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RS. 1000 FREE TO READERS

THE

MERRY

MAGAZINE

Vol. III

MADRAS, 26th JANUARY, 1935

No. 4

ONE ACT PLAY

(Very much Condensed)

HB: Why do you hesitate? What is preventing you?

She: A tree, you silly.
(Cursing)





Vol. III

MADRAS, 26th JANUARY, 1935.

No. 4

SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

In a broadcast message to Australia, the Prime Minister is reported to have said: "The idea of the British Commonwealth of Nations is the idea of the League of Nations."

We are unable to determine whether this is intended to prop up the British Empire or the League of Nations.

Says Jean Harlow: "When I was a child, I cared no more for clothes than I do now."

But she has not the courage of her convictions!

Perry has again been beaten by Crawford.

This is getting to be *monotennis*!

Sir William Clare-Lees says that the new Indo-British trade agreement is full of hope.

Mr. Mody is willing to ratify it to the leas.

From a tourist's impressions of India: "Eight empires have flourished in Delhi, thus proving the eternal incapacity of Indians to govern themselves."

And of the empires to govern them!

There is a concerted move among the provincial governments to intro-

duce broadcasting as an aid to rural reconstruction.

This is good news—to Radio manufacturing interests!

A N. W. Frontier official referred to it the other day and said: "We begin at this end, while Mr. Gandhi begins at the other."

And the ryot is somewhere, in between, trying vainly to make both ends meet!

With a view to help the ryots, the U. P. Government is said to be contemplating the publication of a Hindi weekly to be edited by a prominent journalist.

This seems to us a roundabout way of helping the—journalist.

As a result of the plebiscite, Saar will return to Germany.

Speculation is rife as to where Germany will turn next.

Herr Hitler announces that Germany has no more territorial claims against France.

The rest of the world has every reason to be alarmed by this statement.

An astrologer predicts that the British will remain in India for another 300 years.

We implore our countrymen to give them a hearty send-off—at the proper time.

'The President of the National Chamber of Trade said that the acid test of trade movement was mire work for our unemployed.'—*News Item*.

Hard lines, we think, on the unemployed:—Either no work or dirty work!

It is considered likely that the words 'Dominion Status' will be introduced in the preamble to the Bill. It is expected to make the new constitution amble.

Referring to Madras cricket, H. E. the Governor is said to have remarked that though he has not stayed here very long, he thinks it is very good.

We are happy to say the same thing of His Excellency—at the crease!

Mr. Lloyd George has re-entered the political arena with a 'New Deal!'

It looks more like the old lead than a new deal.



The KING AND HIS

136545

Said the king in awful anger:
 "Cursed be the queen. I must hang her.
 She is an idiot; Satan's wife she ought to be."
 "So she is," said the minister—an aged man was he.
 "I'm tired of her," the king went on, "awfully tired I am
 For such a tiresome spouse I don't care a damn.
 Get rid of her I must; I can stand her no longer.
 If I give her to the hangman, I shall in no way wrong her.
 For, if bitter isn't sweet, she deserves to be hanged."
 So saying he departed, and the door behind him banged.

The queen in her boudoir
 Was reading a French novel, "*Le jardin dans la soir*,"
 Written by a great French master of fiction.
 She cried, "Oh, what style, plot and diction!
 I have never seen this writer, but I swear by Heaven above—
 This perfect novel is enough to make me fall in love.
 If he asks for my hand, I shall give it at once,
 And leave alone the king who is nothing but a dunce."

The queen's waiting-woman (her name was Violet)
 Entered and said, "Your Majesty! *Won't you have your toilet to-day?*
 Good Lord! Don't you notice how time is rolling away?
 The sun on the river is pouring his parting beams
 Liquid fire is rolling on the river—so it seems.
 In the yonder church the gigantic throng
 Is playing: 'Ding Dong, Ding Dong, Dong!'
 The light of day will fade
 And pass beneath the shade
 Of gloomy night.

No queen can stop this, however great her might.
 Listen, Your Majesty! Pray keep that book away,
 And begin to make your toilet of to-day."
 "Oh yes, of course!" The queen to the mirror ran,
 Keeping the book aside; and then her toilet began.

QUEEN

The king said to the hangman, whose name was Eddie:
 "You'll hang the queen to-day; therefore be ready."
 Eddie, veteran hangman, with wide-open eyes
 Yawned, and then gave out half a dozen sighs.
 "O mightier than thunder!" he said to the king,
 "Hanging the queen is no difficult thing.
 I can hang the queen twenty times per hour,
 As easily as I devour,
 My supper at night.
 But the thing is, O mountain of might,
 I shall tell you plainly, keeping no mystery;
 Hang the queen yourself and be famous in history,
 As the king, who himself hanged his queen.
 Imagine what distinction Your Majesty will win!"

"That's right; I'll hang her," the king said in brief,
 And the veteran hangman breathed a sigh of great relief.
 The queen heard the king's threat, so awful and wild.
 She finished her toilet and prettily she smiled.
 She saw herself in the mirror, and then sweetly said:
 "The roses on my cheeks are pretty and red;
 My lips are inviting and charming are my eyes;
 My smiles are sweet and so are my sighs."
 Suddenly.....Tock!!!
 There was a knock
 At the door.
 "I'm coming in," said the king, and said nothing more.
 In came the king and sweetly the queen smiled.
 She said: "King! You look awfully wild.
 Come to hang me? Good. A fame you'll win,
 As the king, who himself hanged his queen."
 So charming she was after her toilet!
 "O Glory of my life! My beloved toilet!"
 Cried the king. "Hang you, my sweet little elf?
 Ah, I would much sooner hang myself."

—Ajit Krishna Basu



THE MIRROR OF LIFE

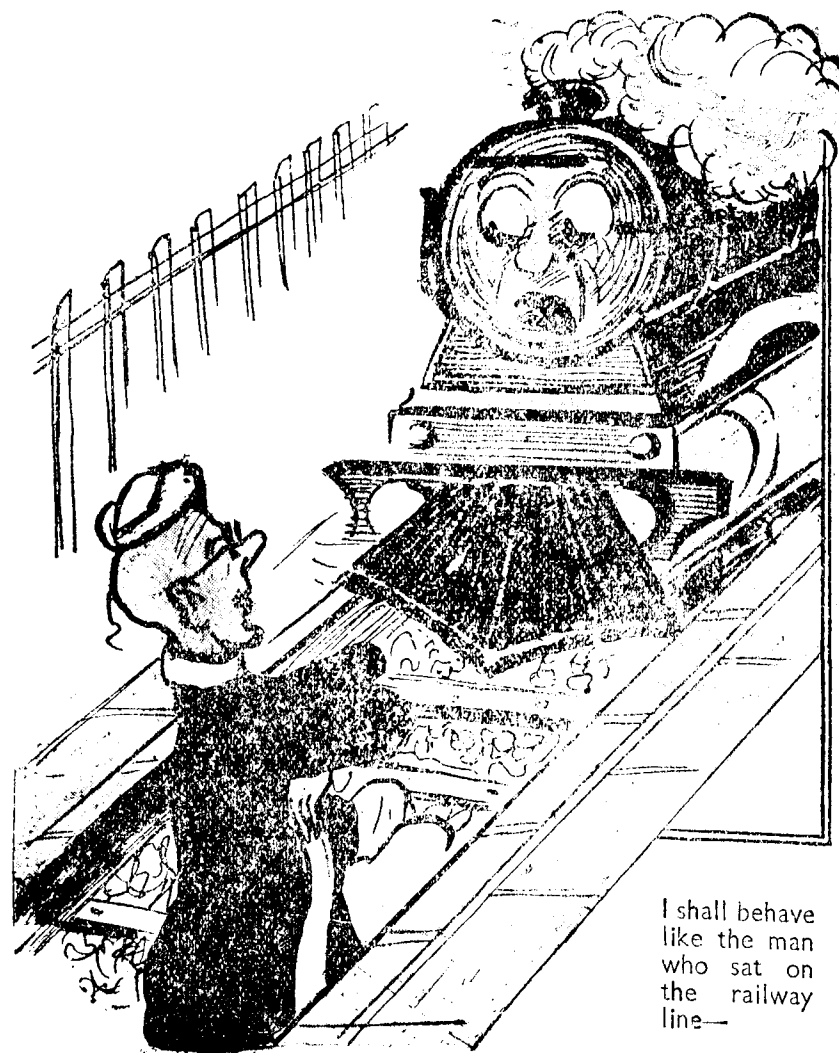
II. AN ESSAY ON CONFERENCES

By Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri

IT is no joke to write an essay. If I write well I may be sure that a much better man would have said much better than myself what I wish to say. If I write ill, no one will read me. If I sprinkle rose-water, people will take the hint and rise and go away. Yes. Even you, Mr. Editor, will move off. What shall I do then, helpless as I am, like a babe in the wood? If I throw ditch-water about, I am sure to be alone, too, because people will move off even more swiftly and some may even consult lawyers and file suits for libel and defamation, for assault and battery. To adopt legal parlance—for I am a lawyer yet, though I do not read to judges what they best like to read *i.e.*, their own judgments—I shall write without prejudice. To write without prejudice means to write with prejudice to you and without prejudice to me. Do you know why judges do not like to read their judgments? The judges write but do not read, (I do not mean to suggest they read nothing) and the advocates read but do not write anything except their pleadings.

I have no desire to be hauled over live coals or to get a ducking in a pond, as might happen if I call a spade a spade in regard to Indian conferences. Yet I must write about conferences. I feel an inner urge to appear in the *Merry Magazine* and thus laugh and grow fat and live long. I do not know well why all

old men wish to live long and drink butter-milk as advised by Netchnikoff and look into the newspapers to find out when Dr. Voronoff is coming here. I shall tell you more about that another day. I have nothing else to write about and this being the Conference season the conferences are on my brain. The *Merry Magazine* must take me into its hospitable columns and surround me with laughter. I shall sit *Dharna* at 2/140, Broadway, Madras. I shall behave like the man who sat on the railway line at Gangaikondan on 21st December, 1933. Do you know what he did! He sat on the railway line. There was nothing remarkable in that. But he sat on it when the train came up. The train came and looked at the hero who like myself was unconquerable and gasped in terror and said to the man with the iron will: "What is this? What is this? I am in a hurry to go, make room, make room." He calmly replied: "I too am in a hurry. I am in a hurry to get into you. Make room. Make room." The train smoked. He smoked too. The train glared. He glared too. The train shook. But he remained unshakeable. Eventually he won (as I shall win) and was taken in the train to his destination. So shall I, with my hard skin and iron will, get into the *Merry Magazine* which is going to have a prosperous non-stop run and go to my destination *i.e.*, the mind of my reader.



I shall behave like the man who sat on the railway line—

During the last week of December 1934 there was in Madras a tempest of conferences following the physical tempest in the same month. The peculiarity of both was that they blew from all the quarters of the compass at one and the same time. But there was this difference between the two, that the intellectual tempest took away not only our health and wealth but also our good temper and good taste while the physical tempest took the other things but not our good taste. Both brought plenty of breezes and lightnings and thunders and showers. Why showers? They brought a deluge. The physical deluge went into the Bay of Bengal. The intellectual deluge went into the *Hindu* and the *Madras Mail* and the *Indian Express* and the *justice*.

The remarkable peculiarity that I find about our modern conferences is that in their people do not confer at all. I see that men differ and differ very volubly and violently in them. So these should be called *differences*. The proper description is the Tamil Lovers' Difference, The Musical Difference (or Discord, if you would prefer the word), the Actors' Difference, the Theosophical Difference, the Liberal Difference, the Social Difference and so on. From another point of view they can be called Sufferances, because the few inflict speeches and the many suffer. Or they can be appropriately called Preferences. The Tamil lovers prefer Tamil to Sanskrit and English, nay to all the languages past, present, and future. The musicians prefer songs *i.e.*, each musician prefers his songs to everything else in the world. The actors prefer to act off the stage, for the dramatist says that "variety is the spice of life." Theosophy prefers itself to all the religions of the world and proves the brotherhood of religions by the best of all proofs *viz.* by the claim that the late Dr. Besant was the mother of them all. Some may ask how the youngest of all could have begotten its elders. But that is the peculiarity of mysticism, for religion says that the last shall be the first. The Liberal League is in love with liberalism (which is conservatism writ small). The Social Conference prefers socialisation by creating a new group in a land of mad and militant groups. The Medical Conference meets merely to wipe out the old stigma that doctors differ.

There used to be formerly a stereotyped group of conferences. Their speciality was that they illustrated the old joke about a husband and a wife having only one mind which, however, was not the husband's mind, as the grey mare is always the better horse. In the nineteenth century every conference in India was a one man's show *i.e.*, one man ran it and spoke like a ventriloquist in many voices from many spots in the conference hall and all the rest were solemnly invited to sit and look on and wonder with a foolish smile of praise. He was the Reception Committee, all the delegates rolled into one, President, Secretaries, Treasurer, Auditor, in fact everything. He used to propose and second and support all the resolutions, and even put up a feeble show of forcible—

feeble difference as in the case of the debate in Parliament about the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report, just by way of spicing the proceedings and magnifying his foregone victory. I need not mention names, for the names are well-known and may be left unstated here.

But in the modern enlightened new age conferences are taking on a new character. The only aim of every man today is to hear the music of his own voice. The object of a real conference is to secure a real contact of minds and a harmonious exchange of views so that the country and its culture may stride forward as the result of the greatest common measure of agreement among the minds of the sons and daughters of the

Motherland. But if every man cares only for his ideas and his voice, and expects all the others to refer everything to him for solution, the assembly may as well be called a reference. But whatever it may or may not be called, it's certainly not a conference. Another speciality is that a man has to play to the gallery or get out. His eye is not on the truth but on the hidden voice that suddenly bursts out "shame" and wrecks conferences as the result of that explosion. So every speaker is full of deference to his predestined destroyer. There I must stop. The moral of it all is that a *conference* is a *difference* or a *sufferance* or a *preference* or a *reference* or a *deference* but is certainly not a *conference*.

In The Next Issue

LOST! P. P. Samuel
(If you are bored with Frank Buck and Martin Johnson on the screen, 'Lost' will give you some relief.)

WEDDING PRESENTS A. T. M. Thomas
(“Which side are you going?” asked she :.....“ You witch!” said Mr. Thomas—and the rest is silence.....)

THE MANGO TREE A. M. Menon
(A Mango tree instead of the woman—in the eternal triangle)

SIR GUY THE CHI-WALRUS 'MacNair'
(The story of a knight-errant bold and true and what beer did to him.)

JOYFULL'S LETTER on Pets in Barracks.

Also
Stories by Jagannathan, 'Tirumalai Nallan', and others besides—Topsy Turvy, Star Dust, Auntie etc.



By 'KEBI'

HABIT, says an old adage, is second nature. And perhaps that explains the strange behaviour of the English school-master, which was brought to the notice of the Highgate Bench recently. Ernest Henry Houghton, B. A., of Duke's Avenue, Church End, Finchley, was summoned by his wife for persistent cruelty, by way of caning and smacking. It was stated on behalf of Mrs. Houghton that before her marriage, she was a school-mistress, being herself a Bachelor of Arts. Some years back, the worthy Houghton took it into his "nut", that if she displeased him, he should "correct" her. He threatened her that, if she made three domestic mistakes in a week, he would thrash her at the week-end. Well, she made them and was chastised. Sequel—the Police Court.

