouth,' or perhaps you belong to the rival camp of my friend Joe, who considers a dozen glasses of strong whisky as 'a thimbleful of diluted water.' In either case, you have missed the joy of life. Now I am no prude; I flatter myself that I am an Epicurean in the matter of living, and I like to get royally drunk once in a way. I admire my Spartan courage to stop it at that. To shun temptation is cowardice. There are temptations which need Herculean courage to succumb to. The true hero allows himself to be tempted, falls and then fights and masters the temptation. That way lies courage and greatness.

"Bo—oy! Get me a whisky-and-soda, and don't be too liberal with the soda." It is Joe calling, and the Neilish throat is thirsting for a drop of something stronger than a lemonade!

(Continued from page 493)

MR. S.:—(Pointing out the broken glass) Clear this mess!

MRS. S.:—(From the closet) No. No. Boyee! Get ready the front-room. Sweep the floor and take a bed-spread and pillow there. Ask the cook to keep inside the room my silver cup and *chombu* full of water.

BOYEE:—*Antu*, amma?

MR. S.:—Say—are you—

MRS. S.:—Yes.

MR. S.:—But how the devil—I mean this Saroja business.....

MRS. S.:—It was 45 days. I thought...

MR. S.:—The devil you did. Iced Sherbet, fruits and flowers! What a waste of money!

MRS. S.:—(Petulantly) You have always been a miser!

MR. S.:—May be: yet mated to a fool.

MRS. S.:—You are calling me a fool. (She comes out of the closet crying and proceeds towards the stair-case).

MR. S.:—Cry on! It is another frame of mind.....  
(Baby in the next house starts another bout of crying.)

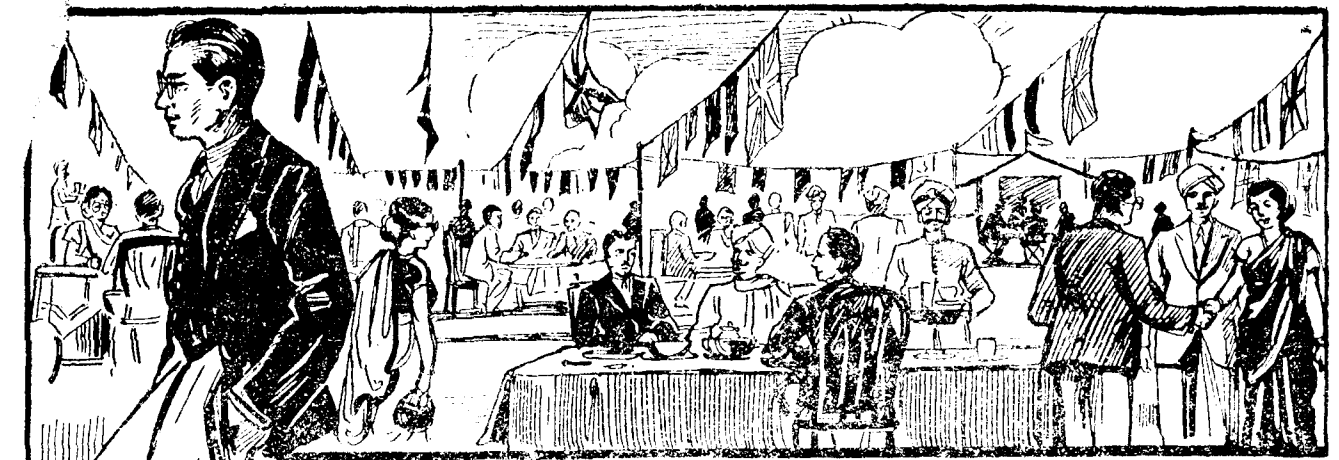
MR. S.:—...and there is accompaniment to your music!

MRS. S.:—(With one foot down the steps) The Gods are wise! I wish that child would cry all night and lustier than ever. You hate children and you will never have any!

MR. S.:—Thanks for the prophecy!

(And as he moves forward, he steps barefooted on a sharp piece of glass and executes a Zulu war dance. Mrs. S. vanishes down the stair-case with a titter).

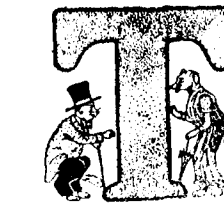
CURTAIN.



## DAMODARAM ON GARDEN PARTIES

(N. SUBRAHMANYAM)

In this delightful article the author continues to describe Damu's views on certain social amenities.



THE earliest local post next morning brought me a decent sized invitation card issued by the Committee of Hosts. By a look at the crammed list of names printed on the back of the card, I believe there were about fifty hosts. There were many well-known names of public men of Madras and I rejoiced to learn about the extreme popularity of my friend Damodaram. The Committee of Hosts had great pleasure in requesting my presence at the function to be held in honour of Rao Sahib Damodaram at Goschen Gardens on the 25th June at 5-15 p.m. There was printed "R.S.V.P." to Mr. K. K. Chettiar at the left corner, the meaning of these mystic letters puzzled my rural brains not a little. I consulted a dictionary, took a postcard and was writing on it:

To

K. K. Chettiar Avl.,  
Dum-Dum House,  
Adyar, Madras.

Madras, dated 23rd June, 1933

Dear Sir,

I thank you very much for the kind invitation you have been good enough to send me and I will not certainly deny the good Committee of Hosts that share of pleasure, however small, which they hope to derive by my presence.

Yours sincerely,

I signed the message and was blotting the card on, when I felt somebody patting on my back gently. On pinning round, whom should I see but my dear friend,

Damodaram "Don't be frightened, my dear chap," said he, "I just dropped in to see if you had your invitation. I phoned up the secretary yesterday, but I wasn't sure he would remember it." "It is quite all right, Damu," I replied, "I have also written a postcard accepting the invitation" and I tossed the postcard on to him.

"This is quite funny, coming from a headmaster. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Damu. "I would not be surprised if you interpreted 'R.S.V.P.' into 'Refreshments served very punctually.' Anyway, confined in a country school so long, your ignorance is excusable. The correct style of accepting an invitation should be: 'Mr. Shankar thanks the Committee of Hosts for their kind invitation and has much pleasure in accepting the same.' Mind you, there is no signature." "In what grammar do you find these directions?" I asked somewhat surprised. "In the grammar of social functions," said Damu jokingly "Form and etymology conform to conventions—well, take it from me, that is the approved way of doing things." I succumbed to his superior knowledge in these matters and uncomplainingly incurred an additional expenditure of nine pies for re-writing a reply on a fresh postcard.

"What is this Committee of Hosts?" I asked Damodaram as ignorantly and innocently as a schoolboy. "Do they all subscribe for the expenses of this function?"

"Look here, Shankar," spoke Damodaram in a school-master-like manner. "There are some secrets which public men will not even whisper into a hole dug into the earth, lest some reed may grow therefrom and broadcast the buried words. You are my bosom pal and there is no harm in telling you, provided you inter it in your memory and seal it with a sacred vow not to let it out."

"If you do not trust me so much," I said tauntingly, "let your secrets observe gosha in your political mind."

"Be not offended, old chap, I am only asking for some safeguards lest there may be occasions, when whispers travel too far and suspicion may hound the source of betrayal. You may take it that in my case, which is exceptional, the move for feting me is spontaneous. I was spoken to, phoned up and persuaded by persons, whose request to refuse I always feel as sinful. Everyone in this committee is quite sincere and vie with one another to be as liberal as possible. I suggested to them that instead of wasting a few thousand rupees on cakes, fruit salads, variety entertainments and fire-works, it would be far more acceptable to me, if a few beggars were fed or the aggregate sum donated to a philanthropic or educational institution. No. They would not hear me. They are infatuated. Fetes and fire-works seem to be the safety-valves of pent-up admiration." "From what you say," I interrupted, "there appears to be an implication which is not quite savoury."

"Yes, I am coming to that. In many cases, the chief guest himself suggests to his admiring friends to get up a congratulatory function in his honour and if he is rich enough, may even debit the whole expenditure to his account. Probably in very rare cases he may even induce his friends to get interested in the projected function by offering them small accommodations by way of handsome cheques to enable them to free themselves from accidental domestic embarrassments and to devote their whole attention to the proper conduct of the function. If your chief guest is poor or miserly, he will seek some obliging rich friend or one bound to him for some past obligation or looking for some future help, to spend for the entertainment in his honour. Generally about half a dozen hosts in that august committee bear the financial burden. In an epidemic of social functions, their contributions may not be quite liberal and, if any deficit should arise, the chief guest may supply it. Subscription-collecting is an art. A friend of some status and integrity to whom it would be impossible to say "no", would bring in better collections than an amiable drudge circulating by sufferance on the surface of society. Whether the subscription collector is agreeable to meet or not, his frequent visits could not be decently prevented otherwise than by a cheque-leaf torn from the book. Some may pay their donations at once and avoid further visits of the subscription collector, but many prefer the instalment system in the pious hope that if the resources on hand balance the budget, they may be absolved from further liabilities. The rest of the hosts serve as ballast to infuse respectability to the function and they are put in for their titles or big purses or official or social positions. They may be first put in and their consent afterwards obtained on the 'phone. But there are some who will crave to be put in for the pride and pleasure of being in the company of illustrious hosts.

"The Committee of Hosts generally do not take much effort to make the function a success. This is delegated to a few habitual drudges, and by adroitly exploiting on their obliging nature, things get on smoothly. Of course, there are usually volunteers, whose aspiration

to be in lime-light is intense, and who are seen over-active in these functions, looking busier than they really are. They give as much help to the hosts as the clown in the circus gives to the servants rolling up mats and carpets.

The matter of issuing invitations requires skill and experience and also a knowledge of the correct form of addressing guests, especially the married European guests. The elite of Madras are to be found in diaries, directories and club-rolls, commencing from His Excellency the Governor to the latest "Rao Sahib" still in the kindergarten of the University of Pune. Each host, mostly non-paying hosts, would like to invite his friends, flatterers, admirers, sycophants and panderers. One or two may go even to the extent of getting invitations issued to Mr. & Mrs. X—because Mr. X is fortunate enough to have a good-looking wife. There are uninvited guests also, who willynilly haunt these functions like flies. They would beat their legs and wings and buzz incessantly until they get an invitation. They are dauntless to a marvellous degree. They refuse to be put down. Even if they are flatly refused an invitation, they would nevertheless comply with R. S. V. P. and write to the secretary thanking him for the kind invitation sent to them and would with pleasure attend the function. And they would turn up, sure, a little before time in tweed suits and suave smiles and might even have the effrontery to receive the distinguished guests at the gate and manoeuvre to wedge in between illustrious guests facing the press camera.

"By the bye," I interrupted, "is there any dress regulation in these functions?"

"Certainly not. There are prescribed strappings for Government functions, but in these entertainments it is left to your taste and good manners. You may come in your dhoti and your incontrovertible turban. The perpetual guest in all functions always keeps a good tweed suit, well-brushed and neat, ready for such occasions and he would alight gracefully from the car of an obliging friend and saunter along with his bland smiles and complacent looks. He may desire to rub his shoulders with some high dignitary, who goes about strutting like a peacock scattering smiles to right and left, front and back, with a divine condescension natural only to such eminent souls. He would wait patiently and be on the alert to be by the side or at the feet of the august person at the time the photograph is taken, and if by chance he is far away, he would run as if for life and panting thrust his face in the group, that a portion of his upper anatomy may be immortalised. So did amber in prehistoric days preserve both the butterflies and flies!

"I am overpowered with these revelations," I exclaimed, "why then do you desire to drag me to witness this refined tom-foolery of human vanity and baseness?"

"Because headmasters must have knowledge of Man, fully. The proper study of man is Man. What you heard from me will only prepare you for the Entrance Examination, but you must undergo direct course for your degree."

"Well, Damu, your description has dulled my appetite." "But it will return after the first course. This leads me on to talk of the programmes. In my function you will have both Indian and European catering of refreshments though it is considered more dignifying to leave the whole catering to Messrs. Swallow and Suffer, whose pastries and cakes do not bring stomach-aches and whose salads and creams are beyond a glutton's dreams. They charge moderately even for immoderate eaters and service is prompt and liberal, in sunshine or rain. Many guests bring a good appetite with them and after fruit-salads and ice-creams they may start *encore* with seed cakes and sponge cakes. It is only the ultra-fashionable dyspeptics of the centre table, who sit admiring the flower vases and table napkins pretending to bite a cake or sip the tea-cup.

"Shankar, do come and see all this tamasha, this merry-go-round. You will have an opportunity of meeting forgotten or forgetting acquaintances and friends, who may even there be kind enough to wish you cordially "Hullo! Shankar—glad to meet you," but wondering all the time who the devil invited a rustic to high society. Well, if you are tired of greetings, smiles, simpers and

such refinements, you can go alone and unobserved to the various entertainments and entertain yourself. You have a fat buffoon performing stale tricks to an audience of servers and chauffeurs; there is an orchestra of Indian musical instruments admired only by the performers; there is a girl-guide dance where at last you see a respectable audience punctuating the performances with applause. There is a fancy dress parade of satanic beggars, rickshaw-coolies and such other edifying exhibits not usually seen in this part of the world. If all these do not please you, wait for the rockets and fire-works dissipating money in coloured flame and smoke. And if even these tamashas do not stir you, why, you are carved of granite stone and nothing will animate you in this world."

"I am very thankful to you, Damu, for your description but it is getting late for my breakfast. Shall we part now to meet again at your function?"

"Yes, I am sorry, but I believe I have given you a full course to obtain your degree."

"Thank you. I will attend the Convocation on Saturday."

## THE PRESSING CREDITOR

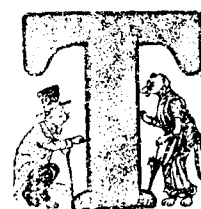




## A BACHELOR'S COMPLAINT

(V. GANAPATHI.)

.....Shares the lovers' path.....Head at an angle of elevation.....



which he has treated.

I shall not prolong my introduction or discussion of relative merits. "Comparisons are odious." Epic poets and great writers have successfully adopted the prescribed method of "*In medias res*," and I shall follow their lead.

So, to take you then right into the middle of things, I am a bachelor. Why do you sneer? It is not a sin to be a bachelor, nor a shame. Every one of us was at one time or another, a bachelor.

Men marry young, they marry when they become men, and some marry when old. Youths long to marry, men have to marry, and the good old souls (if widowers, of course) like to marry. The lot that makes the matrimonial game an easy affair is the last-mentioned; for there are no financial considerations butting in into the bargain.

I had friends, not a few. We were a happy 'Bachelors Union'. That was four years back. But now, every one of them is married, except me. Is it a matter of delight for me to realise that I am free while they have all become encumbered? Or am I to feel sorry that I have not been blessed with that mated life? I have not been able all these days, to come to any definite conclusion. Yet this is sure, that I feel quite contented and happy.

One's friends should all be bachelors. Else, mortifications are many that one may have to encounter.

The display of married happiness straight before your eyes is nothing but a flagrant and unqualified insult. I know I am a bachelor; I know I have not been a particular choice; I know I am not like them, happy in that conjugal

sphere; but it is enough that I know I am not. I do not want this perpetual reminding.

What joy beams on the faces of a new married couple! To them life is nothing but a bed of roses. To them each is all the world to the other. "Lord, they know not what they do."

You are a friend, a particular friend, having moved on great terms of intimacy with some individual, and he has married. If you still continue to visit him, I warn you, you are treading on dangerous ground. You stand a fair chance of being simply stared out of the house.