Mrs. Houghton, giving evidence before the Bench, was asked if she resisted her husband's behaviour and she replied that she thought that if she gave in, she would appease him. For the slight "punishment" she received—poor thing—she did not wish to wreck their marriage. "He was always nice to me afterwards," she added "he gave me a cup of tea."

The court granted her separation and ordered him to pay her and their five children compensation.

But this wife-beating is not a strange art in India. Is it, folks? Anyway, pedagogues, sit up and take notice. Don't get into the groove.

That reminds me of the resounding snub administered by a witness at a trial in an English Court. Witness was giving long and evasive replies to counsel for prosecution during the cross-examination, whereupon the latter got piqued and bellowed to witness, "If you cannot answer 'yes' or 'no' to my queries, stop grinning and get out of the box." Witness still persisted in his roving.

Counsel, (more annoyed): Can't you say 'yes' or 'no' to my questions?

Witness (unperturbed): It is not always possible to do it.

Counsel: Why not, you fool?

Witness: Because it is so. I will put you a question. Will you answer 'yes' or 'no'?

Counsel: Certainly, you big stiff.

Witness: Have you given up beating your wife?
Answer 'yes' or 'no.'
Riot of laughter in court.
Order please, order.

For sheer misfortune, can you beat the following tragic record of a woman who committed suicide?

"This is one of the saddest stories I have ever come across," said the Stoke-On-Trent Coroner at the inquest, at Stoke, on Mrs. Catherine Sanderson, wife of the farm bailiff of the London-Road Institution, Stoke. She was found in a bath of water at the farm.

The Coroner recounted the following facts from the woman's story.

When she came of age, her mother died.

She went to America to see a sister, who died.

While in the States, she became engaged, but just before the wedding, her fiance died.

She returned to England and became engaged to a farmer in Shropshire, who also died.

She later married the bailiff of the Institution farm, but in eighteen months he was taken to a mental hospital.

And finally, she committed suicide.

Strange and inexplicable are the ways of burglars and thieves. But surely, the burglars, who entered no fewer than eight houses in Jerningham Road, New Cross, were merely pleasure-bent. Their strange bag contained the following:—

A dozen bottles of wine;

A table-cloth;

Some silver spoons;

A dozen eggs;

A pound of bacon and

A wireless set.

But, what do you say to the sad fate of the two police cricket teams, who were playing in the final of the William Julien Courtauld Cup, open to Police divisions in Essex? While the two teams were having a sumptuous repast, called lunch, in the pavilion of the Witham (Essex) Cricket Club ground, their clothes in the next room were pinched by burglars! What a standing joke and what an affront to Bobby!



Epitaph:

Let's all come together
and pray
For Mr. Tobias Taper;
He crossed the busy street one day
While reading his newspaper.

The week's worst pun:

When a young man quarrels with his girl, the best way to make up is to buy her a box of chocolates. In other words, Cadbury the hatchet.

Appropriate maladies:

Then there was the butcher who suffered from stiff joints.

Q-Quite s-so:

One advantage of being a stutterer is that by the time you are half through the sentence, "Will you marry me, darling?" you grow wise enough to shut up.

Poets will be poets:

Editor (witheringly): Didn't I tell you you can never write poetry?

Poet: You did, sir. But I have TYPED it this time.

We ask you:

"When in trouble sing a song" says a psychologist. Yeah, and get into more trouble.

Information:

And talking of songs, do you know how the boxers' song goes? It goes, 'Tra La La BIFF de Ay.'

Cause and effect:

1st Moth: Where have you been hiding all these days? You look famished.

2nd Moth: Oh, I got myself shut up in a chorus girl's wardrobe.

Stand up and cheer:

"A father who refuses to let his girl marry as she pleases is a person I simply cannot stand," declares an author. I advise him to go and tell that to his girl's father. Then he simply will not be able to SIT DOWN.

Music hath charms:

One: Which piece did you like best at last night's concert?

Two: God save the King.

Jail Jollity:

"A burglar becomes bolder every time he is sent to jail," says a detective. The courage of his convictions, certainly.

Epitaph:

Friends, let's all come together and pray
For old Jim Grace;
He stopped in the middle of the street one day
To tie his shoe lace.

Tall Talk:

The well-dressed man has nobody to fear, declares a film star.

Except of course his tailor.

Tipping you off:

"Is it true that Young Smith was thrown out of the restaurant because he tipped the waitress?"

"Quite true. You see he tipped her a wink."

THE EDITOR'S COLUMN

MY desire to welcome opinion and criticisms of the *Merry Week* has evoked a (never mind the adjective) response. But, in a moment of post-prandial weakness, while I was feeling completely at peace with the world I suggested that readers might send in their opinions of me too. That readers should have unanimously praised the *Merry* is no salve to my wounded ego. The *Merry* was described by some of my correspondents as the weekly *par excellence*, as the *ne plus ultra* of humorous journalism, as the acme of something else. Many grew lyrical over it, others hysteric (with excess of joy) and not a few sent me the advance copy of epics extolling the get-up, copy and lay-out. I am told that husbands were prepared to forego their after-dinner cigars in exchange for the *Merry* and that housewives gladly starved in lace for the same noble cause.

Notwithstanding these paeans of praise I was still feeling hurt. Because these panegyrics were occasionally accompanied by uncomplimentary references to myself. Most of the readers have not met me in person but this did not prevent them from describing my personal appearance, my figure and habits with a wealth of detail and range of epithets which, to say the least, surprised me. However, since I asked for it, I am not complaining now. I am my own stoic self now and can bring myself to address you again.

To the least scurrilous of my correspondents I have decided to reply. The others will be editorially ignored entirely, for, I have read somewhere that where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be—to be—well familiar (I hope).

Curious (Poona) Well madam, I am selling only umpteen copies a week. I hope to do better next time. Yes: we have no bananas.

A Reader (Laccadives) You want to know whether my contributors are using their own names or just *nom-de-plumes*? I am sorry, I can't tell you. You see, so long as they use their brains, better leave them alone.

Merry Fan (Lhasa) Yes, yes, please come to the point. Oh, you think the *Merry* can be compared very favourably with some of the best foreign periodicals, do you? Much as I should like to 'pat myself on the back, I cannot in good taste do it, you know. Hence I merely say 'H'm, h'm.' You wish to know my age? As old as the hills! Is my face red?

Contributor (Simla) You are piqued at the rejection of your Ms. These things do happen in the best (I almost said 'in the best-regulated families'). However try again. What? Never mind my nose!

Luny (Palghat) Your poem is excellent no doubt but scarcely—er—I mean it is.....what I mean is.....it is splendid.....too good for us. Please send stamps.

Talking about poems I present to you a new poet who has risen in our midst. He is unfortunately a member of my staff. He prefers to remain incognito but here is one of his efforts. Some effort! What?

If your Papa's in a rage
Go and show him just *this page*
And if your wifey starts to nag
Go and buy her the *Merry Mag*.

More of his outbursts later. Meanwhile, I am always yours truly

Editor.

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A FEAST OF FUN

QUITE A MISTAKE!

"You know the smallest thing upsets my wife. Why, last night she was doing a crossword puzzle and she said to me, 'Jim, what is a female sheep?' I answered 'Ewe,' and she immediately burst into tears!"

PLACE HIM

She: "Listen here, if you try to kiss me again I'll show you your place."

He: "Don't bother, baby. I can find it myself."

JUST TIRED

Belle: "Freddy and I drove for hours last night."

Mel: "You must have come back good and tired."

Belle: "Well, no—just tired."

TRY

"Listen, baby," she said, "is it me you love or my clothes?"

"Test me honey," he said, "test me!"

HIS EXCUSE

Magistrate: "Why did you stick a knife in the man?"

Prisoner: "Well, I saw a policeman coming and I had to hide it somewhere."

SELF-SACRIFICE

She swore she'd go through anything. All hell would not affright her, If she could have my precious love— And so I hugged her tighter.

2—26—1—35

She held me with her finger tips,
She thrilled me with her kissing,
I left and learned what she'd go through—
My cash and watch were missing!

Another Soup Story



Diner: "Waiter! My plate is quite damp."

Waiter: "Pardon me, sir, that is your soup."

THESE FILM FOLK!

"Hallo, Bob, not married yet?"

"Haven't you heard? It's been delayed a few weeks."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, old man, she married someone else!"

NOT WHAT HE MEANT

Mr. Smith: "My daughter is getting on very well with her music. She's just arranged a little piece for the piano."

Mr. Brown: "Ah, good. It's about time we had a little peace."

A BIT MIXED

Customer: "I want a pair of spec-rimmed hornicles—I mean sporn-him-med rectacles—dash! I mean hick-rem-med spornacles!"

Assistant: "I know what you mean sir; you mean a pair of rim-sporned hectacles."

THE RIGHT SORT OF CAR!

"Move along, please, sir. Your car can't stop here."
"You don't know my car, constable; it can stop anywhere."

Topsy Turvy

A THRILLING FANTASY

"By RAJARAM"

PART THE FOUR

PROFESSOR SAHEB AT NARGUN'S

The fantasy so far

Professor Thurkov of Modalkar meets his student, Nargun, while taking a walk on a drizzling evening. Nargun suggests a visit to the temple of Bhima nearby to divert the professor from the congenial topic of the shortcomings of students. At the entrance of the temple stands a colossal statue of Bhima, in whose presence the professor whimsically regrets his long-lost youth. Nargun in turn expresses a desire to become a sedate and respected professor. Now an ugly little creature, the Witch of Modalkar, enters the scene heralded by thunder and lightning. She grants the desire of both Thurkov and Nargun.

It is more a curse than a boon. For, the transformation relates to the personality. In mind and spirit, Thurkov and Nargun remain their original selves, in bodies unaccustomed. After a long discussion they part and each goes to his strange residence. Nargun, as professor, has to pretend fever and delirium to postpone the problem of speaking to his wife and children in Tamil of which he knows nothing. And professor Thurkov, as Nargun, pretends that he has taken a vow to talk only in English for a fortnight and thus saves himself from talking in Mahrati, of which he knows nothing. The first day's problems were thus solved. Now read on:—

10

NARGUN'S House in Gopal Galli was a massive, old-fashioned, two storied building, fitted with electric lights and other modern luxuries. The elder Nargun, leading lawyer of Modalkar was past middle age when our tale opens, but he had lost none of his vitality nor money-making powers. Many a cussed murderer had he helped to escape the scaffold.

Thurkov spotted the house from a distance. It must be a relief, he thought, to escape into the house and be no more perturbed by the extraordinary questions of Nargun's class-mates who met him on the way. Ginde had asked him, "Finished reading Parkinson? I want the book back tomorrow; bring it to the College." And Gorwali, the Cricket Captain, had said at the street corner, "Nargun, you're in the College XI to play against the Police XI on Saturday. You are our best all-rounder, you know. Mind, you don't strain a muscle or smash a finger or something. Goo-night!" Worst of all, the Logic Professor who managed to know everybody in the College, had accosted him with, "Not so fast, Nargun! I recognize you! You sang well last year during the music competitions! Been to the cinema? Confess, and don't bluff! Otherwise why are you so late?" Nargun had cursed his confounded colleague for his meddlesomeness inwardly, but given a reply that vaguely had satisfied the loquacious professor. How could one go on like that, in such a mystifying, clogging atmosphere? Some fellows—God knows who—hurled at the astonished Thurkov plentiful Mahratti, gutterally vocal, and the most he could do was to escape brazenly with nods and becks and wreathed smiles. And now there was Nargun's house at long last! Deliverance—but what fresh trials were in store for the professor of chemistry!

That was not the time in any case to think of such gloomy contingencies. Thurkov should learn to behave

with restraint, coolness and tact. Clients—among them cut-throats, forgers, dacoits, insolvents, and lunatics—swarmed in the vast verandah; but they were an understanding crowd, though thoroughly motley in appearance for at Thurkov's approach they bowed all smilingly and reverently, beamed and thawed and whined. Thurkov went in briskly remembering Nargun's minute instructions, and past a miscellany of men and women went up the stairs and turning to the left entered an arched room the door of which was half-open. That must be Nargun's from its location. Not without trepidation Thurkov glanced about the well-furnished cosy study—but what was his surprise when one so like himself, though younger by one or two years, eagerly advanced towards him with a gusto of Mahratti exclamation! That was Madhu most probably—but didn't he know English? "Oh, do be quiet, Madhu" boldly put in Thurkov, "you'll disturb father and he'll come a-scolding us. I've a lot to do tonight, so please, leave me alone!" Madhu was a trifle surprised at his brother's conduct, but he smelt no rat and with a mere 'Achcha' slipped away.

This was, thought Thurkov, the first feather in his cap. Would he equally well acquit himself in the sterner struggles that would follow in its wake? Time would put his tact and sense to the crucial test. For the nonce he would do well to change his pyjamas and banian and shirt well-a-day,—there was the set of drawers Nargun had referred to—and be less conspicuous in his appearance. He had no sooner done all that, trimmed his hair so aggressively curly, and adjusted himself on the cushioned chair (how much nicer than his own at home!) and settled down to page one of Foster and Shore's physiology (for he had looked up the time-table, and tomorrow the first thing in the afternoon, the professor of Physiology and Hygiene would be grinding his students into pulp with his inexorably severe questions)—than there was an intrusion.

Prema (for the dear girl had Nargun's bright and captivating features) was the intruder. Thurkov was nervous in the presence of this thing of rare beauty and managed a semi-articulate, "Hullo, what? Ayae called me or what? You are looking exceedingly happy and glorious, my dear Prema!" She flushed and smiled mockingly and advanced towards Thurkov in the coquettish Jeanette-Macdonald manner and said: "Oh you silly, you try your English with me? I'm more than a



"I beseech you my lords and ladies, call the culprit to account!"

11

match for you, I wager. Do you know what I've got in my hand? Guess, you little orange-pip!" And she gently, mischievously clouted the head of Professor Turkov of the Chemistry Department of the local College!

Thurkov was a basket of shattered nerves. Here was a Helen in beauty leading him by the nose and he was on the brink of discovery! However, all was not lost yet and he mustered nerve to say: "Oh Prema, don't tease me; what's that? I confess I am a booby brother and that I can't make a guess!"

This sudden surrender displeased Prema who held out her hand and exhibited a dainty little gold-medal on her palm, and archly said: "There! What d'ye think of it now?"

"What do I think of it?" haltingly repeated Thurkov. "Why, what an absurd question, Prema! This is such a nice dolly thing; let me see—oh you got it as a present, you never told me! My hearty congratulations!"

Thurkov was rapidly getting acclimatised to his new surroundings, he thought; but before he could do any more thinking Prema interposed: "Now you stupid! Don't you understand? That's the medal for elocution in English, mind you! And unless you apologise, I shan't speak to you or before you in Mahratti—but hurl at you, everytime and everywhere, only English—finer English than yours, I promise."

Thurkov thanked his stars. That was all to the good. "I don't mean to apologise to you, my lady," he replied with ironic gallantry: "On the contrary, I have decided to talk only in English for the next three weeks everywhere and to everyone!"

Prema flared up: "And why, may I ask, have you come to this preposterous decision? You who were but the day before extolling to the seventh Heaven the glory of the mother tongue and the antiquity and limpidity of our Mahratti?"