"Look, this is my first-born. Isn't he a darling? Hasn't he the marks of his parent's likeness?" asked my married friend, and extended the little, blinking brat towards me. Now, this was too much. I did not feel the least inclined for physiognomical study; at least the place and the context forbade any such venture. Maybe, a father has got his own pride and satisfaction at having made an addition to the population of our country—and that he may consider a 'national service.' But why on earth I should share in it, I do not see. On the other hand, I see excellent reason and opportunity to open up a decent outlet for my store of sympathetic feelings.

After all, what pride is there for a father over a child? How often do children turn out vicious, defeating the fond hopes of the parents? A rare object may excite in us a feeling of curiosity or longing to see it; but children are not uncommon. Every house swarms with them.

What kind of grown-up men and women are they going to be, who can tell? Numerous are the ways for men to take. Where is the guarantee that they will choose the straight but narrow path? Without their being either privy or party to the transaction, they have been ushered into this world of sin.

All children do not evoke feelings of admiration. For my part, I do not feel happy to see them. Instead of unalloyed pity, why should I feel happy at their sight? It is they that bring home to our realisation, the bitter truth that man is no more than a "piece of valiant dust."

Frankly, my sincere opinion is that children, as a whole, are a nuisance. A sweet baby is indeed the sweetest thing on the face of the earth, absorbing all our cares and anxieties in its own ignorant manner. But there are occasions when that sweetest thing creates in you, feelings that would normally have had no place in your mind, and almost tempts you to exhibit the splenetic part of your being. If you have not, I have, on many occasions, felt my hands itching impatiently to straight-away fling them up into the open air. I am exceedingly fond of sweet little babies, I may remark incidentally.

You can fondle a child, you can play with it, you can enjoy its pretty prattle; but I must observe, it is most unfair, to say the least, to be called upon to love a child because it is so engaging. I love a child or hate it according as I find cause for either.

If you do not fondle a child, you are set down for a cynic or a morose hater of children. If, on the other hand, you are by nature, lovingly disposed towards them, and so you fondle a child, either the mother wants to give it her attention, or some occasion is snatched to remove the child—for you spoil the child.

You marry—and your lot has been disposed of in this world. You have no more choice. You may have had a partiality towards your cousin and a keen desire to marry her—or Sarojini, your neighbour's daughter. But now, they must vanish entirely from your mind. No more hopes. Truly "wiving and hanging go by Destiny." What a happy pair of ideas, these two!

Most thoughtlessly, I called in one day, rather early in the morning, at my friend Kittu's. He greeted me, offered me a seat and went in. Near the kitchen-door could be seen his appealing face, in a plaintive pose, like a wanton school-boy awaiting admonition; and I could guess it was a humble enquiry whether it would be convenient for his wife to prepare a cup of coffee.

\* \* \*

The insult to Bachelors offered by those, who are just about to get into that holy state, is very sharp indeed. In their marriage invitations, they request the pleasure of the company of Mr. & Mrs. So-and-So, but the invitations that I receive always have the "Mrs." scored. Why put in and then score off? Is this not a mischievous hit? I construe it as one such, anyway.

A young man walks along the Marina in the company of a young lady (presumably his wife) with extreme complacency and head set at an angle of elevation, and the wife participates—as if all the world belonged to them. They smile at the poor "singles" that walk along. They consider it a trespass, if a third person shares the "lovers' path." Hand in hand, they march ahead and feel that that enjoyment is the be-all and end-all of human existence.

I do not complain that married people are happy. Let them, by all means, be, if they can. I do not complain that they are too self-important. I do not complain

that they deny the social freedom to Bachelors. But I do complain that they are far too insolent and derisive. They carry their self-sufficiency too far. I have chosen a phase of life. Whether wise or otherwise, it is for me to judge. Why poke their unwanted noses? Like the fed-up prophetess of old, I cry, "leave me, leave me, to repose."

Wide advertisement do I see of "Glaxo" and "Horlicks" for babies. What is it to me? And of "Feluna" for the Fair, and "Lodhra for Ladies"; what is it to me either? I don't bother in the least.

A girl or a lady may be fair, yet I am well. She may be beautiful, charming and lovely, yet I am well. She may be rich and virtuous, and yet I am well. For I am a confirmed Bachelor. I do not in the least, feel uneasy. Till this moment I am sane. May God preserve me in that excellent, happy condition.

Sometimes, I do deviate and muse on marriage. My face is not so bad as a necessary conclusion may appear to suggest. My looking-glass presents to me a decent pair of eyes, an aquiline nose and normal features, but of course, not that married expression. I am none the worse for lack of it, however.

Have you seen or heard of the most philanthropic set of people that offer their services to bring together two straying souls? If you have not, I tell you, there are some such. And the newspapers are also rendering unto humanity this most laudable service, and insert calls for "fair, beautiful, accomplished and educated virgin of rich and respectable family." How far these requirements can be fulfilled passes one's comprehension. Conditions are indeed too many to expect to be satisfied.

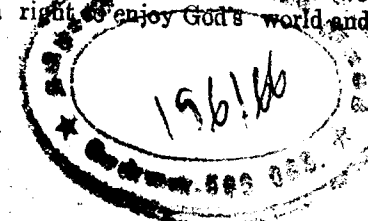
I may get an offer through these agencies, marketing for lawful disposal a poor, orphan virgin or a widow (if otherwise, there would be no need for their kind offices). But I hate second-hand goods of any description.

To be a Bachelor is a glory indeed. No worry, no doctor's bills, no market-going, no Birth Control; and above all no interference with your free-will.

There is a dignity in the term "Bachelor". That is why we say "Bachelor of Arts", "Bachelor of Laws" etc. Otherwise, if there is a dignity in being a husband or a wife, these degrees would have been "Husband of Laws", "Wife of Arts" etc.

This is my firm conclusion. You may beg to differ. But I must warn you beforehand, you may go on begging, I will never be moved. I will not budge an inch.

Anyhow, will you please do or cause to be done, something either in the Council or in the Assembly (this is not less important or useful a subject than any they deliberate upon or achieve) or through the Press or in any manner whatsoever, to make the married people behave themselves? Let them only realise that we Bachelors, have as much right to enjoy God's world and His gifts as they have.





# A FLIGHT Of Imagination.

(S. G. IYER)

People dream and as soon as they wake-up, sit down and write their dreams on reams and reams of paper using jars and jars of ink. The number of dream-narratives we receive per day is countless. But this one is different.—*Editor.*



ALL it childish or what you will, but I must confess to a long-standing thirst to get into one of those flying wonders—the aeroplanes they call them—and have a look at the world beneath me. My imagination staggered when I tried to form a picture of what I shall probably see from the dizzy heights—for like most men, who venture opinions on subjects they are innocent of, I too, failed in my endeavour to hazard an idea of what the world will look from on high, having never been up higher than the balcony of the lighthouse in the High Court. Joy rides I could not undertake, for want of filthy lucre; and kings and patrons of today do not easily clutch at the opportunity to finance an explorer into the ethereal regions. Gone are the days when expeditions were fitted out for the discovery of new lands and the originator contributed nothing but his brains while moneyed people found the wherewithal for it. But alas for the days that are not! "Let the dead past bury its dead."

But really, can I blame the well-to-do after all? So soon after the R101, is it kindness on their part to consent to my martyrising myself for nothing? Yes, but about themselves, their wives and children who are everyday tantalizing me by flying over my head? Well, they know best, the owners of aeroplanes and the wealthy, who can, but will not give me a joy ride.

At 10 p.m. yesterday, I lay in my bed, the desire to fly oppressing me more intensely than ever and after half

an hour's process of cogitation, at the end of which I was no wiser than before, I gave up the problem as unsolvable. My good friend, Mr. Sesha—Anna—Achari of the Madras Flying Club, had the kindness to invite me to a seat in his 'plane to keep him company on a world-tour he was projecting that day. I consented—not without a sense of genuine satisfaction, which however, I kept to myself. All my friend saw of me was the well-feigned look of reluctant acquiescence in a proposal which to all appearances, was undertaken on my part, more to oblige him than myself. Really, my friend's delay in obliging me with a lift had already piqued me.

We ran on the ground for a few yards—I mean the 'plane—and then shot up and the earth and its fixtures grew smaller and smaller. The cool breeze of the heights coupled with a sense of a satisfied desire made me feel perfectly at peace with myself and the world and filled me with a feeling of self-complacence and superiority over the poor antlike mortals we saw dotted in the leaden, prosaic earth below, wending their weary way. I was in ecstasy and my picture was certainly golden-hued. We flew the whole world over and I spoke to my friend thus as we went along.

"The old order changeth yielding place to new," said the immortal Poet Laureate of England, Lord Tennyson. His words are true for all time and never so much as now. The whole world is passing through the throes of a revolution in thought, word and deed. Behold! To him that hath eyes to see, a whole panorama is laid bare. The discoveries of modern science have been impressed into man's service to minister to his wants—

physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. Time and space are almost ignored. Distance does not count, nor do differences of race, language or country. There is an attempt at unification of the whole world. Men are tired of their differences, and warring nations have laid their arms at rest, and are busy spinning silken cords of love which shall bind them in unity for ever, and banish fell war from the globe. Violence as a means of settling differences has run its race and we are in the era of loved peace. It is the peculiar privilege of our sacred land that the two apostles of Ahimsa—the Religion of Love—Buddha and Gandhiji, are its sons. Students of the world's population are alarmed at the pace at which the human race progresses in numbers and are busy forging means to keep it in check.

The so-called lower classes, whether by caste as in India, or by calling as everywhere, are coming into their own. That labour is dignified, and no class of it, wrongly called low or mean, is really such, has been amply demonstrated by the power which labour could wield for the welfare or otherwise of a nation,—nay, of the whole world. Who could have contemplated a decade or two ago, the prospects of the destinies of the mighty British Empire being entrusted in the hands of the representative of the working classes? Nay, that a half-naked fakir could parley on equal terms with His Majesty himself, not to speak of his representative, is a *fait accompli* and the fakir strides the whole world like a Colossus not of strength or stature, but of love and truth, winning hearts wherever he goes and making converts of those, whose lower nature however would not yield without an unavailing attempt at resistance.

That East and West shall never meet seems to be a thing of the past. The Oriental belief in the permanence of souls, that they exist after death under conditions other than ours, and that "the grave is not its goal" is being realised and acted upon in England, France, America, and a host of other countries of the West.

"Religion and Science have met." One hears the thing said very often and naturally arises the question, "Were they ever apart?" They were all along there and have been striding the world like the twins of Siam, hand in hand—only men have like the proverbial six blind men of Hindustan, been at loggerheads with one another.

Lastly, woman is taking her proper place in the world. She is no more a slave to the physically stronger sex. She is, on the other hand, a much superior person with a broader heart and an equal, if not greater, power of the intellect than the male: she knows her rights but would fain sacrifice them for the benefit of man—he be husband, brother, son or father. The Queen of the home, the symbol of the Motherhood of God, she is extending her activities far beyond the limits of the four walls she has been believing to be her home. Today her home is the whole world and for it, work she shall. No picture nobler or grander than a woman with the true ideal of motherhood rendering service to humanity. In times of emergency, woman issues from inside her home, radiant and cheerful, a symbol of self-sacrifice. Hearth

or home, and domestic duties within the four walls are nought to her and she often wins where man fails. Alongside of a wave of materialism and Mammon worship sweeps another, stronger, intenser and nobler, which threatens, at any time to engulf the lesser and selfish one.

Peace and content appear to be what the world is out for, and the duty of the wise and the good is not to swim across the current, but along and be drafted to the "Heaven of Freedom" in which Dr. Tagore prays his country might awake. May we with the Rishis of old pray, "Lead me from the non-existent to the existent, from darkness unto light and from death to immortality."

My friend, who listened with rapt attention and astonishment, said: "I have flown so often over this world and never had I occasion to note all these things nor deemed you so wise. My friend, you are wise as a book. I wish we had some more rides when we could deal at length upon the various cryptic remarks of yours. Each is worthy of a volume running into hundreds of pages." "Gladly" said I, "that is what I call the triumph of insight over indifference" and with a look of triumph—I cannot vouchsafe for my friend's feelings—we landed. After a hurried expression of thanks to my friend, I got down from the 'plane and reached home, when lo! I awoke with a jump to the call of my faithful Big Ben at 5-30 a.m. to find that it was all a dream. There was no aeroplane, nor my friend of the aeronautic club. I found myself in my old familiar room on the third floor of the "Scientific Pharmacy" where I was staying.

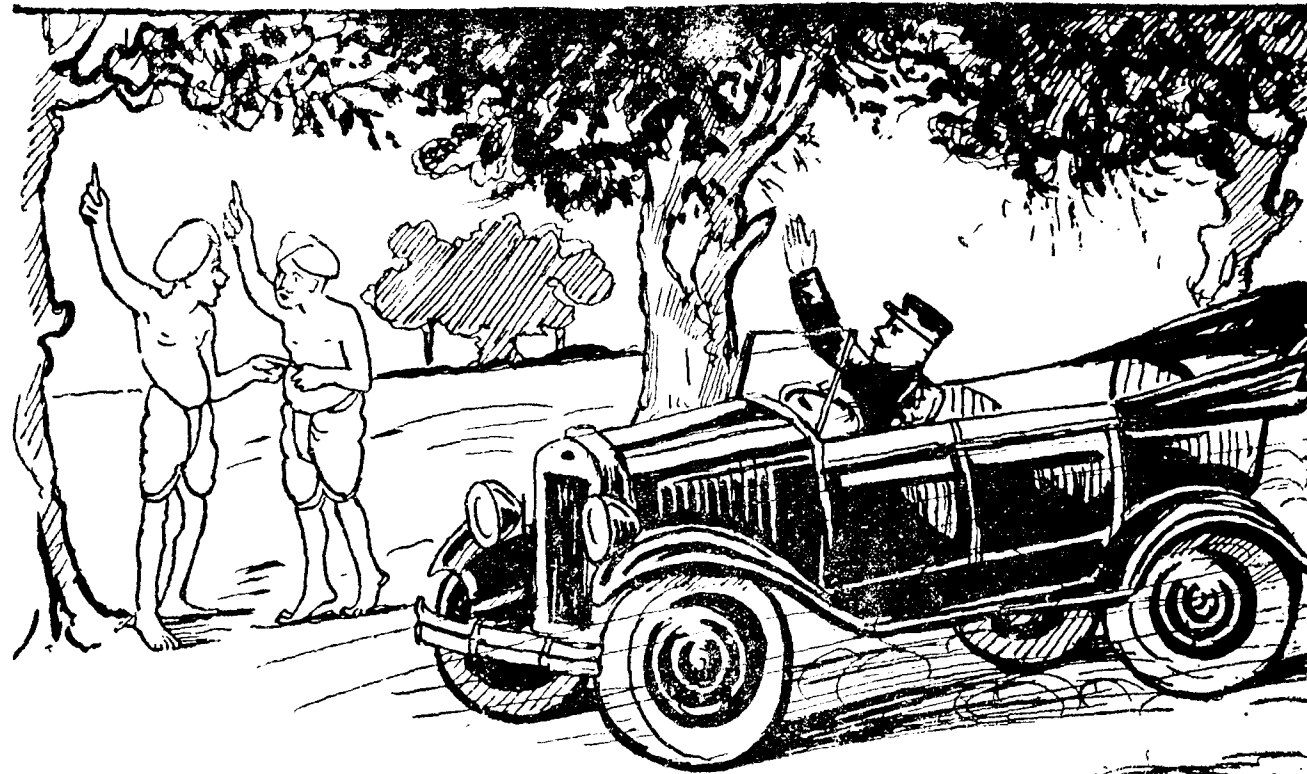
I can only claim the privilege of faithfulness to my dream as chronicle, and if there is not logical sequence, or paragraph arrangement or any such details, well, the only answer is that the routine red-tapism, which the grammarians and rhetoricians take pride in, is not "the stuff that dreams are made of."