That was a difficult question to answer, and very likely he might have bluffed before his fair companion, had not more intruders made his confusion worse confounded than before. They were, it was apparent, the other members of the Nargun family—the father, mother and Madhu.

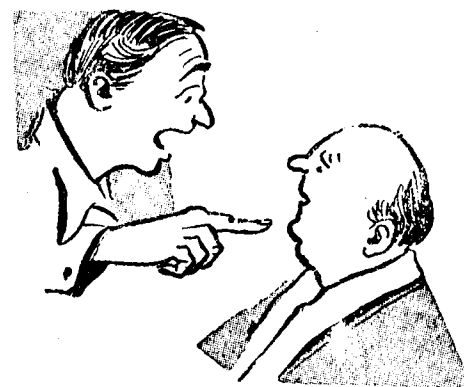
In a way though, that eased the situation so far as Thurkov was concerned. For once Prema was in a talking vein, she went on with the speed of the Deccan Queen—rushing headlong over grammatical blunders and laughable idioms and the ghats of bilingualist ranges. "Father, heard the like of that in the whole of your professional career?" she began with elfin

cunning: "your good-for-nothing first-born of a son and hare of this royal throne of Narguns—your favourite, mother, this irresponsible ninny of your *jeshthabratha*, mother, oh, you unfortunate Madhu—this, this pup of an ape will only talk in English hereafter. Just while you were coming in, your Honour, I was crossing the prisoner on the dock as to the precious reasons that prompted him to come to this hazardous decision. India blushes to hear of it; Mother Mahratti sheds tears of blood. It is an act of shame; it is a treacherous decision. I beseech you, my lords and ladies, call the culprit to account and vindicate the glory and inviolable sacredness of our mother tongue!" And then a drowning peal of laughter rose to a crescendo of mirth as everyone present participated in it.

Thurkov, the Chemistry Professor, was out of sorts in such terribly jocund company, but he must play the game. He promptly answered, bowing first to the assembled company. "Ladies and Gentlemen, lend me your ears: 'tis true I've this night decided to talk in English, only in English, and in nothing but English! But there's a saving proviso—only for three weeks! Harken to me, ladies and gentlemen, whether you acquit me or convict me! If I have erred or erred grievously, there have been necessary and sufficient reasons, as they say in Analytical Geometry. The event that, like a Catalytic agent (as we say in Chemistry) induced me to come to this strange decision, I shall presently describe. This evening in my walk I chanced to meet one of my professors, and I had to exchange a few words with him—and while so doing I had the misfortune to split an infinitive and break the necks of two or three rules of syntax. My professor was furious; he swore like Goddess Ate: he said my English was worse, much worse than a fifth-standard student's. And when parting from me, advised me to have more practice in English in my life—by reading more, writing more and above all talking more English! More and yet more and still more English! Let that be your watch-word, Nargun! So said my guru—and I, most dutiful and obedient chela

(Continued on Page 16)

DO YOU KNOW?



Please see answers on Page 16.

1. Who invented the modern type-writer?
2. Which is the largest lake in Europe?
3. What is meant by the "nebular hypothesis"?
4. What do "port" and "starboard" mean in nautical phraseology?
5. From what part of a whale is a whalebone obtained?
6. What is "fool's gold"?

BACHAI SAKAO'S CORONATION

EXTRACTS FROM A NEWSPAPER REPORT.

By "RAMONA"

ABOUT 20,000 guests were present at the Coronation of Amir Bachai Sakao, held yesterday in the Palace Hall. Among the guests were Ministers, High Court Judges, and all high officials. The Maharaja of Satapur and the Begum of Halwabad were also present. Bachai Sakao rose amidst cheers and delivered the following speech:—

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you very much for the honour you have done me by wasting (!) your valuable time and coming over here. My coronation ceremony has broken all previous records owing to the following facts:

1. A few days ago I wrote to H. M. Geza Shah to lend me his crown for a few days, but he refused because I had ringworm on my forehead and feared that he might be infected. I then wrote to Baboo Chashmawalla about it and he was good enough to steal a crown from the Prince of Wales Museum and send it by parcel post in a basket of Alphonso mangoes. Of course, the mangoes were sour.

2. According to my principles, a man must bathe only twice in a lifetime, at birth and after death. But my A. D. C. would not respect my feelings or sentiments and felled me to the ground, just as they fell an elephant in the Victoria Gardens, rubbed me with Charka Brand Bar Soap and made me seven pounds lighter.

3. At about midnight today, I felt thirsty and wanted to have a cup of milk. I went to the stable, but to my disappointment, I found the wretched buffalo sleeping. I awakened it by directing my strong Ever-ready torch on its face. It got up, kicked me and began to run round the palace. I at once remembered what one of my ministers had told me about a poet writing "Music hath its charms": and in order to pacify the brute, I tied a harmonium round my neck after the fashion of *Prabhat Pheri* people, and began to play a *gala* of the well-known *raga, Ekayapalate*. The animal, I think, was ignorant of the poet and his philosophy, and instead of submitting to me, came rushing towards me and pierced its horns in the harmonium bellows. Thank God, the harmonium acted as a shield against my tummy; otherwise I would have been in.....by now. My shouts for help brought the veteran veterinary (note the alliteration) surgeon from his bungalow. The buffalo was then chloroformed and milked. (Shouts of 'Bravo.')

4. I am the only modern dacoit, who has had the privilege of sitting on the throne, (here the Bacha removed a bug from his beard) and I advise all the parents to benefit by my experience and follow the example of my mother, and give their children the necessary training for stealing, looting etc. It is not worth while, nowadays to go in for modern education. In India, I am told, there are springing up several bogus companies, against whom Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel warned the public. I wish these companies success.

The address being over, Bacha took up the applications for disposal, and issued orders as follows:—

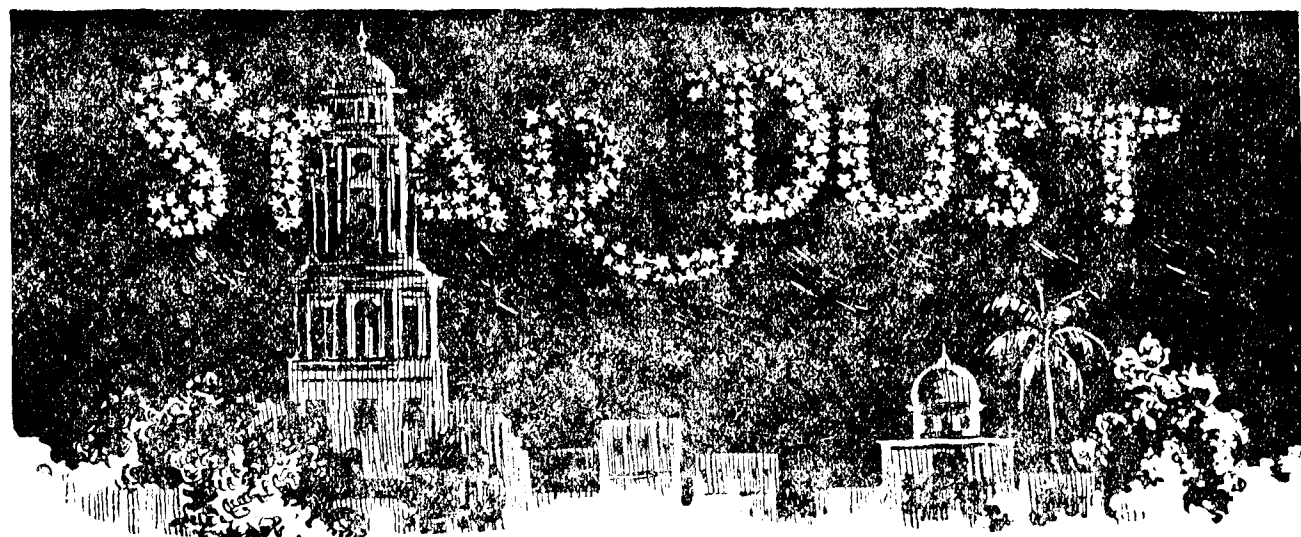
"My father's application for a permit to enter my harem is rejected, because I remember that he always used to marry the girls engaged to me in my boyhood."

"The applications from women to join my harem are also rejected because there is no vacancy there, and when I open a branch, as I intend to, these women shall be informed."

Refreshment was then served. The Maharaja of Satapur and the Begum of Halwabad began quarrelling over a piece of *badam halwa*, and from words came to blows, but the Bacha ordered them to keep quiet and fined them Rs. 40/- each. As the fine was immediately paid in cash, a discount of Rs. 1/- calculated at 2½% was given.

The ceremony being over, the Bacha was taken in procession to the mosque. On the way a crowd of about 4000 persons greeted him with black flags and shouts of 'Bacha, go back.' The Amanullaite party was dispersed by a *lathi* charge and order was thus restored.





British Fans Place the Stars

ONE eye firmly fixed on his box-office, Mr. Sydney L. Bernstein, proprietor of a chain of 31 cinemas in London and its suburbs sent his film-questionnaires last year to his patrons. He asked them for their favourite film-stars and, what is more audacious and astounding, the stars they *disliked* most.

The result is a surprise. Nearly 125,000 of his patrons responded, all voting by a large majority for George Arliss in the "Men" section and for Norma Shearer in the "Women" section.

Next to George Arliss, comes Clark Gable, whom we are all prone to misjudge as a mere *gigolo*. Then, of course, comes Wallace Beery, the 'human' actor, and winner of 1934 Motion Picture Association's Medal for the Best Acting by a male star. His acting the part of the bandit Pancho Villa in "Viva Villa" has earned him this medal. He is placed third, but should have been above Clark Gable who is just a "hurricane lover." The surprise is that Ronald Colman, who was called the most handsome film actor in 1932, has been placed sixth.

This is, after all, British taste; further, this cannot mean that the public will see only such pictures as feature their favourite stars. That way, one can see only two or three pictures a year.

Among women stars, the second place, and, not the first, is given to the late, dear old Marie Dressler. Greta Garbo is third—she is first in America!

Kay Francis is the fourth and her runner-up is Marlene Dietrich. The real joke in the choice here again is the placing of Katharine Hepburn as the sixth.

The notable fall is Fredric "Cellini" March. John Gilbert is not in the first ten at all, nor is Douglas Fairbanks for that matter.

Among the "Women" stars, Kay Francis and Marlene Dietrich retain their places still.

The first Ten "Likes" are:

MEN	WOMEN
1. George Arliss	1. Norma Shearer
2. Clark Gable	2. Marie Dressler
3. Wallace Beery	3. Greta Garbo
4. Clive Brook	4. Kay Francis
5. Robert Montgomery	5. Marlene Dietrich
6. Ronald Colman	6. Katharine Hepburn
7. Jack Hulbert	7. Gracie Fields
8. Lionel Barrymore	8. Janet Gaynor
9. Charles Laughton	9. Joan Crawford
10. Tom Walls.	10. Claudette Colbert.

Maurice Chevalier and John Boles, among men, have lost their places and taken a long dive.

And, among the women, Constance Bennett, (2nd in 1932) and Ruth Chatterton (4th in 1932) have gone down.

Of the old-time favourites, Dolores Del Rio, Betty Balfour, Clara Bow, Esther Ralston, Vilma Banky, Florence Vidor and Mary Pickford do not appear in the list at all! What has happened to Anna Sten, Elizabeth Bergner and Margaret Sullavan? They too are not there!

The "Dislikes" list is headed by James Cagney for the Men and Mae West for the Women: both of them 'naughty'. Following them are Lee Tracy and Greta Garbo. The order of the ten 'dislikes' is as under:—

MEN	WOMEN
1. James Cagney	1. Mae West
2. Lee Tracy	2. Greta Garbo
3. Adolphe Menjou	3. Jean Harlow
4. George Raft	4. Joan Crawford
5. Ralph Lynn	5. Constance Bennett
6. Joe. E. Brown	6. Marlene Dietrich
7. Owen Nares	7. Jessie Matthews
8. Maurice Chevalier	8. Katharine Hepburn
9. Wallace Beery	9. Clara Bow
10. Clark Gable.	10. Zasu Pitts.



Rajagopalan :—So one thing is settled. We go to Muttalam to escape from the further horrors of this heat.

Myself :—We don't go there as we shouldn't go there. It's a beastly place. Robbers and thieves and all that sort of thing, I hear.

Rajagopalan :—Nonsense. I know there are half a dozen tigers there, waiting for a bite at a *Madras* human anatomy,—but robbers, oh, no—not at all.

Myself :—Thieves then; burglars, cat-burglars, pick-pockets, or whatever you call those bally fellows who want to pinch your goods.

Rajagopalan :—Why, they can't lay hands on a copper in Muttalam, except once in six months. They can't do any trade there; especially now, with this slump in full swing. If they had any business instinct, they would try Cooty.

Myself :—I agree with you. These chappies don't seem to understand their job. But if they don't, that is their affair. Our concern is only that they are there.

Rajagopalan :—You are forgetting that the afore-mentioned robbers are not likely to approach us, seeing that we should be carrying with us just enough cash for three weeks' stay at a not very *posh* hotel.

Myself :—You have spoken a fairly long complex sentence. Now split it up into simple sentences, as you used to do in your schooldays. The robbers will more than approach you. They will attack you, assault you, batter you, and will probably hang, quarter and draw you. Secondly, they will discover that your cash is not much, only after making a hash of you. Perhaps you may have some satisfaction in giving them a posthumous snubbing—but personally, I am in favour of leaving Muttalam to its fate.

Rajagopalan :—What place do you suggest?

Myself :—Cooty.

Rajagopalan :—We can't think of Cooty. It is damned costly.

Myself :—Not, if you know where and how to live.

Rajagopalan :—You are not thinking of being a paying guest of one of the Secretariat people?

Myself :—That is one of the ways and means. But was thinking of cheap hotels.

Rajagopalan :—When a man goes to Cooty, he should be in a decent place. What is the point in leaving Madras and toddling all that way, if you are going to have bad grub and a rotten place to stay in?

Myself :—My dear chap, you don't know the economic conditions at present. This slump, you know—and low prices, don't you know? We can get tolerable places for very moderate prices.

Rajagopalan :—The jolly old slump does not operate that way. It stops the people, who are wondering if they should go to Cooty this year, from going there. I am hoping it will stop us any way

Myself :—You, being a literature student, don't understand Economics. Now, tell me how much filthy lucre we have got.

Rajagopalan :—Two hundred and fifty rupees.

Myself :—What is that? Rs. 250

What has happened to the other Rs. 100?

Rajagopalan :—Warm clothes. Don't you remember?

Myself :—Well, dash it, what's the use of woollen stuff if you can't wear it?

Rajagopalan :—I admit that the woollen stuff can't be used by us at Cooty, because we can't go to Cooty this year.

Myself :—Unless we reduce our proposed stay there to two weeks.

Rajagopalan :—I object, I heartily object. Even a whole month is much too short. But two weeks we shall be just getting used to the cold, when we shall have to come back to this sweltering heat.

Myself:—This warm dress has absolutely botched up things. Very well. Cooty scratched. Any other possibilities?

Rajagopalan:—Of course. Do you know the great, grand, glorious place where my lady-friend abides now?

Myself:—Oh, cut that. Our idea is to get away from the heat and not to go about wooing girls.

Rajagopalan:—I only pointed out that Poonoor affords opportunities of pleasant company.

Myself:—Poonoor is quite good, so far as it goes. Moderate living and withal the 'been-to-the-hills' touch about it. All the thrifty souls, who want to feel they are living comfortably, go there every year.

Rajagopalan:—Well, we fix up Poonoor then.

Myself:—Not so fast. There is that nasty feller, Sankar, fouling the Silgiri air with his presence. I should not like to run into him, for the proprietorship of all the hill-stations in the world.

Rajagopalan:—But we can ascertain, where he lives and then take up lodgings at the longest possible distance from him.

Myself:—I think he would feel flattered, if he knew I was bothering so much about it. Besides, I shan't take risks.

Rajagopalan:—What is your way out?

Myself:—Put Poonoor on the 'also-ran' list.

Rajagopalan:—I think I have a brain-wave.

Myself:—I'm afraid I've it too.

Rajagopalan:—Most original, let me tell you.

Myself:—Shouldn't be surprised, if it was the same idea as mine.

Rajagopalan:—We can have ice-cream ten times a day.

Myself:—Cold bath five times.

Rajagopalan:—Sleep during day and remain awake at night.

Myself:—We may try that too.

Rajagopalan:—Four pounds of ice in the rooms—windows hermetically closed and fans going at the highest speed.

Myself:—Rs. 250 to spend on useful things.

Rajagopalan:—Like books.

Myself:—Books be blown! Gramophone records.

Rajagopalan:—Not all the money on gramophone records. That would be foolish.

Myself:—It looks as if we are going to have another discussion.

Rajagopalan:—Then, we adjourn. Good-bye to hill-stations.

Myself:—Till next summer.

TOPSY TURVY—(Continued on from Page 12)

that I am, have decided to speak and write and read English only for a period of three weeks—and then evaluate the results accruing from the experiment. I'm sure, most learned members of the jury, I have done no wrong—and I'm sure you'll acquit me of all malevolence towards Mahratti and would indeed persuade India to blush less and Mother Mahratti to weep no more and my fair sister to desist from giggling in that impertinent way. I've done!

"Bravo! Nagi and Prema—what inveterate talkers you've become!" judiciously put in Nargun, the lawyer.

"But boy, your peroration is capital, without a single flaw I tell you! Who was that booby professor who told you your English was bad? And when I come to think of it, you oughtn't to have taken the Science course at all—the Arts Course and Law afterwards, and you would have been a tremendous success at the Bar! The Science Course was a gross miscalculation, I'm afraid....."

Madhu timidly intervened: "That booby professor Saheb must be the Chimisthry man—whatdye call him Nagi? That fat hippo, you used to say! I saw you two walking the Bhima Temple way."

You don't suppose Thurkov did not take to heart that perfectly tactless speech of Madhu's; but as luck would have it, with a sudden commanding gesture of the father, the company rose in a body and adjourned to the dining hall.

In part the fifth of this fantasy, Nargun springs a surprise on his students and Thurkov, and incidentally solves the difficult problem of lecturing on a subject, of which he knew nothing, to a class of hypercritical, mischievous youngsters.

YES! I KNOW!

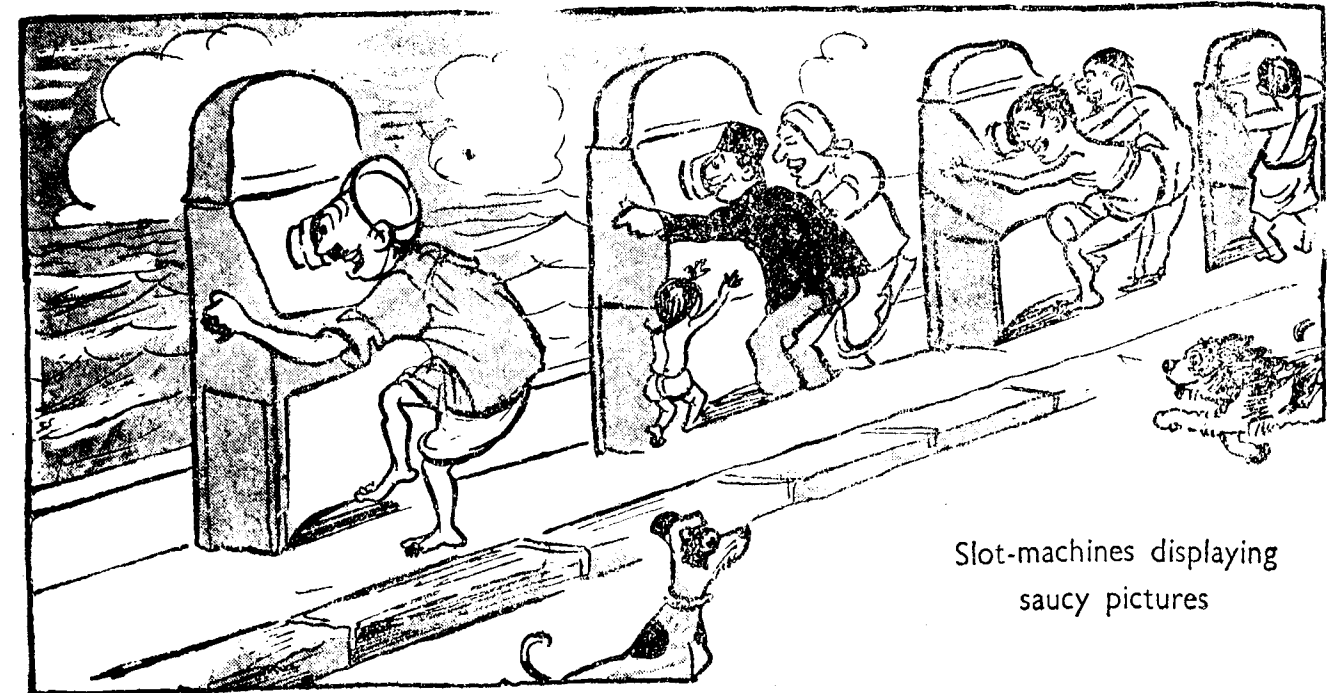


1. Charles Latham Sholes, and James Densmore.
2. Lake Ladoga in Russia and Finland covers an area of about 7000 sq. miles.
3. It is a theory to explain the formation of the stars and planets.
4. The left and the right sides of a vessel respectively when looking towards the bow.
5. From the palate. Its real name is baleen.
6. Pyrite—a mineral with a colour and glitter suggesting gold; often mistaken by inexperienced prospectors for gold-bearing rock.

For questions see Page 12.

THE LETTERS OF PRIVATE JOYFULL

33. MADRAS AS A SEASIDE-RESORT



Slot-machines displaying saucy pictures

Madras, 26th January, 1935.

DEAR MOTHER,

I am surprised that you ask if Madras is a seaside resort, and if it has a pier. Of course, you imagine a place that is visited by thousands of holiday-makers; where all the inhabitants make a living by boarding, catering for, and amusing the visitors. Madras is not like that. It is a hospitable place, but a stranger expecting to be received into anyone's house, would die of want.

When you came to think of it, the English seaside-resort is a strange institution. It has a pier, but the pier is not intended for ships. It is simply a structure on which there is a theatre, shooting-galleries, and fun-fairs. Why they should trouble to build a theatre out in the sea, no one knows. Perhaps it is because the bold islanders can tread a sea-girt deck without the inconvenience of being seasick.

It is peculiar that the bold islanders only visit the seaside at places where they have to pay to enjoy it. The journey from their lodgings to the beach is past rows of brigands, and when they have placated the brigands and reached the beach, they have to pay to sit down. If they want to swim, they have to stand meekly in a queue for two or three hours, and when at last they obtain the ticket which entitles them to bathe in the ocean, it is on payment. Should anyone behave like a free-born Briton, and go diving off the King's foreshore into the English Channel without paying anyone, he is arrested.

I think we ought to start a non-co-operation movement in England, to create a change of heart in the tyrants, who thus oppress us. We should all form processions and march to the beach singing holy songs. We could take spinning-wheels, and show passive resistance to the peaked-cap brigands with their rolls of tickets. We could offer *satyagraha* by lying down at the margin of the ocean and refusing to swim in it. After a while, the movement would extend to all the other tyrannies which we uncomplainingly suffer, such as not being allowed to buy chocolate after 8 p.m. In time, we might get a White Paper and Provincial Autonomy, like the more-favoured parts of the Empire. As it is, we poor Britons groan in chains that Parliament would not dare to impose on any other race.

In Madras, anybody can go and swim in the ocean without paying anyone. On the other hand, they can also get drowned free of charge. There are no life-guards that patrol the beach for the rescue of foolhardy bathers, nor are there many ropes or life saving appliances. This is because, if you left ropes on the beach, someone would steal them. It would be no good to put up a notice "For use only in case of drowning. Not to be taken away," because the thieves cannot read.

That is a difference between the Indian and the English character. We will obey all kinds of notices, and endure all sorts of regulations and prohibitions, provided we are persuaded they are for the common good. Indians, however, are sturdy individualists. If a gentleman of Madras wants to cross a road, he simply proceeds to the other side. Should his leisurely progress cause a few traffic-smashes, that is *dharma*.

With an Englishman, you can stop him crossing the road entirely, by simply putting up a few beacons and making a few regulations. You say to him, "We must have safeguards; it is for the good of the country," and he eagerly consents to his loss of liberty, and even writes to the newspapers suggesting ways his liberty may be further circumscribed.....for the good of the country. Indians, however, prefer liberty without safeguards. It is very hard to decide which point of view is correct. I think it depends on whether you live in England or in India.

It would be very amusing if they made Madras into a seaside resort. They already have a promenade, or monkey-parade. It is called the Marina. They could line it on one side with slot-machines displaying saucy pictures. It would be quite interesting to have the seaward side of the footpath lined from end to end with the rumps of naughty boys peering at motion-pictures entitled, "Through the bathroom keyhole," or "What father did in Paris."

On the other side of the footpath the Corporation could build small booths, and hire them out for the season at ten rupees per square inch. These booths could sell hot dogs, toy dogs, sugar dogs, china dogs, and dogs: all these are favourite purchases with seaside holiday-makers. Other stalls could sell walking-sticks, photographs, paper hats, lemonade, little spades, and bananas. Besides that there would be fortune-tellers, beauty-specialists, rug-merchants, tea-agents, sellers of imitation pearls, and vendors of ice-cream.

The sands would be divided into small areas, and leased out to various enterprises at ten rupees per square inch. There would have to be *pierrots* and Punch-and-Judy shows, of course. If religious or political organisations wanted to hold meetings, they could hire so many square inches of sand, like everyone else. At present, the people of Madras hold meetings on the sand without paying anybody; which shows the extraordinary amount of liberty there is in India. The organisers of the meeting do not even have to pay for the police, who control the assembly.

Some time ago, I was talking to an Indian, who had a great grievance. He said he went to a meeting on the sands, and suddenly a lot of policemen came and hit him on the head and drove him away. I said the same thing often happened in England, and no one

really minded much. Everybody realised that large assemblies must be controlled, and even broken up, if dangerous. Sensible people went away, without waiting to be driven away by the police, if the assembly started to become unruly.

I went on to describe the details of our management of political meetings, and my acquaintances were horrified. "What!" he shouted. "Do you actually pay for the police to come and hit you on the head?"

"Certainly," I replied. "The extra work naturally has to be paid for by someone."

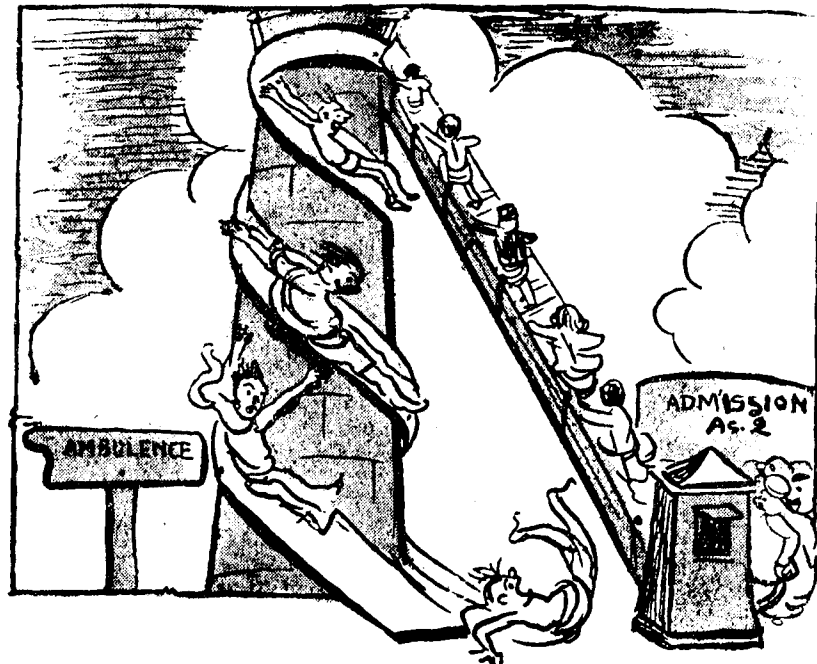
"But," he objected, "why doesn't the Government bear the cost?"

There are two things which Indians find hard to understand. Firstly, that everything must be paid for, and secondly that the Government is not a kind of magic provider that sits in Heaven surrounded by bags of gold. The Government is simply themselves, and it is ridiculous to ask the Government to provide things for which they are unwilling to pay.

I think it would lead to a much greater sense of responsibility in India, if public meetings were made to pay for their police, and individuals charged for their use of public property and Government services. No man expects the Government to carry his private letters for nothing! Yet he expects the Government to treat his private ailments free of charge. A realisation of the cost of Government would do away with the idea of the Government showering down gold from Heaven. In England we never let anyone forget that things have to be paid for. Even the King has to pay, out of his own privy purse, for the extra police required when he takes part in ceremonies or processions. Then there is the Lord Mayor of London. Neither the Government nor the City pays him anything at all, yet he is constantly

representing the Government and the City at expensive functions. It costs him three lakhs a year to entertain State visitors, hold ceremonies, and keep up the honour of the City, and every anna of it comes out of his own pocket. If he is unwilling to bear the cost, he avoids becoming a candidate for the Mayoralty. All Mayors in England are greatly out-of-pocket in the same way, and if the electors want a poor man to be Mayor, they all subscribe to enable him to meet the expense.

A helter-skelter on the old light-house



(Continued on page 23)

The Story of My Life



IV

'Shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwilling to school.....'

—ANON.

THE Elementary school building was a low thatched hall, which seldom could resist rain. Forms were arranged in squares, which constituted the classes. On one side of the square sat the master on a high chair (angle of elevation to the boys, 35 degrees). A blackboard which had grown grey in service and constantly had to be dyed and rejuvenated, a duster resembling the powdered wigs of 18th century footmen and a substantial cane completed the equipment of a class. On the walls were faded lithographs of celebrities, together with certain mottoes and inscriptions, designed to raise the morality of and inculcate righteousness in the young scamps present. There were commandments like—'Thou shalt not ink thy neighbour's jacket' and 'Thou shalt not place straw-berries under the legs of thy master's chair.' The mottoes were also interesting and edifying. 'To err is divine; to forget human' was one. Others were 'Too many

MIE

hooks spoil the frock,' 'A 'bird' at the door is worth two in the streets,' 'Make way, while the sun shines,' 'Honesty is the next best policy,' 'A friend in need is a fiend indeed' and 'Slovenliness is next after bad illness.' I am not quite sure of the wording. My memory has slightly faded with years.