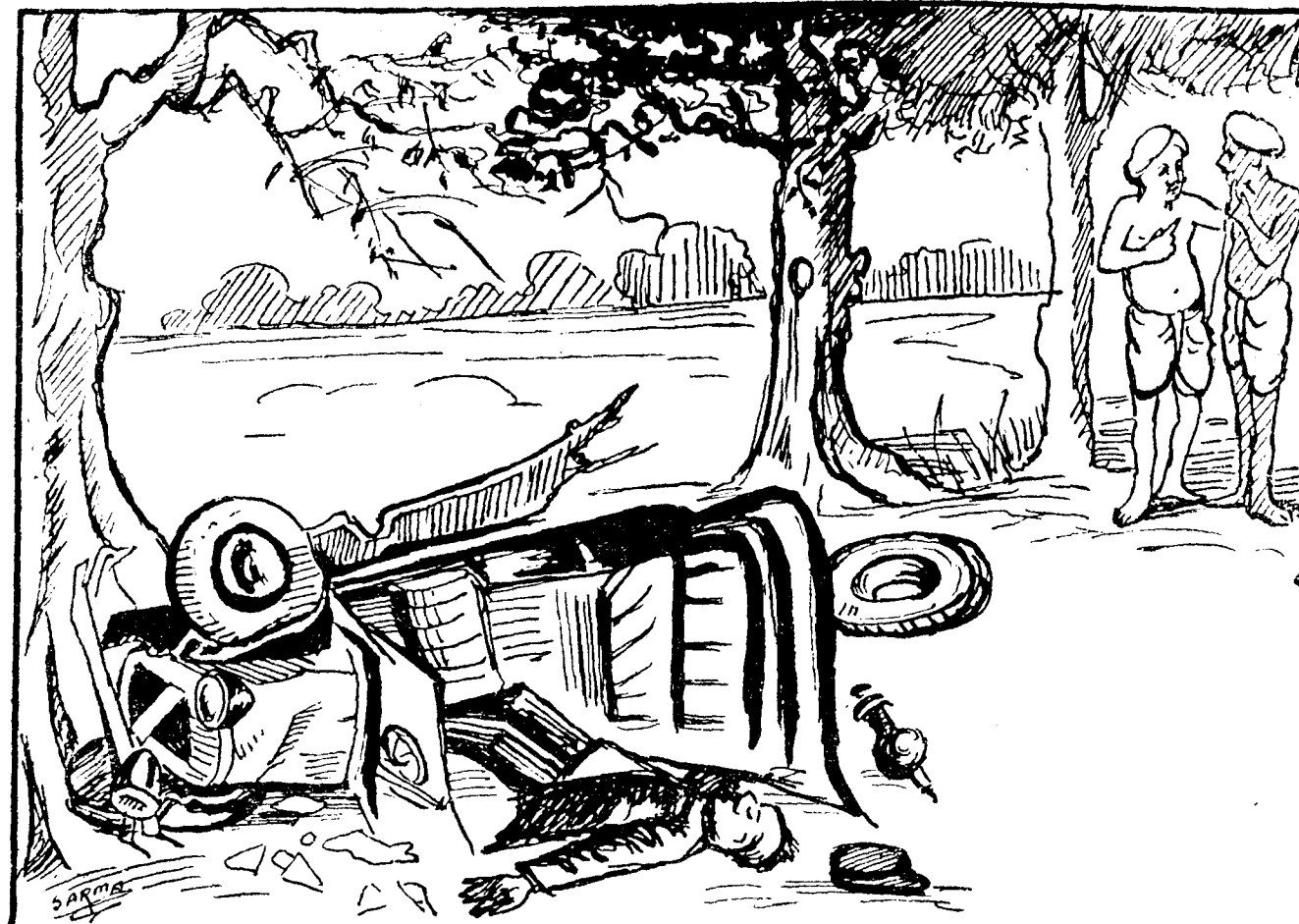
He:—"Darling, I have made-up my mind to stay at home."

She:—"Too late! I have made-up my face to go out."

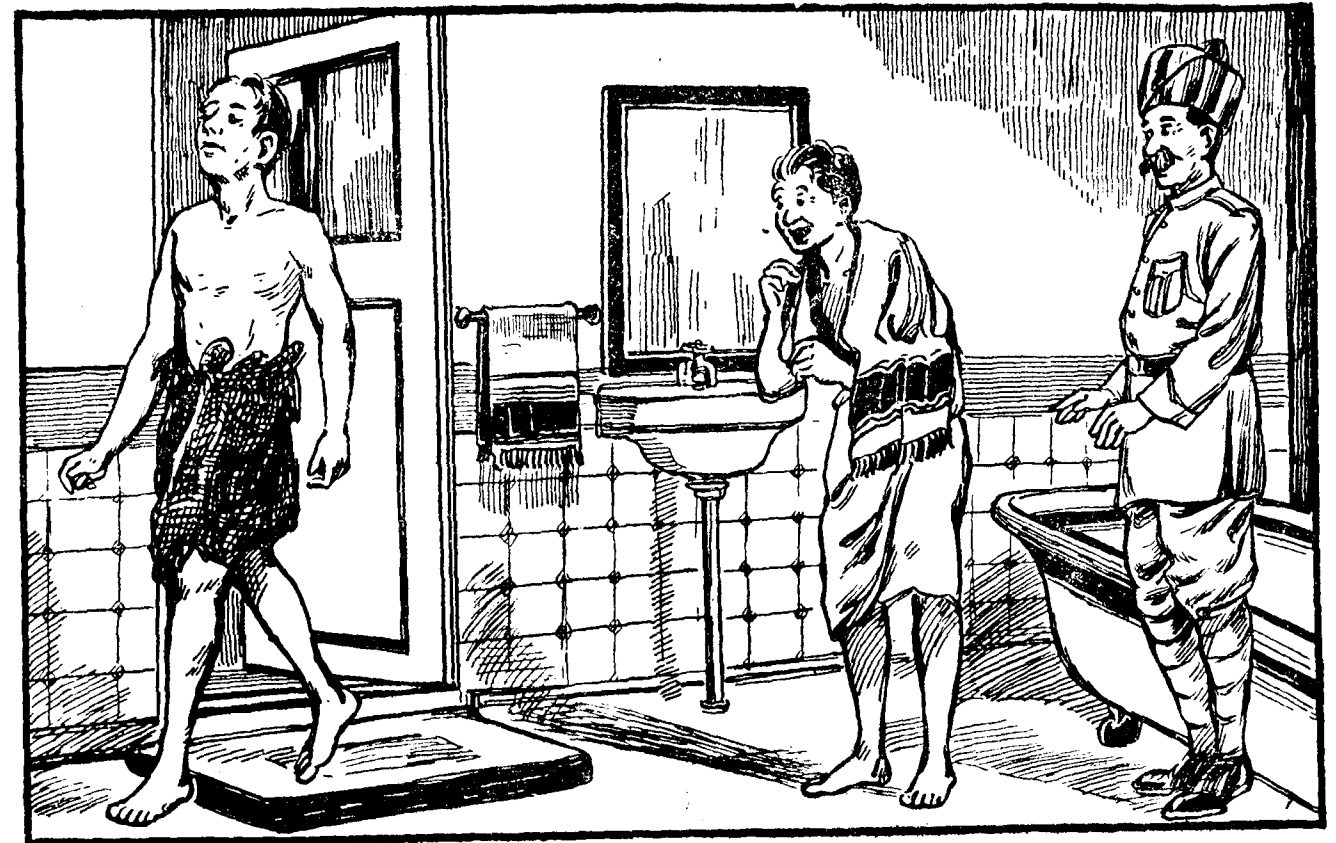
## A CORRECT PREDICTION!



1st Villager:—Why is that driver showing his hand up? Where could he be going, so fast?  
2nd Villager:—It looks as if he is going up—to Heaven!



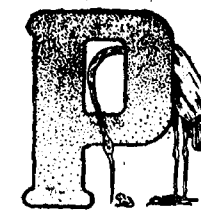
2nd Villager:—(after the accident) What did I tell you?



.....walked out like another John the Baptist.

## THE GHOST IN THE BATH TUB

(V.B. PRASAD.)



RACTICAL jokes are good, enjoyable things—in a way. But when a joke gets a bit too practical, as this one did, well, there is a call for the lid. Firmness and all that, you know.

This is how it happened. We will introduce the subject in the

Land of Liberty style.

The virgin moon peeping bashfully from over the eastern horizon of Madras. The much-too benevolent monarch of the tropics (honest Phoebus in simple English) very much red in the face, bestowing a jolly parting wink jointly on the coy satellite opposite and on the Eastern Hemisphere, from behind an ethereal glory of sable and gold, low down in the Western horizon. Feathered creation retiring for the day, rather noisily, as if they had too much illegal beer at some bootleg speakeasy. The hoarse yells of evil-smelling vendors of spurious wares in the yard of the Moore Market, filtered to a surging hum, by the distance. The last batch of play-intoxicated youngsters, homeward blithely bound. Villainous-looking rickshawwallahs persuasively poking the shafts of their crazy vehicles into the middle anatomy of unwary pedestrians.

Such the time, when myself fresh from the country, and my old friend, a city-bird with a flair for practical jokes, found ourselves at the edge of the water in the Park. The latter was my self-appointed guide in sight-seeing, and, as he called himself, master of the revels. The revels consisted of a series of bus and tram-rides, dodging that wonderful brotherhood with which Madras is specially blessed—the beggars—letting out as perspiration, enormous quantities of iced drinks and the master of the revels ogling second and third-hand ladies as occasion arose. That appears to be the city-meaning of revels.

"I vote for a laze-out on the water," my friend suggested through the nose.

"Splendid!" I agreed.

With an air of aristocratic boredom he fixed up a bilgy-tarry apology for a pleasure dinghy. We got in. I paddled some thirty yards in, and then let the tub ride, not at anchor, because there was none, but as it chose.

The confluence of two heavenly lights struggling against the gathering shadows, cast a romantic charm over the encircling vegetation. The time, the setting, were such, why, even the Senate House or Mr. Shaw would be cast into the sentimental mould. My friend, a ligneous buster, or if you don't know Greek, a prosaic chap, imme-

diately set to entertain himself, hanging monkeywise over the dirty water and blowing bubbles thereon with a reed. I, being composed of the aesthetic grain, to wit, the stuff that poets and philosophers are made of, was soon away in the stratosphere, in tune with the infinite.

A choking gurgle close at hand. I came toppling down to mundane vanities. My eye! A gargantuan waterfowl was forcing down its capacious gullet a prodigious fish, as fat as the boy of Dingley Dell, probably the first course of its belated lunch. The monster must be a tame atrocity of the Park, for it was making its horrid meal under my very nose, literally, as if nobody lived in the world except itself.

"Hi! Look! What a greedy devil!" I called the bubble-blower's attention. He was not interested. I turned round to see if he was still blowing away his absurd bubbles.

Spirit of my Great Grandma! What do I see! The bally boat was empty, but for me!

I did the open-mouthed business for full five minutes before I let out a yell, probably the loudest heard in that part of the solar system, and gave the world the first indication of the tragedy.

Awful thought! My poor friend gone into the water! I, so near, yet so far! To think of it was a physical pain—a sledge-hammer blow.

"What's the matter, sir?" yelled back the constable on duty at the water's edge.

"My friend slipped into the water," I whimpered.

"Have you searched the boat thoroughly?"

I am considered a star-swimmer down in my place. Impulsively, I dived down. It was not deep anywhere around. Just enough fluid for a clumsy idiot to drown himself in. Surely, my friend could not have kicked the bucket in such shallow water, without letting out at least half a whistle for help. But gone he was. I found no bloated body there, except the horrid scaly legs of the monster fowl aforesaid, and queer somethings bolting hither and thither in panic at my pressure amongst them. A few powerful strokes, and I gained the shore.

"What's to be done, Constable? Even an ass couldn't die in 6 feet of water, without a struggle at least."

"Aha! You don't know anything. It is in shallow water that people get drowned easily."

"But what's to be done? Something must be done, don't you agree?"

"Certainly, something must be done and will be done, depend on me. Well, then notify the police, wire to the deceased's ma or pa or somebody, follow that with a confirmatory, explanatory, condolatory yarn, trot home, have a nice bath, go to bed with (preferably) an empty inside and a baby conscience. There you are! You are not to blame."

A very brisk way of tendering advice, this! These city cops, and chaps are the limit, superlatively smart! Hats and caps and tarbooshes and if you can manage it, turbans off to them.

"Where is the nearest police thana?"

"Don't you bother yourself about thanas, sir, I am the Police. Limb of the Law, you know. Just hand us the story. And.....and.....that's all. Report developments."

I gave him the particulars of the tragedy and of the actor thereof.

"Can I do nothing beyond this, then?"

"Nothing that I can see. By the way, did you say that your friend was a hubby of the h. p. variety and that he had something on his....."

He didn't finish. He saw the ominous spark in my eyes, and bottled up. I clearly told the blamed fellow earlier in the proceedings that the late master of the revels was in bachelor-blessedness.

"No, I didn't" I barked, "A little water pressure yourself."

"No offence, sir, I am sure. G. may do information is part of a policeman's job. You say so, spend upon me. I will do all I can. If I might say, there is no use dragging the old pond. I am sure that cannibal of a waterfowl has him in his gizzard."

"Has what?"

"Eaten and digested your friend."

That's the limit. The fellow's sardonic humour was getting on my nerves which were hanging yards and yards out. I wanted an urgent outlet for my emotion. I was mentally weighing the consequences to myself if I soaked the blighter one on his bullet nut, rather more seriously than was exactly healthy for him. He must have sensed my thoughts. He wisely began to edge away. Being a law-abiding citizen, I thought better of it.

The telegraph office. I had a queer feeling of something loose somewhere. I couldn't immediately place it. My other self, the psychology fellows call it your subconscious self, registered a plump? Ah! that's it. Whom to wire? That's the riddle. The poor devil—no, the poor angel (let us speak respectfully of the departed)—had not a fraction of a relation this side of the grave, I mean the burning ghat. But wire I must, to somebody. That is certain as hell to Anti-Harijans. A death implies at least one telegraphic message. That is respectability, *post obit*. You don't say a fellow hopped off into the immensity of ever expanding space decently, if somebody was not wired to, do you? Of course not.

So, I set the wires buzzing with the tragic news. I wired to my grandmother.

The old lady wants to know to this blessed day why I wired to her at all and aggravated her dyspepsia. Where is the sense of it, who was that fellow to her, she says. Ah! she doesn't know the proprieties science has ushered in, since her flapper days, the old dear.

Sore in foot, heavy at heart, I reached home—the home that was but recently ringing with the poor angel's catching laughter. That police chap was right. I was in need of a bath. Casting off my soiled garments, I walked into the bath-room. Threw the towel at the wall abstractedly and switched on the light.

Stars of Heaven and Hollywood! The bath is tenanted!

"Bha! What if it is?" Some of you will say.

Softly, softly, my friends. You won't say that if you saw a ghost in your bath.

I saw a ghost!—the first in my life.

The ghost of my dear master of the revels was—what do you think it was doing? Sprawling indecently in the bath, grinning at me as of old and rubbing its nose very hard, like a live thing for all the world!

My jaws got fixed up at an angle of approximately 146 degrees. There must have been a lot of sinovial fluid in my what-do-you-call-them, they i.e. the knees got wobbling and immediately attained a 300-a-minute knocking against each other. Uncanny change to top-gear!

I was stark naked as Adam, you know, and must have looked quite a Paris picture even to an immaterial thing as a ghost, for, presently the thing in the bath released a diabolic scream of refrigerated laughter that shot me up like a.....like a.....shuttle-cock. I achieved the second Zulu yell of my life and beat a naked and disorderly retreat into the disused closet opposite. I placed myself against the latchless door, which was not precisely a strong room door of the Bank of England.

Hoarse whispering, smothered giggles and laughter. Apparently a ghostly cabal going on the other side. Fallen Angels! This is not a place for peaceful populace to live in. This is a ghost club.

"O.K., my Grecian Statue, come out." That is my ghost i.e. the ghost of my poor angel cooing through the door.

I wring my hands in agony. I swallow something and murmur:—

"Heaven's peace be on you, dear, dear soul in purgatory."

Another satanic bray of a laugh from the other side. Evidently the ghosts were having a capital treat out of me. These city ghosts are the very devil for pulling a simple fellow's leg.

But the ghosts overdid it a little.

I just remembered a spiritualist gent telling me in the Railway train that brought me to this pandemonium, that ghosts don't go beyond a very broad grin even if they were in the funniest of situations. No cent-per-cent ghost ever laughs outright, much less boisterously as these did. This brainwave soothed me a little, though my courage was oozing out in perspiration as fast as the Niagara Falls. I managed to gather a little of it.....I mean the courage, not the Fall, and peeped out through one of the many serviceable chinks in the door.

My body stiffened. I drew myself up. Chin very much in the air.....Indicates dignity, disdain etc., you know. The effect was a little marred by the fact of my not being exactly dressed for the Governor's reception. I was just as God or Evolution made me. I cast my eyes around a bit. There was in that hole of a closet nothing except a piece of a sack which, a decade back, must have

sheltered some edible flour. Wrapping it round my waist or as far round it as it would go, I walked out like another John the Baptist, when he was in the locusts-and-wild-honey stage.

I pause on the threshold sweeping the scene before me with the witheringest glance on record since Lord Siva annihilated that blighter, Manmadha.

The ghost was doubled up on the floor in a paroxysm of indecent mirth. The other humorist, the constable of the park was remonstrating with the ghost, rather shamefacedly.

I pass on like an emperor, (with the limitation imposed by the sack) to my room, with thoughts a million miles away.

Later in the night, I sat in grim silence as the whilom ghost unfolded the little plot with the cop, to give me a scare par excellence.

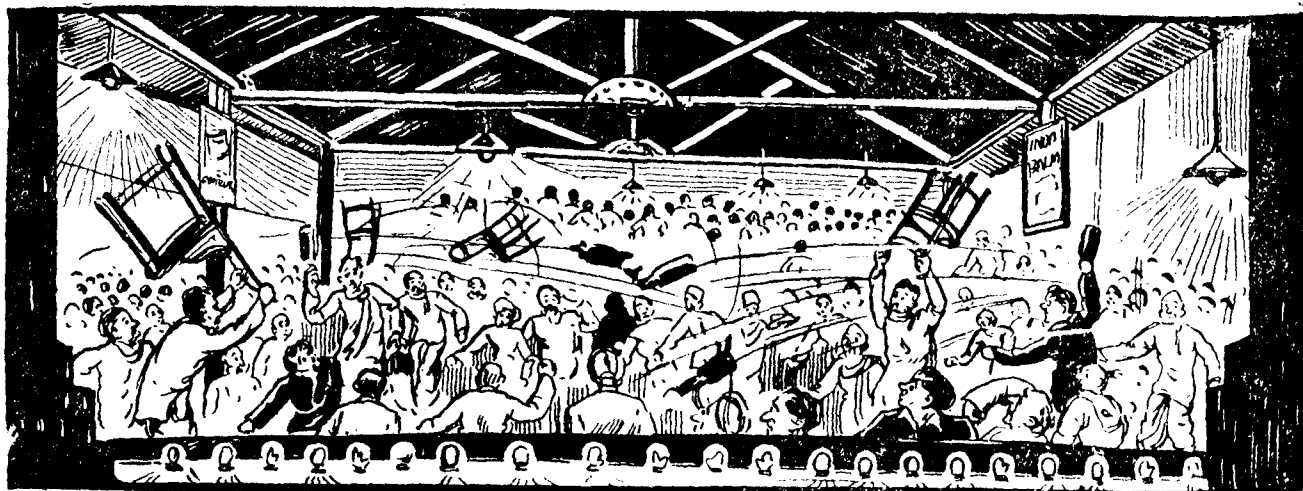
While my something was in tune with the infinite—call it idiotic coma, if you like—this heartless brigand quietly slipped into the water, and beat it for the shore, with the Limb of the Law treating the whole affair as a free entertainment.

"Well, what do you think of that for an originalst joke, Old Green?" the fellow asks with the air of a fat broker who did a day's good business on the 'Change.

"Go to old blazes with your jokes, you.....you brother-in-law of Satan. And don't you 'old green' me. May you become a ghost very soon. And mind, my fine practical joker, if ever you try this brand on me again, I will *old green* you. Get that fixed up in your sinful soul as an eternal verity."



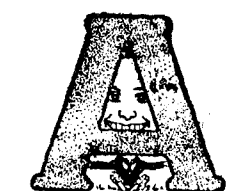
He:—On what grounds does your father object to me?  
She:—On all grounds within a mile of the house.



## The South Indian Stage

### III. The Art of Play-Writing.

(DR. CYNICUS)



DRAMA may be defined as "a complete and unified story of human life acted on the stage, in a series of motived incidents so arranged as to excite the greatest amount of interest and pleasure in the spectator, by means of novelty, variety, contrast, suspense, surprise, climax, humour and pathos." The basis of all play-writing is or should be inspiration, but no hard and fast injunctions can be given for kindling this elusive element. It is something akin to what we call "genius" and can only be felt and experienced from within. But even genius has got to conform to certain elementary principles!

The fundamental basis of any play is a thoroughly dramatic idea. Most of the plays that are now being produced are either entirely devoid of any sort of real dramatic idea, or else they contain so many ideas, all so confused and distorted one with the other, that they seldom succeed in making any coherent impression on the reader. It may be laid down as a general rule that if a play fails to impress in the reading, the chances of its holding an audience in the theatre are indeed remote. Drama is again essentially of the nature of conflict. It need not necessarily be confined to the physical conflict of man with man or with the elements of nature; it may be the mental conflict of the mind with other minds or with circumstances, or again, it may be the spiritual conflict of the human being with his inner self—call it soul or conscience,—or with the particular manifestation of his individual conception of God-head. Whatever be its nature or character, the conception of conflict is always there in the dramatic idea and, the more vital, real and fundamental the conflict, the greater and more appealing the resultant drama.

A play, like everything else, that seeks to create an effect, must have a beginning, a middle and an end. Even when the underlying theme is a psycho-analytical treatise or a philosophic exposition of a particular virtue, it is

primarily of the nature of a story and has to be shaped as such. It is not enough if it be merely a story—however well-conceived—it must be capable of being acted. It must find natural expression in those simple or complicated movements of the human body, which, either with or without the accompaniment of speech, denote passion, emotion and resolve. It must be capable of being interpreted in dagger-thrusts, kisses, frowns, sighs, laughter, caresses, eating, drinking, fighting and dying. The construction of the plot need not follow any rigid pattern or inflexible model; it may start anywhere and may develop in any manner the author's inspiration dictates. Only in one respect can a general principle be laid down so far as the construction or the evolution of the story is concerned, and that is, the interest must be sustained and cumulative. The author must so adjust his various events and details that the story rises and keeps on rising to its climax or catastrophe through a well-regulated sequence of increasing suspense. Once it has achieved this, it must end and that quickly. A tedious and tiresome conclusion tends to rob the play of much of its value. The play must be pointed, crisp and cohesive and, it should develop definitely and irresistibly to its natural conclusion, if it is to arrest and capture the attention of the audience. There is hardly any time on the stage for digressions, discussions or lengthy expositions of particular ideas or themes.

It is very often argued that without what is known as the "sense of the theatre" it is difficult to produce a really gripping play and, that it is impossible to obtain this sense of the theatre without a prolonged period of apprenticeship behind the foot-lights. It is difficult, however, to defend this proposition, as there are innumerable instances of admirable dramas, most eminently suited for acting, being produced by people who cannot tell the side-screen from the foot-light. This theatre-sense is principally a gift, partly the result of practical experience on the stage, but to a very large extent, a matter of mere commonsense. It is again, largely bound up with a sense of character, and a just and proper appreciation of what constitutes effective dialogue. For, without characters,

the drama cannot exist. Philosophically considered, the great march of the stars and the clash of civilisations are exciting—even gripping: they are hardly of the nature of drama as we understand the word. They lack the personal element that counts for so much in enlivening the story.

No other art is so full of life or exercises so universal an appeal as the drama, because no other art is concerned so much with the interplay of human passions. The peculiar fascination of the drama lies in the fact that it deals with people like ourselves, caught in circumstances that might one day be our own lot to experience or suffer, and reacting to those agencies in a manner that instinctively awakens our personal sympathies. The more we understand, follow and appreciate the motives which actuate the people in the play, the more they strike us as being true to human nature, the greater is the pleasure we derive from witnessing the activities of the various characters on the stage. But, by himself, the author can do very little beyond the creation of the abstract character: he is perforce compelled to seek the co-operation of the actor to infuse life into his creations. If the character itself is so wooden and lacks the vital spark of life, the greatest actor can do nothing with it. Whatever the character personified, it must be true to human nature and consistent with itself and that in a fashion that could be identified and recognised without difficulty. Judged from this critical standard, most of our plays could hardly hope to come out of the ordeal unscathed, as their characters very often say and do things which they could not possibly do or say in real life, if they were really the sort of people their authors would have us to believe.

Dialogue is one of the most essential requirements of the drama. Between the long and dreary harangues that we are sometimes treated to, and the bright, twinkling, half-line utterances, there is room of course for every variety of conversation; but whatever the type, it should not only be forceful and dramatically crisp and pointed, but also rhythmic and flowing; and, above all, it must bear the closest relation to the progressive unfolding of the plot. Lengthy conversations inspire very little effect and have the further disadvantage of unnecessarily prolonging the duration of the performance to an unduly late hour, much to the disgust of the audience. A play must never take too long to be acted: modern convention requires that a play should not take more than two and a half or three hours at the utmost and, if it runs beyond that period, there is the very heavy risk of its tiring the audience and, consequently, losing its value

either as an entertainment or as an educative medium.

Turning now to the South Indian Stage, it must be confessed that, there is very little encouragement in the direction of dramatic literature; the educative value of the theatre as a national institution is just beginning to be appreciated. Of dramatic criticism, the less said about it the better, for, there is but little material to criticise. Leading journals and newspapers have a duty to perform in this respect: a glance at any British newspaper or magazine will convince one of the enormous interest taken by the people in the drama. Almost every piece put on boards is subjected to an

elaborate criticism by well-informed writers and, pages are regularly set apart for such dramatic criticism. In our country, however, newspapers find no use for such subjects and, the result is that the dissemination of ideas becomes increasingly difficult. Newspapers would do well, therefore, to devote a separate page a week, for reviewing the activities of our theatres both professional and amateur, and guiding public opinion along the right channels.

It is true, of course, that the literature of India extends over millenia and has produced in the realm of dramatic art, works which can compare favourably with the master-pieces of a Shakespeare, but almost all these works are in a language which is practically forgotten. Vernacular literature is almost barren of enterprise in the dramatic field and, with the exception of that veteran actor-playwright, Rao Bahadur P. Sambandam, there are few dramatists of repute. His productions are very popular both with the amateurs and the professionals, and as almost the pioneer in the field, he deserves the sincere thanks of all lovers of the South Indian Stage, although, judged from a too critical standard, some of his plays may not stand the test.

#### An Earthquake At Stratford-on-Avon?



Little Rama:—"I don't want to go to that damn school any more —"

Father:—"Why, Rama, wherever did you learn such a word as that?"

Rama:—"Why Wm. Shakespeare uses words like that—"

Father:—"Well, quit running around with him."

Again and again, our dramatists are falling back upon the Puranas and Puranas alone for their themes. Indian History and Indian contemporary life are yet almost virgin fields from which a very rich harvest could be reaped, but the labourers are yet so few. Popular appreciation and applause are the requisite spurs to literary ambition everywhere and particularly so in India, where literature is a poorly paid profession and where those who work in other fields have to take up literature in an amateurish spirit—albeit with a genuine passion for it. Amateur associations have indeed a very great part to play in this direction, namely of harnessing that popular approval and kindling the latent fires of dramatic authorship smouldering within the heart of many a young and ambitious writer.

## Susila Wins the First Prize

(N. S. PILLIEUX)



AN educated wife is, indeed, an expensive luxury, if it be a luxury at all. In these days of economic depression and financial stringency, salary cuts and retrenchments, when one has to strain every nerve, (sinew and muscle), to procure even the bare necessities of life, to find the additional wherewithal to humour her expensive tastes, is certainly a problem.

To me, Susila has always been a white elephant, figuratively speaking. What with getting down all sorts of heard-of and unheard-of dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, quarterlies, and annuals, and what with meeting her "Club" dues and footing her jeweller's and dress-maker's bills, year in and year out, I have always more than enough troubles to contend with. Added to all these, came the revelation that she had of late turned a crossword-maniac.

The first discernible symptom of this accursed malady was brought home to me, one afternoon, when my servant came to my office bearing a chit with the names of the following books written thereon:

1. Chambers XXth Century Dictionary.
2. Oxford Concise English Dictionary.
3. Pears Encyclopaedia.

4. Crossword Puzzle Solver's Vade-mecum. Would I kindly fetch the books, when I returned home in the evening?

Experience had taught me, that to argue or remonstrate with Susila on any matter, whatsoever, was not only futile effort, but also a costly venture, in as much as to get over the slight consequential unpleasantness, a visit to the theatre or to the jeweller's would have to be eventually planned. So, to make a virtue of necessity, I gracefully allow her to do it all in her own capricious way, myself steering the course of least resistance.

The books were accordingly brought home in the evening, and for three days and three nights, Susila was at it—the puzzle, I mean. All the characteristic, unequivocal symptoms of crossword-mania were on her, to wit, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, an anxious expression on the face, short temper and a general disinclination to detract the mind to the ordinary duties in life. I wisely kept myself aloof, for any attempt on my part to intrude into her presence then, would have been just like hammering on a detonating cap.

The fourth day, however, the symptoms subsided, and, on my return from office, I found Susila standing in the hall with one of her sweetest and gentlest of smiles on her lips.

"I have solved the puzzle, dear," she exclaimed, with an air of triumph.

"Susila, dear, I always have a high opinion of your intellectual—," I began, just to humour her.