Now the Headmaster was an interesting person. Unlike ordinary Headmasters he was not a prosaic, narrow-minded, unimaginative soul. He had a slight

philosophical and mystical tinge in his nature and often when eloquently describing the complications that resulted from Ali Baba's numismatic discovery, he would fly off at a tangent and speak of the futility of riches, the meaninglessness of life, of *Maya* or world-illusion and cognate things. Generally, the students used to give him a patient hearing. But one day he took such a long time over a discussion that the youngsters, who much preferred a description of caramels and ginger-bread with actual models, could no longer suffer it. However they held his cane too much in awe and esteem to ignore it entirely and walk out. One of the stoutest hearted (of the same stuff as *Oliver Twist* was made) got up and left the class with a melancholy and meditative expression on his face. The master immediately came down to earth and paused. The delinquent was summoned back. He was asked what he meant by walking out of the class. "Please, sir, when I heard you speak, I suddenly had a revelation. I perceived things as they really were. What is this school? What are we? and what are you? All this is unreal. All this is *Maya*. Why, my exit from the class itself was *Maya*."

"Oh!.....You are right my boy. As you say, all this is *Maya*. Now stand by that wall and I shall explain my thought better. Pull down your knickers, will you? That is right. Now take this, and this. Why, you are crying. Why should you? Don't you see that this is also *Maya*?" The boy never again turned philosophic and curiously the master also abandoned his lectures on the subject.

Our school, I should have mentioned, was a mixed one; and being a school for children, no distinction between the sexes was made. The authorities thought that the children were too young to be sex-conscious. They were wrong, however. I can remember vividly two instances, where children showed symptoms of sex awakening. One day during an inspection of the school, the master of one class started testing the class before the inspector. A young girl was asked—

"Tell me, Kalyani, what is F-A-T-H-E-R?"

"Father. Daddy, sir."

"And M-O-T-H-E-R?" "Mother. Mummy, sir"

"Yes, now, A-U-N-T?" "Aunt. Mummy's sister, sir."

"Good, and S-I-S-T-E-R?" "Sister,—Rukmini over there, sir."

"Well, and H-U-S-B-A-N-D?"

The girl (shyly), "Please, sir, I shan't say that."

"Why not? come, come, answer like a good girl." The girl remained silent, looking down.

"Now, Kalyani, what is the matter? Don't you know it? Tell me in the vernacular what it means."

The girl, at last, blushing "My cousin Venu, sir!"

The other instance, I referred to was the case of a boy. It was much more serious. It is of such a nature that mixed schools are likely to be abolished should more of such cases occur. In fact it was a case of love. I am not mistaken. I can speak authoritatively of it, because, I know all about it. *I was the boy!*

Stranger Than Fiction

By
Ram Saran Sharma



She might, who knows, become the Empress of Hindustan. But Kasim—she looked side ways at him.....

"THE problem seems to defy any solution," said she.

"Exactly, Dilara. I don't see how we can marry."

She was Dilara. A full blooming girl of sweet sixteen. Her big hazel eyes, her creamy white skin tinged with the cherry blossom glow of youth on her cheeks; her Amazonian chin and rich red lips ravished the hearts of all who saw her.

No wonder that Kasim succumbed to her charms. He was a tall, powerfully built man with a shadowless past and a confident future. He came of a humble origin. But he had risen to the office of Asstt. Bakhshi in the Moghal Army.

Kasim continued, "Really, Dilara, it seems impossible—I, a poor water-carrier, to aspire to marry Dilara, the daughter of Khan Sherjung, a Pathan."

He stopped, Dilara sat silent. Her big eyes grew moist, as she realized the situation.

"Must my dream be shattered?" she spoke hoarsely, "Our secret meetings, our hopes of future happiness must they come to nought?" Her voice broke. She gulped, fighting back her sobs and continued, "Oh Kasim, please, can't we run away?"

She looked at him to see how he took the suggestion. The evening shadows were dark. His face was darker. He sighed.

"I have thought over it, it can't be; your father is too powerful. We will be hounded out."

"Oh, God, Kasim, I love you so," and she looked at him. His eyes were moist. His lips quivered with suppressed emotion.

They looked up. A puny figure of a man was approaching. His forehead was painted with sandal paste, the sacred thread peeped out of his jacket. He had a bundle of old books under his arm.

"Fortune, O Khan, O greater than the great Khans, in your forehead I behold the vision of Mars and Venus. If only Jupiter had not interfered! Let me study your palm and disclose your future."

"Oh, go away please."

But Dilara was interested.

"Oh, Kasim dear," she said, "let me show my hand."

The astrologer peered over the delicate hand before him. Suddenly he bent low and he exclaimed:—

"Mars has no affinity to you; Venus looks askance; Jupiter inclines to you but once; Saturn, the wisest in the heavens, is your star. I see royal patronage on your head." Dilara was flattered. She smiled.

"Your wishes will be fulfilled by a king," added the astrologer.

Dilara's tears dried. No wonder. She was a Pathan girl. And she had a charming face. If the king were to marry her. The palace, the maids, the jewellery. She might, who knows, become the Empress of Hindustan. But Kasim.....she looked side ways at him....he was a water-carrier by birth, if not by profession...a mere nobody and she, well.....

Kasim suddenly stiffened. Dilara peered. Out of the dark shadows of the trees emerged some armed figures.

"*Mayo! Kill!*" they shouted, as they fell on Kasim.

Kasim unarmed and surprised, could not even resist. He was captured.

"Wretch of a water-carrier," hissed a youth, "You dared so much. You must die."

Turning to Dilara he asked sharply, "How did you come here?"

She was still dazed. Royal patronage....Empress of Hindustan.....the word rang in her ears. The imperial jewels seemed to glitter before her eyes. She almost fancied herself on the threshold of the Emperor's Palace.

"He brought me here," she said. Kasim turned to her sharply. But before he could utter a word, he lay there lifeless with a dozen wounds.

II

It was the prison at Agra.

An old couple and a young man stood in the room meant for interviews with prisoners. The three were much troubled. The couple had red swollen eyes, presumably because of tears. The young man was very gloomy. They looked expectantly on the other side of the bars, where the

unfortunates were to come. The prison *daroga* sat on a stool, twisting his moustache.

"Ah, there she comes," cried the old man.

Dilara and her brother entered, chains clanging on their ankles. Dilara was strangely calm. Her face was set and her eyes were bright. She seemed to be walking with supreme nonchalance. Her brother dragged his feet behind her and was too thin and emaciated to be recognised as the dashing youth of those old, far off, days.

"Oh, Dilara, darling," her mother sobbed, "Oh, my son!"

"My poor, dear Dilara," her father sobbed.

"My son, how are you?"

"Quite well, mother dear," replied Dilara calmly. "Father, you look pulled down."

"Of course he does and your mother too," said her uncle, "Don't you know the latest news?"

Dilara raised her eyebrows.

"What—what is it?" her brother faltered.

"Too bad. You know when the Emperor Humayun was fleeing from the forces of Sher Shah, and had plunged into the flooded Ganges, Nizam, the water-carrier, saved him from drowning."

"So?"

"And this Nizam was promised half a day's rule over Hindustan by the Emperor. And Nizam is Kasim's brother."

The mother burst into tears.

"Woe is me," moaned the father.

"And that means that whatever happens, you two are doomed," said the *daroga*.

Dilara gave him a look of scorn and said:—

"We deserve it, too. At least I do. I got him killed."

"No, you didn't. I did it," said her brother rallying his vestiges of heroism.

Dilara went on, not heeding him. Her parents looked at her as she spoke in a cold, almost unconcerned way.

"Yes, I loved him. I went with him."

"But you said.....," broke in her uncle.

Dilara stopped him with a gesture, "Yes, I loved him. But that astrologer gave me hopes of being the Empress of Hindustan and woman-like, I lost my head." She paused. And then continued:



She seemed to be walking with supreme nonchalance.



There was a deep inhaling of breath all around. The nobles prepared themselves to witness the wreaking of the imperial vengeance on the heads of the unfortunates. The man, who till yesterday was a mere nonentity, today could make or mar the destiny of millions. Fate's prank it was.

The *chobdar* announced their entry. The two prisoners advanced surrounded by the guards. Dilara was walking steadily, but her head was bent. Her brother was pale, deathly pale, and his knees knocked against each other as he moved. The court was hushed in silence.

Everybody speculated on the tortures that awaited them.

As they neared the throne the guards kneeled and kissed the ground. All eyes suddenly turned towards the throne. The Emperor had risen up.

Would he kill them himself, they wondered.

What would he do?

A slave hurriedly whispered to another slave to beg the ladies to go away from the balcony.

Dilara's brother kissed the ground, but Dilara only bowed.

The nobles were horror-struck at this flagrant breach of etiquette. This insolence would surely add fuel to the Emperor's fury. She was mad, stark mad. No hope.

The Emperor approached them with slow steps, looking at them intently. Dilara looked at him. Her face looked confused. Once it became red, and then again ashen white.

Her loosened curls trembled slightly on her cheeks, as Dilara shivered. Not out of fear but because this was the supreme moment of her life when she would pay the penalty. She had waited for it.

The Emperor stopped. He turned to the trembling brother of Dilara and said, "I free you, you may go."

He stifled a moan and was too overcome to speak. He stood staring at the Emperor.



The Emperor Stopped

"Yes, I must pay the penalty for my treachery. The retribution has begun. It shall only be complete, when I am beheaded by his brother. I am happy, at the thought that I shall soon kneel before him and beg his pardon."

She turned and left. Her parents sat staring after her, unable to speak a word.

"My God, who could have thought of it?" said her uncle.

"The interview is over," announced the *daroga*.

III

His Imperial Majesty, Nizam Shah, the one-day Emperor of Hindustan sat on the throne of the Great Moghal. The entire nobility was present, by order of umayun, to do homage to him.

Row after row of the great nobles sat in silence, broken only by a whisper or two. The Emperor Nizam was silent and pensive. What was worrying the Emperor? Could there be an execution or the gift of a *jagir*? The nobles watched and waited.

Suddenly the Emperor seemed to make up his mind. He sat up and ordered:—

"Bring the prisoner, Dilara, and her brother here."

The courtiers gasped. The whole brunt of the Emperor's fury was to be borne by Dilara, the root cause of the trouble. They waited in painful suspense to hear her fate.

"What shall I do to you?" asked the Emperor.

Dilara replied, "Death is the fitting reward for a traitor."

"Death is too painful. You are yet young."

"Death is a pleasure, when it is a payment for our sins. I look upon death as the threshold beyond which I will meet your brother. My youth died with your brother."

"You don't know what you are saying."

"I know it. I am rather looking up to death to ease my agony."

"Listen, my dear," said the Emperor as he patted Dilara on the shoulder, his voice husky with emotion, "I free you. You were the darling of my brother. I free you."

The courtiers fell back, too surprised for words. They looked on. Dilara was speaking anxiously, eagerly.

"Your Majesty is denying me the only means to expiate my sin."

"I free you," murmured the Emperor. And then struck by a thought, he asked, "Name anything you like. And name it high."

Dilara paused to think. In a moment her eyes lit up.

"I want one lakh gold *mohurs*," she said.

So, the courtiers smiled. Money! Was she not grateful that he had acquitted her? The wench! She wanted money; after all this talk of love and punishment! She ought to have been grateful for his kindness. But, no, one never knew a woman.

"You shall have them," said the Emperor and then tenderly, very tenderly asked, "My dear, what will you do with them?"

The courtiers craned their necks to hear her reply.

"I will build a mausoleum over your brother's grave and live there."

The Emperor's head bent, the courtiers' heads bowed lower at this heroic resolve of a sorrowful woman.

The Letters of Private Joyfull—(Continued from page 18)

No one seems to have thought of a shop to provide the citizens of Madras with toy buckets and spades with which to divert themselves on the beach. As soon as an Englishman sees a nice stretch of sand, he wants to start digging, and making something. Generally it is an elaborate sand-castle with strong walls and a paper flag flying proudly over the keep. Then he fights an exciting battle with the tide, trying to defend his castle against the encroaching waves. The waves always win, but it is a noble contest, in which the castellan is defeated, but not disgraced.

I think the citizens have a prejudice against buckets and spades, because they are supposed to be implements of humble labour. Not long ago I was talking to a gentleman who had just come back from England. "Bah!" he said. "The English are a nation of sweepers!"

I thanked him for the compliment, and agreed that we liked to keep our towns and houses clean. I asked how he had noticed that we were fond of sweeping. He seemed rather disconcerted, but in the end said he had stayed at a hostel in London, and the head of the hostel was an Earl's daughter, and she used to sweep the dining-room with her own hands. I said I was glad to hear it, because some of these daughters of the nobility were inclined to be lazy. At this he went away muttering that I was mad.

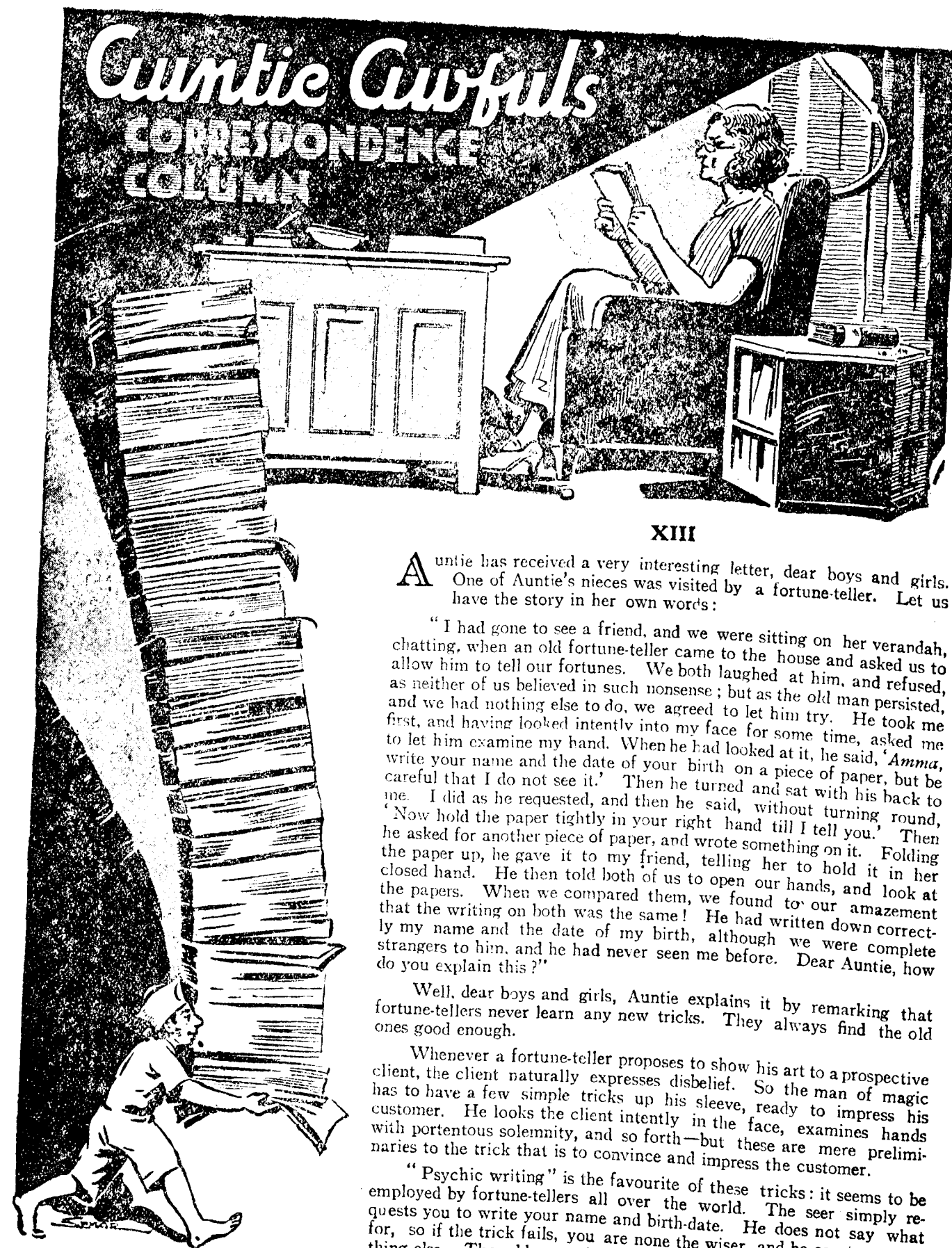
I suppose the greatest change in Madras as a seaside-resort would be in the town. Imagine every house bearing announcements ranging from "High Class Private

Hotel," to "Superior Apartments," then just "Apartments," and so on down to "Rooms," "Good Beds," and just "Beds." The father of five marriageable daughters would proclaim, "Boarding-house for young gentlemen only," while the caterer for strolling-players stipulated, "Cash strictly in advance."