"Tut! Tut!" She cut in with impatience, "None of your flattery now. I want you to send up these solutions tomorrow-morning," she added.

"Certainly, dear," I acquiesced.

"You know the entrance fee is Rs. 2 per solution and I am sending all the possible alternatives—twelve in number—so that we have to remit Rs. 24 as entrance fees," she continued.

"Look here, dear, you know Rs. 24 is a small fortune nowadays," I forgot myself and ventured to remonstrate.

"I have exhausted all the possible alternatives and I am quite sure of winning the first prize of Rs. 600, and what is a paltry sum of Rs. 24 against 600?" was her query.

Of course, I was silenced and the solutions and remittance were sent accordingly.

A week later, Susila came running to me one evening, waving a sheet of newspaper. "Dear, one of my solutions is an all-correct one. The correct solution for the puzzle is published here and I am sending the claim form tomorrow. Won't you congratulate me?" she exclaimed with feverish excitement.

"Certainly, dear, I do with all my heart," I said, as I caught her up in my arms and imprinted a kiss on her up-turned lips.

Sure enough, four days later, the postman brought a letter addressed to "Mrs. Susila Devi Pillieux B.A." Susila ran down to get the letter and as she tore it open in haste and held it up in her trembling hands, I peered over her shoulder and committed the indiscretion of reading the following:

"Dear Madam," the typescript ran, "We hasten to congratulate you most heartily for having sent the correct solution for the puzzle.

"Unfortunately, the amount realised fell far short of our expectations, so that instead of the first prize of Rs. 600 and the second prize of Rs. 200, we are constrained to do away with the second prize altogether and also to diminish the first prize to Rs. 200.

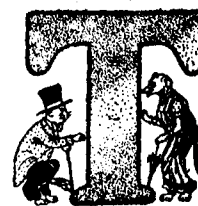
"There were in all 102 correct entries for the puzzle, and hence 102 claimants for the first prize amongst whom the prize amount has to be divided equally. For the sake of convenience, we contributed something from our pockets so as to make it a round sum of Rs. 2 for each claimant, which we shall send to your address, less M. O. commission, as soon as we hear from you.

"Should you, however, desire to reserve the same in your account towards the entrance fee for the 'E.O. X word, Puzzle No. 2—' (the leaflets for which we herewith enclose)—we shall only be too glad to arrange accordingly. Hoping to receive, for ever, your kind patronage—"

Before I could finish the letter, Susila had crushed it up, and thrown it with such fury on the ground that I quietly faded away from the place, lest her fury should be vicariously directed at me eventually.

## SHOCK THERAPY

(FELIX SUM)



THE gift of the gab is not everybody's. Some talk and talk, like Launcelot Gobbo. Some again struggle painfully to talk but could hardly say two words together without their Adam's apple, working up and down like a piston-head. Either lot amuse and are indulged in; but when it comes to sudden transformations it must result in violent comedy or violent tragedy.

The case of Mohan Krishnan is to the point. Rescued from an obscure corner of a profession, which essentially

demand the gift of the gab for its success, thanks to the sudden love for particular communities—he was put to some lecturing work. A quiet, easy-going chappie, nervous at the sight of assembled men, still more so—in the presence of a single member of the sex, Mohan found to his great dismay, that he could no longer have his forty winks in the spacious chairs his profession gave him to. But still with a determination not to abandon that air of *neglige* or *laissez faire* caressed by him, he entered on his life as a lecturer. He dictated the notes of a predecessor and when it came to speaking, he would with every phrase and clause look up to the ceiling for inspiration for some five to ten minutes, and then emit some more sparks of wisdom. "What is wrong?" said he once to a student, who delicately and artfully touched on the defect, "My old science professor at college—great man—very great man—name Muff something—looks at ceiling twenty minutes per sentence spoken."

Well, teaching alone would not have disturbed this delightful state of affairs. Women always bring trouble and in Mohan's life came a woman. Mohan was an extremely handsome person, no disgrace to the name. Many a girl had cast longing eyes at him, but Mohan was dreadfully shy of the softer sex. It was reserved for an Anglo-Indian girl, a medical student to thrill Mohan into ecstasies of love. He happened to see her for the first

time as she got up in a tram outside the college: he fell in love with her at first sight and forgetting his own destination, near the Moore Market, found himself in San Thome. Miss Grace David was a shrewd girl. She was aware of her conquest and was in no mood to slip the hour into a limbo of pleasant thoughts. She was by no means comely but the ways of Cupid are inscrutable. In an oval, elongated face set on a giraffe neck, there gleamed a pair of powerfully penetrating black or blue-black eyes, an impossible combination of a gimlet and a searchlight.

The trouble began when she encouraged his society—he was drawing a decent salary to afford chocolates and

cinema—and seemed to long to hear him talk. Hear him talk—aye, there's the rub. Once, when she called him on the telephone, his performance was almost exasperating. Anyone who had not the pleasure of listening to a stammerer on the phone, has simply missed one of the finest bits of humour in life.

That night Mohan felt his defect. 'I must talk' said he to himself. It was a big problem. He rolled about in his bed, taxing his brains—if there was a tax on brains like income-tax, he need

not have bothered himself at all about it. But he did tax his brains to devise means of remedying. Medicine or surgery cannot cure; if it could, would not Miss David have advised him? Reading: no good can come of that, only headache and defect in vision. The thought came to him of Demosthenes and the pebbles of the sea. For a whole hour he pondered over the advisability of mouthing bits of mountain rock lying around Pallavaram.

The next morning he confided his difficulty to Ramaswami, a wily Komati friend, with a turn for practical jokes. 'To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces' muttered Ramaswami to himself and set about thinking. "Try a correspondence course in Elocution," said he. At first Mohan was a little sceptic, but was soon convinced that there could be no harm at least in trying. He hunted up advertisements and at last determined on a Pelman



.....the advisability of mouthing bits of mountain rock lying around Pallavaram.

course and another styled, "How to become a fluent talker."

Nearly a month later, Ramaswami received a note from Mohan. "The thing's dashed marvellous. Awfully thankful to you, old boy. It is a gift of tongues. Literature, History, Science, Economics, all spurt and come playing like a fountain....." The note was fully scribbled, every bit of available space used economically.

When Ramaswami visited Mohan, he found a different person altogether, bubbling and effervescing in talk. "Association of ideas, you know," started Mohan "is the grandest platform." Ramaswami saw that the course had worked like magic, that the floodgates of speech had burst. "Well, it was this wise," drawled Mohan, "for a fortnight I paid the closest attention to the instructions and I discovered only yesterday what a rapid change had been wrought in me. The fact is, secluded as I was, I had no opportunity to know my own advancement. But yesterday as I started taking the class, I looked no longer into Lakshman's notes but started right away. You should have heard my lecture on the Rule against Perpetuities. I talked the full hour and the students clapped and cheered all the time. Sure they never had a lecture like that before. And then I knew I was made."

"I can imagine. I have heard of Parasuraman who could never say conundrum without rhyming it to Trivandrum. Now, your difficulty in respect of Mercy—"

"No, Grace, that is over. I have been accepted by her yesterday. I'm only concerned as to the form of marriage I should adopt. Brahmo or some such thing. She'll take to any faith for me. Again—good things never come single; she is in luck, has fallen into property."

"In faith, she will. I should advocate the Self Respect mode."

Ramaswami fled from his friend and his torrential eloquence a few minutes later, after learning diverse bits of instructive information, the length and importance of Hitler's moustache, communism, the futility of the Harijan movement, the habits of wild beasts with special reference to the Madras Zoo and so forth.

In the club people actually shunned Mohan's society and planned to escape him as he entered. His friends would not stand his incessant flow of talk. One by one they dropped until the only person he could find to remain with him was old Krishnaswami Chetty, whose hearing completely petered out twenty five years ago. At the billiard table—he would go on talking and talking, on every conceivable subject under the sun, without the slightest detriment to his game. In fact, it has often been observed that he played an exceptionally good stroke when he was talking.

One evening after this transformation, Miss Grace, who had been bored by Mohan a little too much now, chanced to meet Ramaswami and put it to him how intolerable his friend had become of late.

"Oh! I can't bear his tongue," said she.

"Serves womankind right," thought Ramaswami, but did not say it aloud. "He is chatty no doubt," observed he, "Has he given you his views on the Gold Standard?"

"More than a dozen times: and his views on Disarmament oftener than that."

"When he proposed, you might have noted the change—that he had become a trifle too eloquent."

"Oh! then it was so enchanting. Grand eloquence. He spoke for an hour without stopping. He said I was the essence of every hope, the flower which held the fruit of his life: his Present, his Future and all that sort of thing. If he would only confine his conversation to remarks of a like nature, I could listen to him all day long. But he doesn't. In the cinema he talks in such a way that he's all the talkies, cent per cent, and every one stares at me so. He talks politics, philosophy, religion statistics—everything. I am afraid that when we are getting married he will deliver an address on "Self Respect."

Ramaswami then comforted her with an assurance that he would hit upon some means of restoring Mohan. "I have an idea," said he, "that this malady is only a fleeting one: for the very suddenness with which the germ of loquacity has multiplied gives me hope. You might remember that before this seizure he was rather noted for reticence and lack of speech."

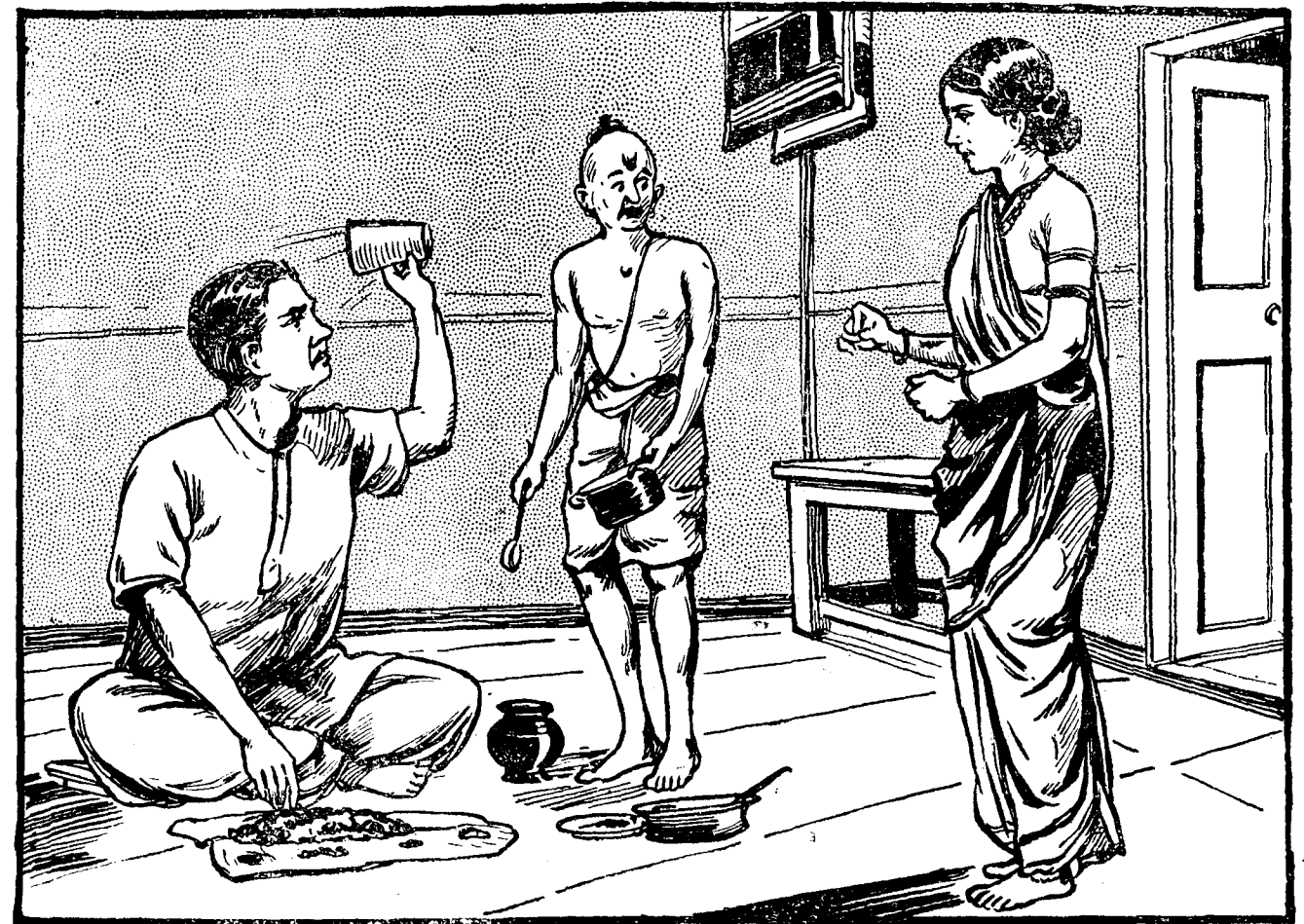
That night an incident in the billiard hall gave Ramaswami the cue. The marker was eking out an additional income as a watch and clock repairer—there's a whisper that from clocks and watches, he is now come to the human body also—and many club members have had their timekeepers ruined by his kindness. As Ramaswami entered the club, he saw a gentleman in a towering passion fling his watch, which made a low and graceful arch over the table like a well-volleyed tennis ball going just over the net. Some one picked it up and it was found, strange to behold, in excellent working condition. "The shock set right what Muniswami set wrong," observed Ramaswami and suddenly grew wise, his eyes beaming and becoming bigger.

The next day Ramaswami gave his advice to Miss Grace. "What Mohan wants is shock therapy. The correspondence course has shuffled or deranged his brain-cells. A rearrangement may show better." They discussed for an hour forms of shock-therapy from protein shock to blows with a club. But after all they concluded that accidents are the best.

A few evenings later Mohan with a few friends attended a music entertainment at Miss Grace's rooms. In the midst of his lecture on the superiority of Sri Tyagaraya to Handel and Beethoven, the lute suddenly descended on his head. Both the lute and the music broke. At the end of nearly half an hour, as he regained consciousness and received apologies of Ramaswami and Miss Grace, he started talking in a different key. No, it was not due to the brandy. A different kaleidoscopic arrangement revealed a still grander picture of incoherent eloquence. He was the Nizam of Hyderabad, was it? Or the King of England by any chance? Rather difficult to decide. There was a rift in the lute.

The shock treatment was excellent in its way, for the patient was three fourths 'made.' But subsequently he must have had another shock and another rearrangement of the brain-cells now,—Mr. Ramaswami and Mrs. Grace Ramaswami having left in great hurry for Bombay—for Mohan is now grave and sober and adorns the billiard hall or the cannon, disposed more to reticence as of old. Garrulity—musical but for the rift in the lute.

## PRIZE STORY No. 2



.....a strong desire to heave the drinking vessel at the head of my beloved.

## HARD LUCK

(A. GOPALARATNAM.)

I AM the pin-cushion of Fate. Whenever that old dame finds nothing else to do, she sticks a pin into me. Failure is the one thing that has marked like milestones, my whole career. Each step I took has been a false one, and when you take a false step, you either stumble or fall—I invariably fell. No wonder I felt at war with the whole world. It was impossible to believe that there existed any reason for the grotesque freak of fact that the wealthy went on amassing wealth, while the poor were ever poor. It is all trash to say that poor people have become rich by honest means. "From log cabin to White House" is a very special case, with special circumstances, special environments, special opportunities. Opportunity knocked at Lincoln's door a dozen times,—the hag was fond of him. She perhaps knocks at my door while I am fast asleep, but while awake I hear only the knocks of my

creditors. You can no more dream of leading a Lincoln's life than you can think of ruling the seas, or riding the moon!