Think of all the derelict sites that could be used up. They could have a helter-skelter on the old lighthouse outside the High Court and a merry-go-round attached to the Ripon statue. The City Fathers could run a giant wheel outside the municipal offices, and a scenic railway in the grounds of the Moore Market. "Let the Mayor and Corporation take you for a ride," would be a popular slogan. They could have Venetian gondolas on the Buckingham Canal, and one-anna steamboats on the Red Hill Lakes. All constables on point duty could wear notices, "Come to Madras!", while residents on the shores of the Cooum River could advertise their wonderful health-giving ozone. Merchants in China Bazaar could announce to visitors, "Don't go elsewhere to be robbed! Step right inside!"

Some people might object that these modern methods would destroy the dignity and old-world charm of the Presidency Town. These innovations would, however, have one great advantage. They would bring in so much revenue to the Corporation that it might be able to give the town a good clean-up.

Your Loving Son,
OBEAH JOYFULL.



XIII

Auntie has received a very interesting letter, dear boys and girls. One of Auntie's nieces was visited by a fortune-teller. Let us have the story in her own words:

"I had gone to see a friend, and we were sitting on her verandah, chatting, when an old fortune-teller came to the house and asked us to allow him to tell our fortunes. We both laughed at him, and refused, as neither of us believed in such nonsense; but as the old man persisted, and we had nothing else to do, we agreed to let him try. He took me first, and having looked intently into my face for some time, asked me to let him examine my hand. When he had looked at it, he said, 'Ammma, write your name and the date of your birth on a piece of paper, but be careful that I do not see it.' Then he turned and sat with his back to me. I did as he requested, and then he said, without turning round, 'Now hold the paper tightly in your right hand till I tell you.' Then he asked for another piece of paper, and wrote something on it. Folding the paper up, he gave it to my friend, telling her to hold it in her closed hand. He then told both of us to open our hands, and look at the papers. When we compared them, we found to our amazement that the writing on both was the same! He had written down correctly my name and the date of my birth, although we were complete strangers to him, and he had never seen me before. Dear Auntie, how do you explain this?"

Well, dear boys and girls, Auntie explains it by remarking that fortune-tellers never learn any new tricks. They always find the old ones good enough.

Whenever a fortune-teller proposes to show his art to a prospective client, the client naturally expresses disbelief. So the man of magic has to have a few simple tricks up his sleeve, ready to impress his customer. He looks the client intently in the face, examines hands with portentous solemnity, and so forth—but these are mere preliminaries to the trick that is to convince and impress the customer.

"Psychic writing" is the favourite of these tricks: it seems to be employed by fortune-tellers all over the world. The seer simply requests you to write your name and birth-date. He does not say what for, so if the trick fails, you are none the wiser, and he can try something else. The odds are that you will write the information on a

letter-pad or scribbling-block—that is the sort of writing-paper most people have in their houses. The seer does not want to see the writing—oh dear, no! You can go in the next room and write, if you like. But after you have written, the seer wants another piece of paper, the next sheet of paper from the pad. This sheet will bear a faint impression of what you have written. From this he knows all.

Sometimes, clients write on an odd scrap of paper, or otherwise behave awkwardly. In such a case, the fortune-teller performs some ritual, in the course of which he can secretly discover what you have written. If this cannot be done without suspicion, the fortune-teller gives up the trick, and you are none the wiser, because you did not know he was going to do it. He disposes of the paper by some meaningless mumbo-jumbo and tries again with a different trick.

There are about a dozen of these tricks, and they all have the same characteristic. The victim is persuaded into giving information unwittingly, and then the fortune-teller passes-off the knowledge as having been gained by psychic means.

The second or third trick is sure to be successful, and the client is duly impressed. That is why fortune-tellers are so persistent. They know that, given an opportunity, they can impress the most hardened sceptic. Once the client is impressed, the fortune-teller can get good rupees for whatever further bunkum he cares to tell. It is usually shrewd bunkum, based on the client's appearance, manner, and circumstances.

Ammma should not feel chagrined at having been taken in so easily. These tricks are effective with the cleverest of people. Every year, hard-headed business men meet strangers in the street, and persuaded by a bit of *hokum*, innocently buy gold-bricks from them. The heads of banks encounter persuasive aliens, and in no time are handing them rolls of money to prove that they are persons in whom the aliens may have confidence. Eminent financiers meet gentlemen from America, and practically at a moment's notice give them large cheques in order to share the inheritance of a beautiful girl who happens to be imprisoned in a castle in Spain. In fact, as my old grandmother used to say, there is one born every minute.

Vartha (Park Town). Auntie sincerely sympathises with your distress over your greying hair. Though you are only 19, I am afraid you must regard it as a natural development which does not indicate any loss of youth. Of course, you are the target of many ill-natured jokes; but you know yourself to be young and healthy, and you should learn to ignore these taunts. The pigmentation of the hair is a somewhat mysterious process which even specialists do not completely understand. Several famous men became grey-haired before they were 25, and no treatment was of any avail. There is a famous musician who became grey at an early age. He was so sensitive about it that he had his head shaved, and now always wears a wig. I do not advise this, as really natural wigs are expensive, and the wearing of them is troublesome. Nor do I advise dyeing the hair. In time it makes the hair brittle, and eventually it will not take the correct colour, and gets a metallic appearance. There are many expensive patent remedies for grey hair, but none of them are worth the price charged. They all depend on merely cleaning and oiling the scalp,

in the hope that the natural growth will be encouraged. They all contain oils, such as coconut-oil or linseed-oil, for softening the scalp, and spirit—*rubbing*—to cleanse it. Ordinary coconut-oil is as good as any patent stuff. Before each application you should shampoo the hair, to keep the scalp clean as well as oiled. The oil should be well rubbed-in with the fingers, as massage is beneficial also. This cannot be guaranteed to restore the colour of the hair, but it will keep it healthy. The most expensive of treatments can do no more. Thank you for the offer of the picture-albums, dear boy. Auntie would like you to send them to the children's ward at the hospital, where they would be greatly appreciated.

A. P. V. (Park Town). "My neighbour has threatened to pull my nose every time he meets me in the street. What do you advise me to do?" Auntie thinks you had better procure a false nose from a firm of theatrical suppliers. The best sort are the ones that emit a stream of ink when squeezed.

Neely Nephew (no address). Auntie was quite upset to read your opinion of the dear Editor. Fancy saying that he seems to be asleep! The poor man is slaving day and night, providing ever better and brighter material for the Magazine: and I ask you, where could you obtain a finer two annas' worth? So far from ignoring your letters, Auntie knows that the dear Editor gives careful consideration to every communication from readers. If you do not get a reply at once, it is because it takes time to get things into print. For instance, the Christmas numbers of London magazines are written during midsummer, and poor Auntie has to imagine stories with snow on the ground, at a time of the year when the asphalt is boiling on the pavements. Never mind, dear boy, Auntie is sending you some toffee for your birthday, but not this year.

Lonely (Yeravada). "My husband has been working for the Government for the last eighteen months, and I only see him now and again." Cheer up, my dear. If he behaves himself, he may earn a remission of part of his sentence.

Bashful (Nazirabad). No, dear boy, Auntie does not advise you to take your wife's mother on your honeymoon. A honeymoon is a sort of football match that does not require a referee.

On Tour (Bihar). Auntie has sent you patterns of making a collapsible table and chair, but the trouble with these things is that they collapse at the wrong time. Carefully follow the instructions, and after collapsing to the floor a few times in the middle of solemn *durbars*, you can chop up the chair for firewood.

Annoyed (Egmore). "How can I prevent my cook from stealing sugar and flour?" Discharge him, my dear, and before engaging another cook, make sure that he has wings and a harp.

Economical (Secunderabad). To make Easter buns, my dear, you had better build a special oven in your compound. Make the bun-mixture very carefully, mark each bun, and put them in the oven. They will come out black and smoking. Throw them away, and go to the baker's shop and buy some.

Novice (Madras). "I have bought a second-hand car. I have not driven before, but I am going to learn this evening on the Marina. Would you advise me to insure the car?" Auntie advises you to insure yourself.

THE room was silent, save for the monotonous ticking of the clock. Saroja was writing at her table. Her pen moved swiftly and smoothly, and she never seemed at a loss for a word. A magazine lay open by the side of the lamp on her table.

THE LOVE LETTER

By G. ANANTHAN

The clock struck twelve, and Mani returned home from the talkie. Through the half open door, he could see his wife writing at her table. Silently, he tiptoed to the door and entered the room. Saroja was so absorbed in her work that she did not notice her husband walking towards her table with quiet steps. Standing behind her chair, he read what his wife had written. The very first words gave him a shock, and his suppressed gasp brought Saroja back to earth. A quick turn of the head showed her Mani in a furious temper. Swiftly she hid the paper between the pages of the magazine, and asked him lovingly, "Well, dear, how did you enjoy the film?"

"How did you enjoy your lo...?" he began wrathfully, and then checked himself.

"What, dear?" she asked placidly.

"Nothing," he muttered. "Why are you sitting up so late? It is past twelve now."

"I had to write a letter to a friend. Reply overdue."

He could not sleep that night. The green-eyed monster had caught him by the scruff of his neck, and its grip was hourly growing stronger. "Damn it all," he said to himself. "I saw it with my own eyes. One doesn't begin a letter to a friend with 'my own dearest darling.' And then there was that 'thousand kisses.' Saroja's a flirt, there can be no mistake about it. My grand-mother was right, when she objected to my marriage with an educated girl."

Thus began the rift in the domestic lute. Outwardly they kept up appearances, but the tension could be felt. As the days passed, Mani grew morose and silent. Though Saroja appeared the same as usual, it was clear that they were drifting apart.

One day, a month later, the postman brought a money-order for one hundred rupees to Saroja. Without explaining anything to Mani, she left the house muttering "I have got some visits to pay."

Mani grew indignant. He determined once for all to find out the truth about his wife. This kind of sus-

pense was worse than hell. A search of Saroja's room, he said to himself, must reveal everything. The search began and ended without Mani being any the wiser for it. Disheartened and thoughtful, he went to her table and glanced idly at an open magazine thereon. An announcement in bold print forced itself on his attention—"Love Letter Competition" he read with wide-open eyes. "Mrs. Saroja B. Sc., wins the first prize of Rs. 100."

The door opened and Saroja walked in saucily with a mischievous smile playing round her lips.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" he almost shouted.

"How dare you suspect me?" she retorted.

To hide his discomfiture, he clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

And I thought I might finish it, while waiting for you."

"Oh, is that so?" he exclaimed sceptically. Next moment, he forced a bitter smile on his lips and went out of the room.



—he could see his wife writing at her table.

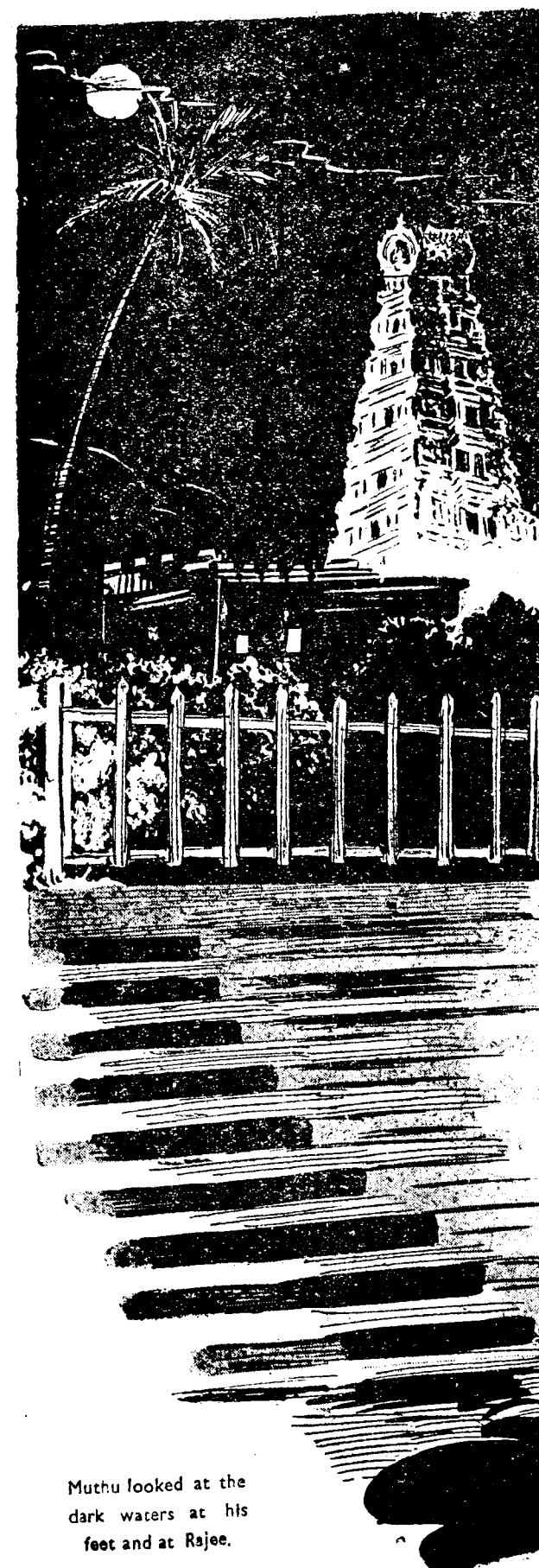


Saroja was so absorbed in her work...

Silver Clouds

By 'VIRGINIA'

LIKE the Lord himself, in whose image she was dressed that day, little Rajee wandered about, looking wonderingly at the bright electric lamps and the flying vehicles hooting and ringing. The *jigina* and *jarikai* on her small velvet coat and knickers sparkled like cut diamonds. Her black hair, profuse for a child of two years, was gathered up into a bewitching side-knot above her forehead, around which circled a chain of gleaming gold. From the centre of this knot stood an 'eye' of peacock feather, moving slightly hither and thither in the passing wind. A double-chain gold necklace hung round her delicate neck over the coat, ending in a pendant, set with sapphires and rubies. Round her bare arms, which the hands of the coat failed to cover, were circlelets of gold, and on her wrists were four pairs of bangles of the latest design. She wore rings of various shapes on her tiny fingers and her left hand held a toy flute, made of gold paper and silk tassels. Her right hand was full of soft *sundal* which she was conveying to her shapely mouth now and then. As little Rajee walked on, the anklets on her legs made a rhythmic sound, which was lost in the noises of the city. It was a sight to see Rajee that day! A glimpse of her celestial face with the two drops of topaz hanging down her ear-ends would have been enough



Muthu looked at the dark waters at his feet and at Rajee.

to make your heart flow with happiness born of Heaven itself.

Muthu was hungry. He hated people and noise, witness his hovel in the bush on the outskirts of the town, but he had to come and move among them to satisfy the incessant cravings of his stomach. All that day he had hung on the fringes of crowds, walked in the crowded streets and hovered about open shop counters without any pickings whatever. There had been various hindrances in the shape of vigilant shop-boys, suspicious constables and very tender-skinned people, conscious of even a feather touch. Muthu had more than once served his term in the City and Vellore jails and the C.I.D.'s had an eye on him. He knew that and had to be very, very cautious.

It was just after he had given the slip to an over-curious police official that his greedy glance fell on a little child walking apparently all alone a few feet in front of him. He looked at the small figure with ravenous eyes and his mind was busy calculating the aggregate amount the jewels would realise.

That was the sixth day of the *navratris*. The hour was about seven at night. The sky was cloudy. The street was half deserted. He looked about him. There was a small shop nearby. He bought sweets for a pice. In two strides, he came up to the child and called in the softest tone he could manage "Dear!" Rajee stopped and looked inquiringly at the barbarous face thrust so close to hers. Muthu bent down still further and held out a chocolate. Rajee saw it and hastily dropping the *sundal*, reached for the sweet and took it. "Come on, child," said Muthu, opening and holding out his arms invitingly. Rajee always enjoyed a ride. It was much nicer than walking. So Muthu took her and holding her to his shoulder walked away rapidly through dark roads and comparatively deserted streets, while Rajee comfortably reclined on his strong muscles, chewing with relish the sweets that Muthu kept giving her.

Muthu was an adept in unclasping jewels. His deft fingers moved soothingly and skilfully among the ornaments and by the time he reached the Parthasarathy Temple Tank, there was not a single jewel on Rajee worth four annas! Carefully he looked about him. People were walking in the streets and the tank was deserted, except for a sleeping figure on one of the western steps. Quickly he slid in and descended the steps. One of the passing clouds hid his descent. The wind was cool. From inside the temple came the sound of clanging bells. Muthu looked at the dark waters at his foot and at Rajee.....

A frenzied mother ran rapidly from room to room in her house calling "Rajee! Rajee!" With sinking heart and querulous voice she entered the last room, and the awful truth that Rajee was missing came like a blast, withering her heart and freezing her blood. She ran wildly into the street and called out: "Rajee! Rajee! Dear!" Eagerly she searched the by-streets and enquired in the neighbouring houses. Her body shaking like an aspen leaf and her hands wringing and clinging to one another, she came back to her house. "My Rajee,

my dear child! Where are you?" she moaned and fell down in a swoon.

A scene of havoc and madness greeted Krishnaswamy that day on his return from office. A crowd had collected at the entrance to his house and people were discussing some apparently absorbing topic. All his neighbours were in the house. His family doctor was bending down over the prostrate form of his wife, holding some phial to her nostrils. As soon as he arrived, there was a babel of voices, and dozens of tongues strove to convey the horrible news to him that Rajee was missing.....Rajee missing? His darling? It could not be.

Something went snap inside him. He ran out of the house and after some frantic attempts at search, made his way to the Ice House Police Station. There he was received sympathetically and on being asked to make a statement, realised that he did not know the actual circumstances under which the child was lost or the dress and ornaments she wore. He came back to the house. Fortunately his wife had recovered consciousness. He took her to the Police Station in the car of the obliging doctor and there had a complete statement deposed. A detailed description of the lost child was telephoned to every police station and constables on patrol duty were ordered to keep a careful look out. Like prisoners waiting to hear their doom, Krishnaswamy and his wife waited at the Police Station, hope ebbing away as time passed on.

Muthu looked at the dark waters at his feet and at Rajee. The cloud above passed away and the peeping moon revealed to Muthu a beautiful little face innocently smiling at him. The smile was rapturous, beatific, celestial. A glorious feeling passed through his hardened heart, a feeling he had never known before, a feeling he could not analyse or identify. He felt the warmth of the little hand round his neck and the warmth of the soft body against his chest. The little heart was beating. Would he silence it?.....With fearful eyes he glanced round him. Still there was no one near about. Quickly he ascended the steps and closely hugging the child to him, made his way southwards.

By the time Muthu reached his hovel beside the burning grounds, Rajee had fallen into a trance. He laid the sleeping child on the worn out mat and lit a smoky kerosene lamp. He drew a horrid looking *peechee* knife out of the low thatched roof and in the feeble light, dug at the corner of the hut. In a minute he had unearthed a tin cigarette-container and opening it had emptied the contents on to his palm. They consisted of a bright four-anna piece, one nickel anna coin and two pice. Dropping back the silver coin in the hole, he covered it with the lid of the container, threw the loose earth over it, picked up the container and the rest of the money, came out, carefully closed the palm-leaf door and hurried down towards a hotel near the Ice House Road Police Station.

In less than three minutes he was back at the hut and was bending over Rajee, his face a glorious study in the flickering light. Gently he awoke her, kissed her

cheek and held the tin of sweetened milk to her pretty little lips.

Umapathy, the swimming champion of the Tanjore district, studying for his degree in the Madras Christian College, was returning from the beach and had just entered the North Square Street of the Parthasarathy Temple tank, when he observed a dark figure descending the steps of the tank. In the darkness he could not make out anything clearly but the figure seemed to carry a bundle on its shoulders. Instinctively, he stepped to the side of the nearest masonry part of the railings and stood watching. He saw the figure halt at the bottom, step near the water edge, and the sight that the peeping moon revealed to him sent a chill through his heart. With a gasp he realised that the thing on the shoulders of the man was a child! He saw the man look about him. Umapathy immediately stepped out. The man was however quicker. He had ascended the steps in less than a minute and was hastily making good his escape. Umapathy followed him with much difficulty, as far as the turning to the cremation grounds, but beyond that he saw the inadvisability of following him alone. Probably the fellow was armed, and the pathway was certainly lonely.

Five minutes later, an eager father, an anxious mother and an interested Police Officer were listening to the curious tale that Umapathy had to tell. An expedition was improvised and they set out.

"I dare say the fellow had seen me; otherwise he would have thrown the child into the water," Umapathy was saying; "even now every moment is fraught with danger. We shall hope that we may see the child alive! I would he had thrown it into the water! I could have been then sure of saving it."

"Get up, Muthu! And for your own sake seek not to play with that awkward weapon in your hand. Drop it down immediately like a good boy, or I will be compelled to put an ounce or so of lead in some part of your anatomy" said a clear, hard voice.

Startled Muthu sprang up, turned and recognised the speaker as Sub-Inspector Kanchi. Behind him stood two stalwart constables like springs under tension.

Further behind them a man and a woman were trying to force their way in. Near Kanchi stood a man, an utter stranger to Muthu. Muthu looked at them and at the muzzle of the revolver or pistol, he could not say which. He saw the foolishness of putting up a fight. The *peechee* knife dropped down and stuck in the soft earth.

"There is my Rajee!" cried the father, who was now inside the hut. He flew to the sleeping form and

gathered the awakening child to his breast. "She lives! She lives!" he cried with an ecstatic catch in his voice. "God be praised!" cried the mother. "My Rajee, my darling!" She was weeping, as she pressed the wondering child to her bosom in her turn.

"If you had not thought of enquiring at this hovel, Inspector," said Umapathy, "he would have killed the child and buried it in that big hole he was digging, and we would never have known!" The Inspector nodded. The mother shuddered and hugged the child closer. The father glared at Muthu. The constables looked knowingly at the *peechee* knife.

Muthu's heart was a chaos. If he had not been so powerless as he then was, at least one tooth of Umapathy would have parted company with his mouth that day, strong as Umapathy was. Even as it was, Muthu turned to him. "Fool!" he shouted with vehemence. "Even Satan will not harm that child! I dug that hole to bury the jewels she was wearing."

The Sub-inspector laughed. "Oh! My virtuous man! Incarnation of Innocence! Come, come, tell that story to the judges and let us see what they think," he said and signed to the policemen. They approached Muthu. There was the click of steel manacles.

"*Amma, amma,*" said the child and pointed to Muthu.

"Did the *poochandi* take my Rajee away?" asked the mother between her tears and kisses.

"Yes, *amma*. He gave me chocolate and milk. I want to go to *poochandi-i-i-i-i-i*," lisped Rajee and kicked her heels. The mother was shocked.

Muthu looked wistfully at the girl. There was a far-away look in his moist eyes, as he quietly obeyed the order of his captor and walked out of the hut. Rajee began to weep, as Muthu was led out.

Muthu got six months R.I., the child's statements and the half-emptied tin of milk pulling him out of a worse sentence.

It is now a year since the events happened. No harm of the slightest consequence has befallen Rajee, since that exemplary servant was employed by Krishnaswamy four months ago. Shunmugam had come to him recommended by a friend and was everything that could be desired in a servant. Especially he was a splendid companion. So at least thought Krishnaswamy, as he heard the cackling laughter of his Rajee and looked on the doting face of the big burly man, playing with her in the moonlight under drifting Silver Clouds.

Keep this copy of The Merry Magazine.

It may bring you a Prize.

ON BIRTH-CONTROL

By P. K. RAJA VARMA

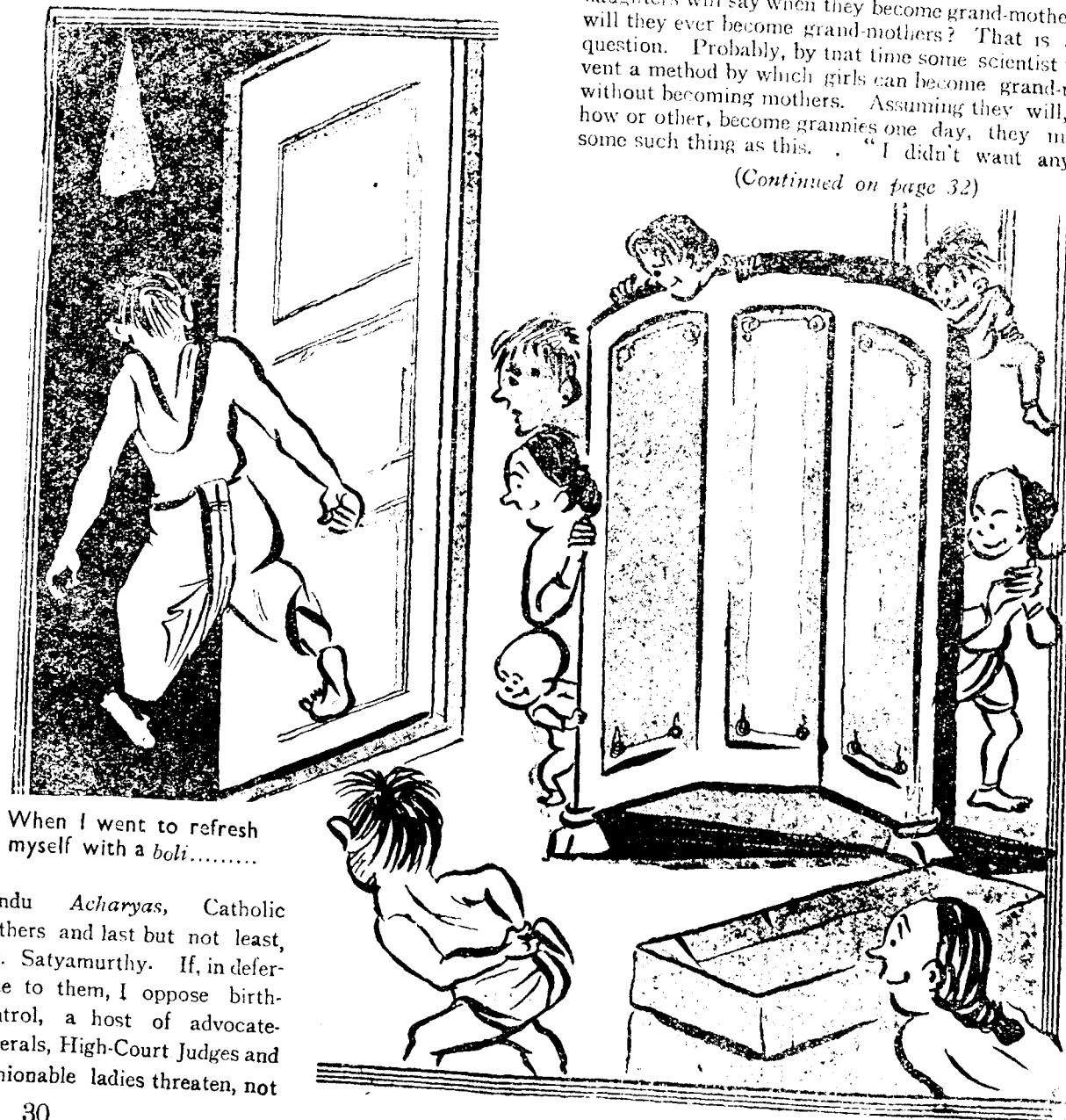
THE present age is an age of controls. Everybody wants to control something. Bankers want to control currency, wives want to control husbands, Sir J. Anderson wants to control Bengalees, while Jawaharlal wants to control the Princes. And now, the Raja Sahib of Bobbili wants to control something more dangerous than all these births!

To be frank, I am terribly afraid of saying anything on birth-control. If I declare myself in its favour, my precious soul is threatened with eternal damnation by

only myself, but the entire world with famine, pestilence and war. I am not willing to give up the pleasures of Heaven. Nor do I wish to court famine and pestilence. So? So, I steer a middle course, being for or against birth-control, as the company in which I find myself.

Grand-mothers any way, seem to be generally against birth-control. "I brought forth twenty-one children," one grand-ma was proudly saying, the other day, when another cut her short, "You needn't boast so much. Had I not been laid up with paralysis for five years, my children would have numbered no less than twenty-four." A third granny interposed, "As if these are feats which others cannot perform! If you deliver at all, you should deliver two at a time, as I have done. Then only shall I call you women." I wonder what our daughters will say when they become grand-mothers. But will they ever become grand-mothers? That is another question. Probably, by that time some scientist will invent a method by which girls can become grand-mothers without becoming mothers. Assuming they will, somehow or other, become grannies one day, they may say some such thing as this. "I didn't want any more

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When I went to refresh myself with a *boli*.....