Who said beg, borrow or steal? Whoever it was, he ought to have been sailing in the same blooming boat as mine. I had begged my creditors and borrowed from them and now I should steal, I suppose, to repay them. Leastways, that was the only word that remained in the adage. I had tried lotteries, cards, races and prize-competitions—fool that I was not to have tried this sure method of stealing! The life of a thief ought to be easy. Work in the night in the right places; and for weeks afterwards you can sleep on the spoils. You have only to avoid mistakes, foot-prints, finger-prints, dogs, accidents and light; success will be yours! So I purchased the necessary implements for house-breaking: a great bunch of skeleton keys, a small crowbar, a pair of pliers, a flat bent iron rod sharp at one end, a metal saw, a

diamond glass-cutter, a pair of rubber shoes, a pair of gloves, a false moustache and a pair of eye-glasses. I purchased the whole accoutrement at different places, so that the police, if they came nosing round my trail, should have the devil of a lot to do.

A little aside, please: there are things in this world that require much grit to take. And one of them is advice from one's wife. Many husbands take it meekly enough when it coincides with their own thoughts, but I would like to see a husband decently taking an advice from his wife, with which he is not in perfect agreement. Anyhow, I have always felt a strong desire to heave the drinking vessel at the head of my beloved when she crosses point-blank or sideways my projects. I have never done it yet, but one of these days the inevitable will happen. So it was with almost an unbecoming alacrity that I consented to her departure to her father's house, a month previous to that particular event, which I am about to relate.

I have never known where her father's house was, except that it was somewhere in the city. None caring about me, I cared for none. If she had told me that she was going to the moon, I should have taken it as a matter of fact, so long as the fact remained that she was leaving me for a while.

To resume the story: that night as my legs wandered aimlessly through streets and lanes, my brain kept pace in the beautiful city it was building up. I had already become the richest man in the district and my wife was dazzling in blue jaggars, when suddenly I came to myself. The sound of a distant clock struck the hour of one. It was the right time to get busy.

I dived into the nearest bye-street, a little darker than the main road, and slowly walked down noting the houses on either side. They were all bungalows with compounds and as I walked on, I couldn't hear a sound except the breeze playing among the thick foliage of the gigantic trees within the compounds. As perhaps some poor fortune-maimed devil had already stolen the moon, it was a "New-moon" day.

At last I selected a bungalow. It looked rich. 'Appearances are often deceitful' they say, but, you see, that was the only bungalow near which there was no municipal lamp. The one that stood a few yards off, had said 'good-night' long ago and was fast asleep.

It was child's play to climb-up the gate and gently drop inside. Hastily I took the morsel of sweet-smelling 'mysore-pak' out of my pocket. It was intended for any canine friend that should greet me, and as, even after five minutes, none did so, I was about to eat the delicacy myself, when I remembered that it contained a good dose

of prussic acid. I hastily threw it away, which action I heard later on, resulted in about fifteen crows lying dead the next day with their feet up in the air, and ten times their number making such a hubbub overhead that the inmates of the house had to keep all the doors and windows shut to keep the noise out.

I went round the house looking for the best means of ingress. Three of the windows on one side of the basement were clean open, which gave me the strange idea that the house was winking at me. Cautiously I approached one of the ground-floor windows and peeped in. Hearing no sound, I flashed an electric torch and found that there was not a soul within. One foot on the window-sill, another on the window-door, one hand on the parapet and the next minute, I was standing on the first-floor verandah.

With a pounding heart, I approached the open door and standing against the wall listened intently. People were sleeping in the hall and two were snoring calmly and regularly. I slipped in and muffling the light, I pressed the button. In the hall there were three beds, in which I supposed people were sleeping. The beds were mosquito-curtained. They looked so cosy, so comfortable, that in my ire I ground my teeth.

There were two doorways to this hall in addition to the one by which I had entered. I approached one, and gently opened it. It opened on a flight of stairs leading down and to another flight leading up. I shut that door and approached the other. On opening it, I found myself in a room. I closed the door upon the hall and flashed my light. There were a big wooden box and a little tin trunk and in a glass almirah stood silver vessels, plates and cups. I turned to the big box. It was an old-fashioned one, single locked, massive looking. With an iron will and a steel saw I set to work and began sawing off the tongue of the lock, as some of the skeleton keys refused to enter and the one that entered refused to open the box or come off. It might have been two full hours before the thing gave way. Throwing open the latch, I looked in. Oh, my eyes! What a galaxy of wealth did I look upon! The torchlight shed its radiance in, and blue, green, red and yellow gleamed the wicked fires of diamonds, pearls, rubies and gold. The box was half full of ornaments. Rings, waist-belts, bangles, brooches, earrings, and head-jewels—thrown in pell-mell.

It was nearly four when I safely reached my house with the precious bundle concealed under my dress. With trembling hands I dug a pit in the backyard and put the vessel full of ornaments in, closed its mouth with a wooden plank, filled it up with earth and planted a branch of a nearby rose tree over it. I then slept the sleep of the innocent.

## "A CLEVER AND DARING ROBBERY!"

Thief gets away with jewels worth about

Rs. 5000/-

Proudly I looked upon the big block letters staring out of the newspaper next day. This was a vengeance I was taking upon society and to be the object of such attributes as 'clever', 'daring' etc., even if you are unknown to your admirer, is a thing to make one's head reel. With a self-complacent air, my brain slapped my back and cried, "Hooray!" as I sipped the tea and continued to read what the paper thought of me. And here is what I read:—

A daring robbery was committed last night at No. 35, Rangaswami Street. The inmates are utterly ignorant of the time the thief came, he had been so silent and swift. The theft was found only this morning and so late as 10 a.m., when the daughter of the house went to take out one of her jewels. The jewels are usually locked up in the strong box every night and worn again next morning. But to-day when she opened the door of the strong room, she was amazed to find the lock hanging like a dead cat to the latch. The lock's tongue had been sawn open. All the jewels except some trinkets had been stolen. Not a trace was left behind. No finger-prints, no tools, no clue, nothing. Inspector Kalyanam, who is in charge of the case, says that it is a difficult nut to crack, but he has hopes. The owner of the properties, Mr. Jayarama Iyer, Dubash, Messrs. West and Hattons—

Oh, why, what's this? There was a sudden grip at my heart. Something went snap inside me. The letters were swimming before my eyes, things went round and round—don't be alarmed, reader, it was nothing—Only the old hag thrusting in another of her infamous pins into me. Who could Jayarama Iyer be but my own father-in-law? There could not be two Jayarama Iyers, Dubash, West and Hattons. Sons-in-law can rob fathers-in-law publicly in daylight at the time of marriage, but could you imagine a son-in-law robbing a father-in-law, sisters-in-law and wife at midnight? It was not a pleasant reflection to think of the sweet things my beloved would say, when I should show her the riches under the rose-tree. Alas! I had no sleep.

It is now months since the event happened, and I am still the same old, poor, fate-crossed man, who will be glad to accept a dinner at your house as often as you like. But if you ever invite me, please invite my wife also, for she insists that she should share all my pleasures. She

has never said anything about my sorrows, but that is woman—all over. Women, like crows, always look with one eye on things. I, however, never share in her pleasures. For she selects pleasures, which are inherently contraceptive to my inclinations. To take an example on hand, that day when she returned from her father's house, she was literally overflowing with news.

"Have you heard?" she cried.

"Heard what?"

She was evidently exceedingly disappointed. She could not imagine how a man could be such an absolute—well, ignoramus! Whoever has not heard of the robbery?

"It was even in the papers!" she pouted, and when a wife pouts, the matter becomes serious.

"Oh, the robbery? Do you mean it?" I asked.

"What ELSE should I mean?" she countered, "You seem to think it as common as drinking water!"

I thought it prudent to affect some interest. "It was a very clever theft!" I ventured dubiously.

"Clever indeed!" she said, curling her lips in a crushing sneer, "It was exceedingly foolish!"

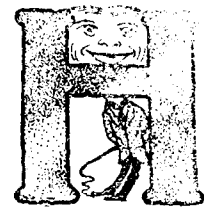
I raised my eyebrows questioningly, and at the same time I remembered the words "Things One's Own" I had read somewhere.

"What kind of cleverness is it," continued my wife, addressing me, "that robs you one day and returns the jewels the next day? We had all the jewels there! He took the lot away and left behind not a single clue! You should have seen the Inspector's face, as my father worried him with questions as to the possibility of finding the thief and the jewels. He blinked and blinked, then looked knowing, but his face told plainly that it would be like searching for a needle in a hay-stack! And yet what does your clever thief do but steals in again the next night and replaces all the jewels intact in the same place and walks away! Fool! Imbecile, who had the courage to steal but not the courage to keep what he had stolen. Rank coward, idiot,——"

Do not ask me to repeat all that she said. One would have thought that she actually wished she had lost all her jewels. She went on in the same strain and then changed to a worse refrain in her eulogy on the cowardly thief, until I put a stop to her opprobrious epithets by the only safe way I knew—I locked her lips with a four-lever kiss and kept it locked. Try this on your wife next time and see what happens. It is a genuine tip!

# ON STAYING AT A HOTEL

(PRAKRIT)



**H**AZLITT, the great English essayist, has written about the attractions of staying at a hotel. It is a delight to cut yourself away from your daily moorings and remain virtually incognito at a hotel in a new place, for even though your name is known, you are a stranger to the people around you. Let me tell you, dear reader, of some of my recent experiences at Chingalore. First you must learn how I was scared away from one hotel and next how I enjoyed my stay at another. I first chose a hotel for no other reason than that I had never gone there before, and I believe I was rightly punished for this. The landlord, reversing the situation in Goldsmith's play, behaved as if he was the squire, and I a poor relation of his.

## The Northern Bear

But what drove me away from the hotel was an insufferable bear. It was a northern bear, coarse and thickset, and yet pretending to refinement. He was no other than Dr. Swellhead Rao, Professor of Aesthetics at the Dullasses College, Dunccepoor. The landlord asked for my card when I entered the hotel, and he read aloud, "Mr. Chandrasekhara, Professor of Aesthetics, Royal College, Rasdam."

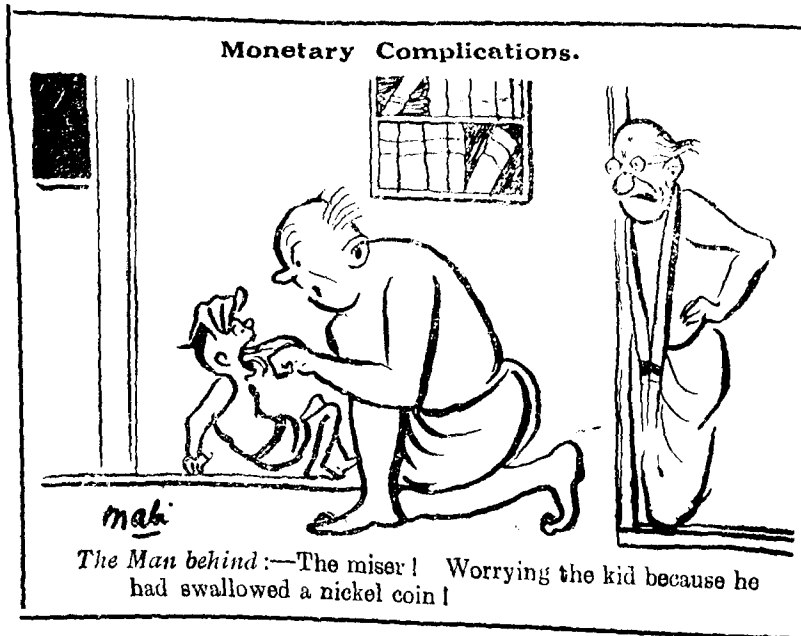
"I have another Professor of Aesthetics staying at the hotel already," says the landlord.

"Who is that?"

"Dr. Swellhead Rao from Dullasses College, Dunccepoor," says the landlord with quite a triumph in his voice.

"O, but we are of different worlds altogether," I say, and conceal my irritation, by walking away.

When I went to the dining-hall, the bear was sitting at a leaf, ready to eat his meal.



I walked thoughtlessly, as it proved later, to take my seat in the corner beyond him. But he stopped me rudely and said the place was for his son. I beat a hasty retreat with bitterness in my heart, though putting on the broadest smile on my face. Sitting in another seat, I went through the meal in my worst mood. The bear's son did not turn up at all during the meal. The rudeness to me had been unpardonable. What was worse, the bear began to discourse on culinary tastes, lauding the standards of his own race which I knew to be barbarian, and condemning the standards prevailing at Chingalore. It was also a mortification to me, when I saw a special dish was served to the barbarian professor, of which I had no share. The end of the meal was the signal to my departure from the hotel.

## The Bombay Spark

Arrived at the hotel of my old acquaintance, the manager directed me to Room No. 33. Mr. Chunilal of Bombay, as I found

on the board, was already in occupation of it, but as it was intended for two, I could be the second occupant. Mr. Lal was evidently an ultra-fashionable man. The room was hardly sufficient for his requirements. Two cupboards, two tables, and a hat-rack over a large mirror, with a ledge to hold toilet requisites, —all were filled with his belongings. There was just a chair left in the room next to the door of the bath-room. Mr. Chunilal shouted out vociferously every five minutes for the hotel boys for some service or other.

"Boy, hot water for shaving."

The boy brings lukewarm water, and Chunilal is indignant. He dashes the water on the boy's face and asks for real hot water. Half an hour later, tea is brought in. There is a minute break in the edge of the cup. The boy must fetch another. So on and so on. Mr. Chunilal is obviously a great authority on the subject of hotels, for he gave a detailed account of hotels at Bombay, Calcutta and other large North Indian cities. He said he was a landlord and capitalist, and he proved this by spending all his time on the requirements of his body. His family are prominent business men, but that their financial position is not solvent is explained by Chunilal's position—borrowed from the family—that business men are naturally great punters at the races. I shared the room with Chunilal for an hour, till Chunilal put away the two things which I kept on the only spare teapoy in the room. He said he was going to have his 'Khana,' and implied that my rights to the exclusive use of a table did not exist. Within five minutes I had cleared out of the room with my scanty belongings. After leaving Room No. 33, I began to enjoy my stay at the hotel. I made a number of friends, and some of them were very pleasant people.

## The Jackal

Having nothing to do all day, our great pastime was to sit on benches facing the portico of the hotel building and look at every new arrival. Squint-eyed old Ramanujam Chetti, who described himself as a jeweller, sat amidst us and told us stories in endless profusion. He knew every temple within fifty

miles of Madras, or rather he knew every dancing girl attached to the temples round about Madras. He was obviously the jackal that followed the kill by the greater animals of the forest. He knew about the detailed succession of each woman's lovers. It had been easy for him as jeweller to get at the women. One night he led a group of hotel friends to a house where, he said, a dancer of repute, of bewitching beauty, was living. The friends found easy excuses to follow the old man. One loved the night-walk for its own sake, especially when the night was moon-lit. Another said it would be a big joke to follow the old jackal. When Chetti knocked at a door, the others stood yards away, for the weak-sighted old man would blunder about the house and rouse the wrath of some respectable householder. When they arrived at the dancer's house, they found the old man's description had far exceeded reality. Nor did the girl comply with the old man's request to sing and dance: it was not the hour, she said. The party returned to the hotel with some fresh merriment at the expense of the old man.

## A Financier's Loves

Mr. Venugopala Naicker was the second member of the portico group. His acquaintance with the men and women of an earlier generation was very wide. Having started life as the office peon, blotting the master's writing, he rose to keep the ledgers at the big European firm of Thompson Brothers, doing importing business on the largest scale. Mr. Naicker was retired on a pension five years ago, but he is very particular to describe himself in his visiting card as follows:

Mr. A. Venugopala Naicker  
of Messrs. Thompson Brothers.

People who see his card rush to him sometimes to make enquiries about some recent development of the firm's business, and the Naicker answers gently that his connection with the firm was of the past. He has been a great success in life and has made piles of money to sustain the long evening of his life. He enjoys a great repute for understanding financial matters, and is a favourite with

moneyed women, in spite of his negro complexion and features. He was guilty of numerous lapses in sexual conduct, and has paid for it in silent suffering and in his wife and son taking over the tutelage of his morals.

### Tennis of kinds

Subbarayadu was the third member of the group. He was past sixty in age but little as a snake. Tennis was his great passion. He had once been a lawyer of some note, and he is fond of stating that he has now retired from all courts except the tennis one. A joke which pleased him greatly was the remark of a friend that the Chetti and the Naicker in their nocturnal peregrinations knew tennis of quite a different kind from the wholesome game practised by Subbarayadu.

### The End

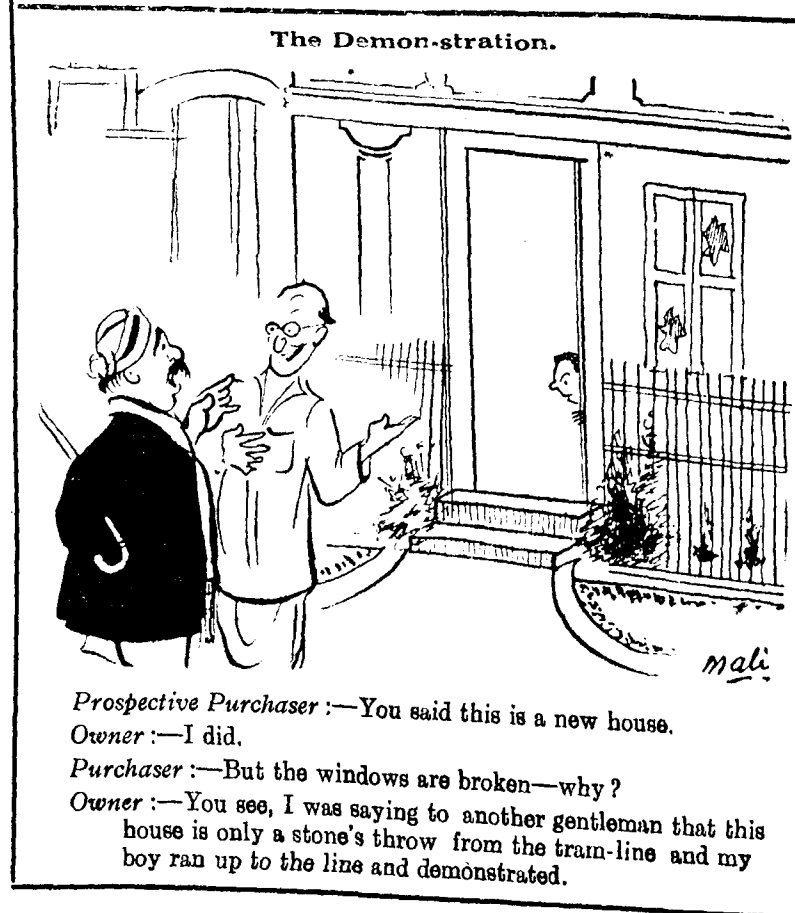
The pastime of sitting on the portico bench came to an end at last, when it involved me in unexpected expense. Vedachalam, the dunce of the class, had sat on the same form as I, when we were at school years ago. He appeared at the hotel portico one morning with three of his friends. I greeted him with the heartiness of an old acquaintance. I learnt he was a clerk attached to the Chief of the Seal and Wax Office. After some talk with me he went in with his friends and all had a sumptuous meal at the hotel. Vedachalam came out and assured me that the hotel gave excellent food, and went away

after some more polite talk. I was horrified to receive at the end of the day, a bill from the hotel manager for a special dinner served to four guests. I sat no more at the hotel portico to greet the friends that dropped there by chance.

Staying at hotel involves chiefly two occupations, eating and talking. Men sometimes escape from the depressing frugality of

the fare at home, to eat plentifully at the hotel, though they often run into indigestion by over-eating. My friend Nagasami sastri made the best bargain, when he resolved to stay at the hotel a whole month and thereby saved the charges by a third part of the daily rate. The hotel catered both north and south Indian food, and Nagasami wisely combined both kinds in his meal. On Ekadasi days and New Moon nights, he would eat a variety of things instead of the regular rice.

As for the convivial talk, we begin by putting on the stiffest manners. We know or get to know easily all the details about the men who come to the hotel and yet we pretend absolute ignorance. Then it happens that the ice is broken and mutual confidences grow rapidly. Acquaintanceship formed in the hotel may lead to lasting attachments, and authors of romances may remember this in weaving stories.



Prospective Purchaser:—You said this is a new house.  
Owner:—I did.

Purchaser:—But the windows are broken—why?

Owner:—You see, I was saying to another gentleman that this house is only a stone's throw from the tram-line and my boy ran up to the line and demonstrated.



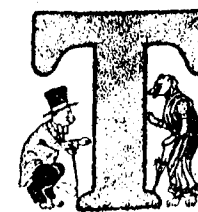
.....wash clothes,

cook and

wallow in crowd

## NEWSPAPER MATRIMONY

(AN INCOGNITO M.A.)



Unemployed graduates and to unmarried lasses, the 'Wanted' columns of a newspaper have a fascination. The one turns to the columns offering employment and the other to the matrimonial advertisements. And more often than not, both drop down the paper in disappointment. No man ever got a good job by responding to a newspaper advertisement, and no girl ever got a good husband through the medium of the newspaper.

I flattered myself I was good-looking. I had graduated in music and was in all respects a modern educated girl. I was a member of the local ladies' club and played tennis off and on. I attended women's conferences and moved high-sounding resolutions on the equality of the sexes and the superiority of the womanly over the manly soul. But at eighteen I was still unmarried, and an unmarried girl at that age is well on the way—in Hindu society—to social disgrace. My father was a rich officer and my mother had high connections. They wanted to marry me to a handsome youth, the son of a zamindar, but I refused to listen to any talk of matrimony till I came out of college. And so I passed the marriageable age quite uneventfully.

But Mrs. Grundy did not fail to pay her quota of attention to me. My neighbours began to discuss among themselves the causes of my remaining a virgin. I realised that, they had no business to poke their noses into my affairs, but then they were evidently under the impression that, as members of a corporate society, they had every right to approve and criticise the actions of any other member of that body. One woman of exceedingly good intentions opined that I was a T. B. patient and

hence no youth came forward to wed me. Another suggested that I was suffering from an inherited abdominal disease and that doctors had warned me against marriage. And so, as days passed, the imaginary charges against my physical well-being and my mental alertness and even my moral soundness, grew in vigour and frequency. The result was that all intending wooers were scared away from me. There arose a gentle fear in me that my virginity might be perpetual. And so I determined to resort to the newspaper to help me to find a lord and husband.

One day the following advertisement attracted my attention.

*Wanted a bride between sixteen and twenty to marry a youth of thirty in All-India Service; no objection to virgin-widows; youth desires a marriage of true minds. Apply Box No. 17215 c/o Postmaster, Pushpapur.*

Here, after all, was my man, I thought. I too was an aspirant after a marriage of true minds. I had witnessed only too often the sickening drama of a girl of twelve bound in wedlock to a playful boy of eighteen, of the wedded pair spending their honeymoon in the smoky chambers of a tiny dwelling in the metropolis, of the poor wife becoming a mother to an unwanted child, of wedded life turning into a long-drawn-out agony of small earnings and annual child-births. I wanted to spend my wifely years in greater freedom and mirth. I never wanted to specialise in cooking or in tending babes. My vision of my wedded life was cast in a more poetic mould. I wanted to spend my mornings in strolls along grassy garden-lawns, my afternoons in reading light literature and my evenings in pleasure drives in the company of my

husband. A gentleman in All-India Service was just the sort of husband I was longing for. My inner voice told me that the author of the particular advertisement was destined to be my life-long companion. I answered the advertisement immediately, prophesying that I would prove a boon to the gentleman in every way. And I built castles in the air of how I would learn to drive my own car, of how I would dress in the most modern fashion, of how I would receive visitors to the bungalow and so on. I made myself ready for the wedding day. I renewed my spectacles, cropped the hair above the forehead to have a few curls in front, wasted half a dozen soaps in washing myself, consulted a friend as to the colour of the dress I could wear with advantage and was practising smiles and movements of eyes for the coming tryst. I got an answer from Ramana Rao—that was the gentleman's name—accepting me as his wife. But he wanted me to give an assurance in writing that I would not reject him at the last moment. He told me he had had disappointments in the matter of matrimonial fixtures and hence wanted the assurance. The other things were easy. We were married before a registrar. I was well impressed by the majestic demeanour and the tweed suit of my husband.

Immediately after the marriage I left for my husband's home. He told me that he would first take me to Berhampore and then to Rajahmundry where he had been posted on special duty. With all my modern manners, I could not get rid of the native shyness of Indian maidenhood, and though very eager to know what office my husband was holding, my tongue failed me when I attempted to interrogate him in the matter. I did not want to prejudice him against me by exhibiting much inquisitiveness. Everything would become clear in a day or two, I thought, and contented myself with making my husband cheerful by womanly arts and maidenly contrivances.

At Berhampore I was taken to a tiny house, where an old widow was preparing cakes of cowdung. I thought she was the servant-maid and resolved that after I became the real mistress, I would change her for a more efficient servant-woman. The smallness of the house was disappointing to me, but I knew that officers, who have to be perpetually on the move, could not always get a very comfortable home. I therefore put up with the initial difficulties and determined to effect a radical transformation in the household within a few weeks.

Next morning, when my husband was leaving for his office, I gathered courage to ask him why, unlike other All-India officers, he was not getting his papers sent home for signature.

"I am not of that sort," answered Ramana Rao.

"What are you then?" I queried.

"I am a clerk in the Postal Department," came the reply, like a bolt from the blue.

"Why did you utter lies in your advertisement?" I asked.

"I said no lies" he answered. "The Postal Department is not provincial, but All-India."

"And your pay?" I demanded.

"Forty-five rupees," came the answer.

"How do you manage to keep a servant-woman then?" I asked.

"I keep no servant. The old woman is my mother," said my husband.

"Your tweed suit deceived me." I spoke more in sorrow than in anger.

"Suits are mere economic facts. They are in the end cheaper than our dhoties and loose clothes," said Ramana Rao, and left for office.

I shed tears. We women are only capable of tears. I thought of the irrevocable nature of Hindu marriages and kept quiet.

And now, instead of gardenwork and evening drives, I keep at home, wash clothes, cook and wallow in a heap of cowdung, think of fate and destiny and pray for a better lot in my next birth.

#### Enough to Go Round.



Muslim Tailor :—Please hold this end of the tape, samii ! I will be back in a second.

Our Thick Friend :—Why, where are you going?

Muslim Tailor :—Round you,—with the other end of the tape !



**M**ODEST as I am, I feel like blowing a little on my trumpet in this issue. I generally sit down to write this chat after the entire issue is printed and that is why you always find me somewhere in the last eight pages. Isn't that modest of me?

Now, looking over this issue, I feel that I am coming nearer and nearer to the goal I have kept before me for an ideal fortnightly magazine. In the wide range of articles, in introducing new writers, in suitably illustrating text as well as jokes, I feel this issue easily eclipses all previous issues. But, while I am modest, I am equally a very difficult person to please (as contributors will testify) and I promise you that you will find the next issue a still better one. I have another ghost there for you from a different writer, a regular carnival, a cat and dog affair, and an examination in Mars, along with the usual dentist's vagaries and the absolute necessity for a second shot. Don't wonder what it all means!

As we generally print just enough copies to meet the demand, perhaps you will do well to order your copy in advance with your news agent.

#### Contributors To This Magazine.

One of my correspondents concludes his letter thus:

"I don't know who that 'Deisvi' is. Have the kindness to tell me his true name. I bring to your notice that my friends and I want a serial by 'Deisvi'—please."

I have had similar letters asking me who the other writers who contribute under a pseudonym to this magazine are.

The contributors to this Magazine are all really well-known men occupying high positions in various walks of life. Even when they don't adopt a pseudonym I make it a point to omit their academical distinctions, because, I want the articles to speak for themselves and I do not want to be accused of trying to impress my readers with

the weight of the alphabets, which, had I the mind, I could add to the names of many of my contributors.

Leo is an advocate: So is Felix Sum: Pam is really a College Principal: Prakrit is a professor of English: If you reverse Nera, you will catch the initials of a brilliant barrister. Dr. Cynicus is neither a doctor nor a cynic and Deisvi is no lady! Is that enough?

#### Short Story Competition.

In the last two issues of this Magazine I have expressed myself—frankly of course—about the merits of the entries to this competition. The judges have selected three stories and have divided the prize-money between the three writers. They are:

Mr. Elmer Delville—Author of "That's How and Why."  
Mr. Gopalratnam. "Hard Luck."  
Dynamite Dam "Another Blacksheep"

It should be understood that in setting down the names as above, no order of merit is indicated or meant.

I am publishing two of the stories in this issue (Please see pages 489 and 513) and the third one "Another Black-sheep" will be published in the next issue of the Magazine. Meanwhile, will Dynamite Dam kindly write to me and tell me his name and address as I don't find anywhere in his Mss this information? To each of the other two successful competitors a cheque for Rs. 33/5/4 is being forwarded.

#### Competition Regarding Bala.

In the next page you will find the name of the winner as well as his review of our Serial Story. Though the story has ended, the readers' interest in Bala has not abated. I am giving you therefore extracts from the entries of other competitors and I am sure it will interest all of you.

In my note in the page 522 you will also see that I mention the receipt of a letter from "Kumar" If this is the genuine Kumar we all know, you may expect a sequel to the Bala Serial.

(Continued on page 524, 2nd Column)



# WHAT THE READERS THINK OF BALA

A Symposium by the Winner and other Competitors.

[This competition has attracted many entries. In view of the great interest taken by the readers in Bala's story, below is printed not only the script of the winner but also selections from other entries.]

A letter has been received in the office of this Magazine signed by one Mr. Kumar. It bears no address. Mr. Kumar is requested to get into touch with the Editor and is hereby assured that his real name and address will be kept confidential.—*Editor*

## "Bala the Bad Woman—A Survey."

WINNER MR. M. K. SRINIVASAN, COIMBATORE.



It is not the sweet privilege of a critic to indulge in wholesale praises or cynical assaults while surveying any literary piece of work. Hence it is that a just review of Bala, the bad woman, must needs consist of both appreciation and comment.

*Style etc.*—As a narrative, the style and language first attract attention and one is pleased to pay a few words of compliment to the talented author. The language is simple and the style elegant and breezy and free from pompous, polysyllabic, profundities. The author has displayed two more features which go to enhance the literary value still further. The first is the auto-biographic form of narration which saves for him many a "boring" aside and unnecessary description. The other is the introduction of the direct form of speech, wherever possible. The possibilities of the direct form are yet to be fully understood by many of our Indian writers. But fortunately the author happens to be one of the blessed few.

The plot of the story is taken from Hindu Life and is highly original. It is all about a Hindu girl married against her will to a rich old man "who is more fit to be her father than her husband." A love affair develops between her and another young man and culminates in an elopement. The girl's father scents it and restores the girl to her husband. A blackmailer reveals the secret to the old man; the girl decides upon suicide. But through the intervention of a lady-doctor the girl is persuaded to take to the calling of a nurse, in which capacity she works wonders, for the rest of her life and dies of typhoidal infection. Told in such brevity, the story appeals as highly original and true to life.

Coming to the Title, and characterisation, one feels that Bala need not be stigmatised a Bad Woman. She is

a victim of chance. Her coming into contact with her lover is too sudden. She feels sorry and thinks of doing away with her 'silly romance.' Even in the elopement, it is her lover who takes the lead. Till the end she remains a virgin. What is more, she devotes her last years in the cause of ailing humanity. Is she then a bad woman? I think not.

The old man is sentimental. His marriage with Bala is an offspring of sentiment. His god-fearing nature and fatherly affection for Bala are very touching. But how is it, one wonders, that he (the Shrewd man that he is) does not suspect Bala until the blackmailer is called into play.

What happens to Bala's lover in the end? One expects a better disposal of him than how the author has done at present.

There is a touch of oriental colouring lent to the whole story by the introduction of elements supernatural. "Dream loving" though uncommon outside the regions of the classics, is purely an Indian phenomenon. Again the breaking of the Puja Plate through the vibrations caused by the presence of "Bad Bala" smacks of Marie Carolio. Miracle working by Bala is nothing if not eastern. Perhaps this is only an exaggeration of Bala's devotion to work.

On the whole, the treatment has been well managed and the logic and continuity kept unbroken through nearly eleven long instalments. The touch of tragedy in conclusion tends greatly to enhance the beauty of the tale. Bala's death due to typhoidal infection is just the thing one wants to justify her.

My congratulations to Mr. Deisvi:—despite his misleading epilogue on his success.

C. M. S. Rao, Triplicane.

"Bala, the bad?" I mentally queried as the last line vanished before my moist eyes, "No" said an inner voice, she was "Bala the sad." She was neither saint nor satan but just a child of humanity with her share of its strong and soft passions. A legitimate outlet for their expression was denied her. And they found their own course. Who dares cast a stone at her for this? Not society surely, which brought her to her tragic end. \* \* \* "There can be no two opinions as to the clear narrative interest of it" says the editor, and I agree. But the artistic merit of the serial demands more notice. It is easy to overdo narrations. Flamboyant descriptions lend an air of unreality even to truth and mar the effect, if not nauseate actually. Bala's feelings and experiences, even at their highest are put forth restrainedly, but with telling effect and vigour. A child-like simplicity and innocence, candour and freshness characterise each episode. Nothing is hidden, and nothing need be hidden. There is nothing to be ashamed of. We are carried along each current and cross-current and made to sink and swim with everyone who had a hand in it. We exclaim each time "Ah, true, that is exactly how it happens in life!" \* \* \* She stands amidst all her trials and tribulations only as an example of the weakness and frailty of human nature rather than as a guilty one. That is why sympathy for her is the predominant feeling in every one of her readers, though her own mother belonging to the letter-of-the-law generation, which is fortunately passing away, could not condone her error. \* \* \* She was a rare flower. She blossomed in a desert. And she drooped and finally faded out of a life of service to those children whom she loved so well.

M. Krishnaswami, Pudukottah.

"Well begun is half-done." This is the old saying. But Mr. Deisvi has belied the saying. Well begun is well developed and well finished. The one thing which I most enjoyed in the story is the chaste language which the talented author has maintained from start to finish. The expression are vivid and picturesque. For instance, when the author describes Sornam as "Stone-deaf and seventy" we get a mental picture of the woman with her wrinkled face and a broom stick in her hand and I wonder why the Editor of the Merry Mag. should have troubled himself about illustrating the story at all. \* \* \* When I first read the elopement I got a little offended with the author. Elopement, in any event, will not be moralising to the reading public, especially, to the readers of the fair sex. That was my idea. I thought that Bala would be defiled by Kumar and she would have been charged with infidelity and she would have died a miserable death suicide or otherwise—an unnatural premature death. Anybody will not believe that a young woman was pure after she had remained with a young man for a night in a far-off place like Bangalore. But the author is not to be found fault with, so easily. \* \* \* The catastrophe of the story is equally interesting. It may seem to be too tragic. But to me it does not seem to be so tragic as it would have been if Bala had committed suicide or if she had led an immoral and wasteful life and died of gruesome diseases. \* \* \* The only complaint I can put forward is

that the element of humour has been uniformly absent and the author has been very serious and sedate throughout. But in view of the facts stated by the author in his epilogue, it will be like asking for a pint of milk when the owner says his quadruped is a bull, if we should expect humour in the story.

V. Anantkrishnan, B. A. Srivakuntam.

Bala's character is a jumble of grit which she evinces at the time of facing tense situations and frailty in that she is not capable of keeping her spirit sustained. But she is essentially feminine. \* \* \* Apart from this story, I have met actual specimens of the type of Bala's husband. \* \* \* One cannot, by the way, afford to forget his funny household—Sornam, Errayya and Narasiah, so lively is their portraiture. \* \* \* The style which the author commands is eminently fitted to narratives of this kind and wherever it is difficult to command a lucid style i. e. at times of great commotion he writes superbly, as for instance, the scene behind the boat in the Marina. The epilogue which the author says, was appended at the request of the editor of this Magazine, is a master-stroke.

P. T. Ekambaram, Madras.

The Title given to the autobiography, styling "Bala" as the "Bad woman" is inappropriate in that Bala repented for her misdeeds and more than atoned for them. The world may call her a bad woman, but in the eyes of the All-forgiving All-merciful God she will remain a pure and innocent girl.

ARVEY, Madras.

I own the soft impeachment along with numerous other Merry Mag. fans of having been on the *qui vive* as to the turn the story may take or as to the working out of the *dénouement*. \* \* \* Bala is only a flighty girl whose head is turned by silly romances.

S. V. Rao, B. A. Madura.

The life history of Bala is a standing example of the evils of unequal marriages, so common in Hindu society as a result of whimsical and quixotical fancies of many a parent. The conflict between conscience and the call of the flesh, resultant of such unfortunate connections, pulsates throughout the story at every stage.

K. Gopalan, Natcharkoil.

Bala's mother is a typical type of an orthodox brahmin woman stupid in ignorance and having a great dread of public opinion, which in small villages still rules the conduct of the community.

K. Gopal Rao B. A. Nellore.

Bala could be ranked with those innocents such as Cordelia, Ophelia and Lucy Ashton, the Bride of Lammermoor and her lot was in no way better. Like Cordelia, Ophelia, Lucy Ashton, Bala died a childless mother. "Bala loves life, but not life dishonoured," hence she leaves her parents, and husband and dedicates herself for serving the innocents and moves among them as a "LIVING MADONNA."

The Merry Magazine

M. K. Ramani, B. A. Madura.

(Bala) She belongs to a type of Hindu girls who as a result of early marriage with old and decrepit men elope with a younger man, commit suicide or finally lead a life of shame and infamy. Here it is that the skill of the author is at its best. In Tolstoy's Anna Karernia, the Heroine Anna and her lover Duke Verriski placed under the same situation as Bala and Kumar, commit suicide, unable to bear their separation. Mr. Deisvi on the other hand has given Bala a long lease of life after her attempt at suicide, by revealing to her a better source of consolation in her grief-stricken days.

"CEARCI," Bezwada.

The description of Bala as rendered by Deisvi in his narrative and as drawn by your artist has infused a desire in many of the readers to meet this Beauty-Queen merely with the sincere wish of looking on one of God's gifted creation in the flesh. In railway trains and club-corners there has always been a talk about Bala and Deisvi and suggestions were going round to the effect that Deisvi was either Bala or Bala's husband, the reason being that the narrative was so perfect that it could not have been anything else but incidents from real life.

G. K. Pillai, Tuticorin.

Mrs. Vaughan is a woman of flesh and blood for me; and when she says: "I am a devout Christian: but when I hear stories like yours, I begin to doubt if there is justice in the divine scheme of things," "there is many another who thinks like that." That's the marginal note I have made on page 396.

JIPPY, Madras.

Can you imagine for a moment what all could have happened if Deisvi had not been fettered by fact and had let his fancy soar to fiction? The old gent could have taken a course of monkey-gland treatment, developed Vim, Vigour and Vitality and one fine evening, instead of patting Bala paternally on the back, crushed her in his arms and made sheik-love to her. Hollywood tells us that this cave-man stuff is the right cure for un-responsive dames. Why, if you had only managed to give publicity to some brand of the V. V. V. Tonic, a grateful manufacturer might have given you a paying advertisement. To me and to most of your readers, Bala was a dream girl who was going to solve a big social problem to some big purpose. Showing up a social evil in glowing colours does nothing to cure it. It is not that nobody is alive to the evil. The trouble is finding a cure in the face of Mrs. Grundy's opposition and this is where fiction helps a lot. Creators of great characters in fiction have a greater responsibility than is popularly supposed and tragedies are ethically taboo unless they are constructive. And so, you will understand my wail, dear Editor, that when we were all looking forward to something big and are asked to be satisfied with a series of fanerals benefitting only a Hospital, we feel badly let down. [Shades of Shakespeare and Hamlet!—Editor.]

(Continued from page 521)

Build a Story Competition

I am delighted to award the prize to a Lady. The winning entry (no pun intended) is printed on page 486 together with the picture. You will admit after reading the page that the winner has treated the subject in a very original manner and I wish the prize-money was more.

Almost all the other competitors have interpreted the picture as the usual difference of opinion between a man and a maid, ending in the man getting one on his adam's apple.

New Competition

I will award a prize of Rs. 15/- to the best letter sent to me. It ought not to exceed 600 words. You can write in any style you like, take any attitude you like, but you must confine yourself to the subject I have chosen --and that is, this issue, dated 10th July 1933.

Mss may be sent by Book-post and this costs only half-an-anna. Mark on top while you address "Letter to Editor". All entries to reach this office before 3-8-33.

The Funniest Incident in Your Life

Another fifteen rupees for this. Do not let your imagination run riot but write about actual experiences. No entrance fee, no coupons, no restrictions to the number of entries, either to this or the above letter competition: not to exceed 600 words and entries to reach this office before 3-8-1933, mark on the envelopes "Funny Incident."

Lucky Numbers.

Here are the June Lucky Numbers. 32508 Rs. 50 26479, 29951, 33478, 35890, 39648, Rs. 5 each. If you have any of these numbers with you send them on and receive the prize-money. All claims to be made before 3-8-33.

In my last editorial chat I told you that some of the lucky number copies have not been produced. To-day we have on hand Rs. 80 unclaimed and we are adding this sum on to the July Lucky Number Scheme. And that really means Rs. 155 given away for the July issues of the merry Magazine. Isn't that another reason why you should not only order your copy in advance but also sit tight on it?

This Copy of The Merry Magazine may be Worth Rs. 100.

Every copy of the Merry Magazine issued on the 10th July and 25th July bears an unduplicated number. 12 different numbers have been selected at random and kept in a sealed envelope with the Editor. These are the winning numbers and they will be published in the issue of the 10th August, '33. The Editor will buy back the copy bearing the first winning number for Rs. 100 in cash. To eleven other copies bearing the other selected numbers a sum Rs. 5 will be given. The copy you now have with you may contain the winning number. So, Keep Your Copy.

Results of 'Periodicals' Competition

The correct solution is

- 1. Railway Times
- 2. Sanatanist
- 3. Indian India
- 4. Free Press
- 5. Student
- 6. C & M Gazette
- 7. Muslim Progress
- 8. The Critic
- 9. The Advocate
- 10. Picture Show
- 11. Appeal
- 12. Hindu Herald

No one having sent in an all-correct entry to this competition, the first prize of Rs 150 and the second prize of Rs 50 have been consolidated and the amount divided equally among the following six gentlemen who have sent in entries that contain a single error. A sum of Rs 33-5-4 is being sent to each of them.

- 1. MAGADI TATACHARYA, Kattampatti B. O. (Via) Irulappatti, (Salem)
- 2. L. N. SBINIVASA RAO, 5/9, Srinivasapuram, Jail Road, Coimbatore.
- 3. A. S. RAO, Loco works Manager's Office, M. & S. M. Ry. Perambur.
- 4. S. N. ISWARANANDAM, c/o S. P. NAGASAMI IYER, Pleader, Ramnad.
- 5. M. S. NAIR, Clerk, D. T. S. T. Office, M. S. M. Ry Bezwada.
- 6. K. RAJAH IYER, 84, Lloyd Road, Royapettah.

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2. — — R K wanting light 5. D — — — a blow  
3. — I — — a heap. 6. — U M P to swell.  
Rules:—Entrance fee as 8 per entry to be sent only by M. O. An all-correct solution is one that agrees letter for letter with the key solution. First prize Rs. 100 for a correct solution; second prize Rs. 50 for a nearest one. In case of ties prizes will be divided. Our decision in all matters is final.  
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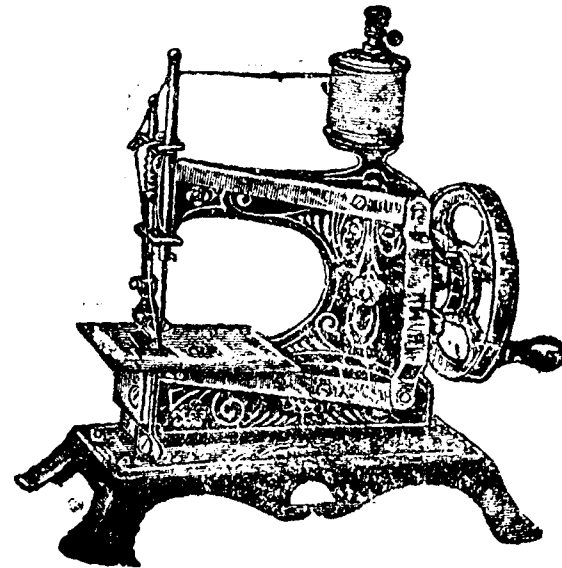
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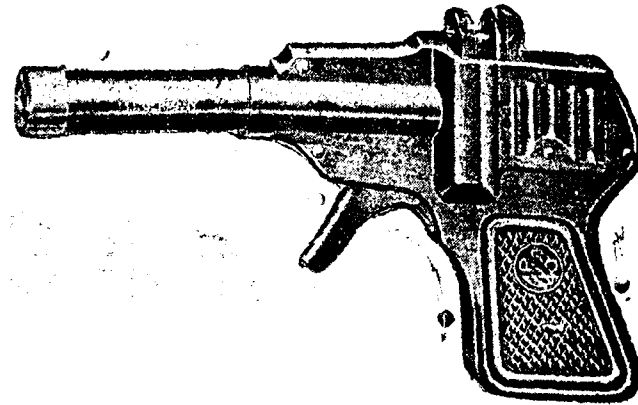
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