Hindu Acharyas, Catholic Fathers and last but not least, Mr. Satyamurthy. If, in deference to them, I oppose birth-control, a host of advocate-generals, High-Court Judges and fashionable ladies threaten, not

IN THE I.C.S. EXAMINATION

By "ADITYA"

IN my village I alone was the happy possessor of a degree. The only other person, who could be called educated, was the son of the manager of the Rajah's estate. But the Rajah Sahib got him appointed as a Sub-inspector of Police. I was very proud and did not like to solicit the help of the Rajah, for he had not come to see me, when I came back after taking my degree. You see all the people of the village came. And then he had the cheek to ask my father to send me as his assistant manager. So I have no respect left for him now and I will show him one day what a graduate is.

I was thinking of getting some biggish job, but I could not think of any. The manager's son had become a police sub-inspector and he was only a matric. What should I—a graduate—be? Well, this is simple arithmetic and though I was not very good at it in my school, I could calculate that I should at least be a governor. But, alas the governors of Bombay, Bengal and Madras cannot be Indians. So I had to cast my eyes over the other provinces. I read the biographies of all the past and present governors from 'Who's Who' and came to the conclusion that they had all been in the I.C.S. Yes, that was the place. I, too, the future

governor, must start from there.

I wrote to the Public Service Com-

I wrote to the District Magistrate that I wanted to appear for the I.C.S. examination and that he should come over to me and take the necessary forms from me. I thought he would come, for after all I was to be a governor and he would be my subordinate. But he did not come and called me to his office. I showed that letter to all the villagers and they were amazed to see that the collector had written to me. Of course I was the only person who could translate from English to our mother-tongue in the village. Really, I said, I was going to be a great man. I promised a police sub-inspectorship to the *chowkidar's* son and made sundry other promises.

Most of the people I know pass the examination the first time they attempt it. I was not in such a great hurry and though I was fool enough to pass my matriculation in the second attempt only, I took full four chances in my B. A. examination and the fourth time I was declared duly successful. You see, slow and steady wins the race. I am the right person to win in any competition. It is immaterial that I got a third class. This was due to the fact that I did not want to shine.

Knowing all this, I did not study much. I knew I was a better student than all the others put together. For some time I remained in the village impressing upon the people the important post that I was going to have. When the examination drew near, I went to Delhi and utilised my time in studying the Viceroy's manners, for was I not going to be something like him, the Viceroy of a province in 'fact'? The sentries at his gate did not realise my importance—



I had to be content with watching him from the gates.

mission for the necessary forms. They did not arrive the next day, so I sent them a reminder asking them to send them by Air Mail—I forgot that the air liners did not touch my village. After considerable delay I got them and set about in right earnest to fill them in.

and so I had to be content with watching him from the gates. All the same I have a fair idea as to how the Viceroy lives.

Well, there was not much in the examination papers to answer. So I wrote in every copy that I did not want to be an ordinary Civilian and that I was looking forward to be a governor. The work for which this examination was being held would be done by my secretary. I was sure that the examiners would be impressed by the logic of this argument. After all a would-be governor need not look after these petty affairs as the examinations etc. I told the same thing in the *viva-voce* examination and the examiners appreciated it very much and told me that I could go. Here were sensible persons. They knew that I was going to be a governor and did not think of examining me further.

With great impatience, I was waiting for the appointment letter, but I received a result sheet. In it my name was the first from the bottom and there were written some figures which I did not understand. After all, I had shown my merit and was first in the Exam. You see, those who got more marks must be found in the end just like the heavy stones, which are found at the bottom of the river. I packed my luggage

and made myself busy in bidding farewell to my friends. In the meantime I wrote to the Public Service Commission that I was waiting for the appointment letter and was ready with my things to go to any desired place. I also wrote to them that I would need a private secretary, as I explained in the *viva-voce* examination.

I got a reply for this also. The Commissioners suggested that I might go to the lunatic asylum for medical examination. When I was at D. I, my father had taken a big loan to meet my expenses, for I had to live like a would-be governor. The Raja told him that I should work as his assistant manager and pay off the debt out of my salary. He laughed when I told him of my success in the Exam. and insisted that I had failed. But if I have failed, I intend going to England and try my luck in the I.C.S. examination there. I stand a fair chance there.

Mr. Editor, whither shall I go? To the lunatic asylum for medical examination, to the Rajah's estate as his manager, or to England to appear in the examination there, if perchance I have failed?

[We would suggest the first place—Ed.]

ON BIRTH-CONTROL—(Continued from page 30)

children. So I determined 'Let there be no more births,' and there were no more births." They will certainly point their fingers in scorn against the woman who accidentally brought forth one baby against her declared wish.

Some people say that God has entrusted us with the duty of propagating our species, and that to shirk that duty is a flagrant breach of faith. But I don't remember to have signed any such contract with anybody either after or before my birth. But these are days when any enterprising man may go to Ottawa, London or Geneva and sign some pacts which, they say, are binding on 360 million souls, including poor, innocent you and I. And so, it is possible, and even probable, that some bishop, *mouvi* or *Acharya* has bound all of us with a promise to God that we shall multiply our species as rapidly as possible. But, suppose I am not going to honour such unwarranted agreements? Of course, I can't conceivably get more severe punishments than what Mr. De Valera gets from the mighty British Government.

On the other hand, there is considerable truth in the argument that too many children tend to produce scarcity of food, especially when the children are gluttonous and the food delicious. Last week, for example, I took an 'emergency loan' from our Co-operative Society for 'an urgent domestic expense' and prepared a hundred and twenty *bolies*. By the time the last one was ready, there were only fifty left. When I went to refresh myself with a *boli* after my midday nap, the number had dwindled to a dozen. When the guest, for whom they had been made, arrived and sat for tiffin at 4 o'clock, there was only half a *boli* left. Had I practised birth-control at the proper time, would such a thing have happened at all? Really, it was at that time that I realised that Malthus was, after all, no madcap.

But the little economics that I have studied and the intensity of the economic depression impel me sometimes to oppose birth-control. Bold and liberal spending by the vast mass of consumers is the only potent remedy

for this depression. If every woman were wise enough to copy the example of our newspapers in bringing forth a nice little 'annual' every year, what a lot of money would be boldly spent? A mid-wife, a doctor, two *vaid-yans*, twenty bottles of medicines, half a dozen grand feasts, twice as many priests, a number of woollen and cotton baby's dresses, bottles of Glaxo and, in 450 cases out of 1000, the funeral of the little baby will have to be paid for during the first year itself. Will not depression fly faster than the deer that are hunted by some of the humanitarian patrons of our S. P. C. A.'s? Signor Mussolini is the only man who seems to have realised this. He is training thousands of couples in the art of bringing forth children, and probably intends to hold an all-Italy child-birth competition.

Not long ago, the editor of a local magazine conducted a competition in defining children. The prize-winning definition was that children were Nature's 'entertainment tax' on married couples. Acting upon the learned editor's considered decision, some may consider the birth-control movement as a sort of 'no-tax campaign' against Nature's government. But paradoxical as it may seem, many of the protagonists of this movement were opposed to Mr. Gandhi's no-tax campaign against the British Government. Their contention is that this movement is not a 'no-birth campaign', but a purely constitutional movement for the reduction of Nature's entertainment tax. In these days when agitations for the reduction of land-tax, water-tax, income-tax and house-tax are driving out even lawn-tennis from its position as the most fashionable pastime of our advocates and politicians, I don't see why our friends should not be free to play a game with one of Nature's taxes.

Whatever be the merits or defects of birth-control, one thing is certain, that it has come to stay in our midst. We cannot help hearing, talking, writing and thinking about it. Even His Grace the Lord Bishop can't.

BLACKMAIL

By
"GOPI"

MUTHUSAMI Naicker drew his well-tailored coat about him and wished sincerely that he had not told his *chauffeur* to wait at the end of the street. Confusion of sound inside the toddy-shop by which he passed, grew stronger, more intensified; the creaking doors opened noisily, to emit a curseful figure, which hit the pavement with head, hip and elbow simultaneously. The blistering profanity, which followed, shocked Mr. Naicker to the core of his quivering soul.

"A drunken cooly!" he gasped, and quickened his pace. He plunged his hands deeply into the pockets of his opulent coat, not so much for warmth as with an instinctive desire to safeguard his many possessions; silver cigarette-case, gold watch, money and the like. For Mr. Naicker was one of the favoured few of the world; his unctuous bank-manager was proof enough of that. When he visited his bank, he was received with flattering courtesy, invited into the secretary's inner sanctum, and there regaled with the special coffee that the stout and inactive man kept for himself.

Mr. Naicker had a vague fear that this prostrate and foul-mouthed outcast might leap upon him and deprive him of certain of his valuables, and he was sorrier than ever that he had been so foolish as to hazard this journey—a futile expedition, as it had proved. But a mental voice—the voice of conscious virtue,—spoke soothingly in his ear, as he fluttered up the dust-swept thoroughfare. "There, but for the grace of God, go I," said this encouraging whisper, and it still comforted him, when he reached his Vauxhall Sedan and sank back with gratitude upon its resilient cushions.

"Home, Muthu," he ordered, and the car swept off almost soundlessly. It took him home without adventure, and enabled him to report on his evening's excursion, before his wife retired for the night. "Precious time wasted," he said, "as I expected. I could not find him. The fellow was hopeless—sunk in degradation, I heard. A hypocrite—yes, a hypocrite, with his plaintive letters and his whining appeal for assistance! Being born of the same parents as I fifty years ago doesn't entitle him to any particular favours that I can see. I have paid him a lot and have given him every opportunity for advancement."

"So you never met him?" his wife asked.

"No!" he said. "I searched the whole of the neighbourhood but couldn't find him. I am not sorry that he has gone, God knows where. I wouldn't feel sorry if



"A drunken cooly!" he gasped.

I heard someone had stuck a dagger into his neck. A blackmailer, and a scoundrel!"

He helped himself to another glass of spiced milk, drank it appreciatively, and then, casting aside his towel, announced that he was ready to go to bed.

At three the following evening, he drove to the Cosmopolitan Club. In his care-worn state of mind, he took a fairly huge quantity of fruit-salad, and being disturbed in the middle by the envious looks of one of the upper ten, stuffed some betel-nut into his mouth, and abruptly rose from the chair.

Out in the verandah, reclining in his easy chair, lay a thin, wiry old man with huge whiskers on either side. The old man, affectionately called 'Tata,' coughed two or three times. Naicker felt disturbed.

It was vulgar. He turned his eyes to the three councillors on the distant divan. Indignant and severe was his look.

The servant at the entrance answered his call. Naicker asked him to send round for the car. It appeared round the bend in a few minutes. The fat man lazily wished another fat man, lounging about in the verandah outside, 'Good night,' and went out.

But even as he stepped into the car, a peon rushed to his side and said, "A gentleman to see you, sir."

"What?"

"A gentleman, sir."

"His name—?"

"He wouldn't tell me, sir."

"Then let him not disturb me—" he turned away.

But a moment later, when he turned once again to see if the peon had gone, he was surprised to find a grinning young man, fumbling his old, rotten cap in his hands.

Bewildered, Naicker gazed upon the intruder with a grave apprehension.

"Good evening, sir," the fellow began. His eyes met Naicker's. In them was a curious look, almost a glitter.

Naicker understood. He shrugged his shoulders, but uttered no word. He looked confused. His gesture was that of one unconvinced. The intruder was a familiar figure. He was an adventurer. He lived a dog's life, but sometimes he made a big coup and provided himself with ample funds. He had met him long ago at a party at the Advocate General's where the fellow had picked a great man's pocket and had been severely punished. An enmity, begotten of the false idea that it was Naicker who had betrayed him, had inspired him and in consequence he had thrown in his lot with some undesirables, with a determination to wreak vengeance on him.

"Well—" the club-member drawled out slowly.

"Sir," the young man cleared his throat. "You remember you had a servant by name Munusamy. You dismissed him for no obvious reasons. I am his brother and I have been asked to approach you on his behalf to arrange for a— a— sort of remuneration."

"No," the fat man bawled out, "not a pie. I am not going to give him anything, not if he should himself come here and beg me. He had an entirely wrong idea of his own importance in the scheme of things. He actually became almost abusive; he made an extravagant statement to the effect that I might not be where I was, but for him."

The visitor laughed softly.

"Sorry, sir, to trouble you so, but this was what he asked me to do. I suppose you are not prepared to give him anything."

"No....."

"It's a pity that you don't appreciate things as they are. That is no wise policy." He turned his back and

strolled towards the telephone stand. "He was not quite well when I left him, and he had certain schemes in mind which he thought of putting into effect, if he failed in getting the money....."

"You mean...?"

"...That he contemplated corresponding with one, to whom the identity of a person concerned in a very important and dangerous affair, would be tremendously useful."

The miserable man did not answer for some moments. His eyes were cast on the floor.

"That's bosh," he snapped, after a while. "You can tell him to go to the devil."

"Listen, sir, you had a brother whom you had turned out because he knew many of your secrets. You never realized then that he could use them to his advantage. Well..."

He walked down the steps. And as he turned round the bend, Naicker called him back.

The corners of his mouth hardened. He thought for a while. Yes, he had turned him out, because he had misbehaved. But after that, he had been giving him an annuity of two thousand rupees. It was true he held some of his secrets. He had always thought that he was true to his brother who helped him so much. But this fellow had now come announcing, vindictively, that he held one of his secrets. Was it possible? When he confided one secret, for instance, to this ungrateful brother, he never for a moment suspected that he would use it against him. It concerned the murder of a man, which he had committed long ago in his place. The Police could not trace the culprit and they had gently dropped the case. Now, could his brother have betrayed?

He argued thus within himself for a long time, but could not come to



—stood in the doorway for a minute.

any decision. Mr. Naicker, as he stood in front of the young man, compared himself to a coward, writhing with fear before the cruel gaze of a King-cobra.

"Why do you taunt me like this?" he cried, turning upon him angrily. "You are merciless. I offer you a hundred rupees. take that and leave me alone."

"Hundred, sir, when another is prepared to give two hundred. No, no. I'm sorry I can't accept your terms."

Naicker cast an apprehensive glance at the troublesome fellow.

"Then take that. It matters little," he said, looking at him with a serious countenance. "You may come tomorrow for the money."

He told this with a kind of exultation, as if it were a trifling difference for him to substitute two hundred for a hundred, and the blackmailer sighed and looked disappointed.

"You are not going to cheat me, sure," he said finally, and went out.

Here was a mess he had made for himself!

This was one of the consequences of confiding one's secrets to others. They might use it—this confidence—to their advantage. Why, he might have kept quiet! But was it true, what this fellow told him? Did he actually possess the secret? At one moment he believed in his brother's fidelity and his strong passionate devotion to him, for had he not seen it displayed in a hun-



dred different ways in the good old days? But the next moment he felt assured that the fellow did possess the secret. He sat in the room for a long time, deeply meditating. Should he call in the police? The doubt assailed him often. But he did not like the idea.

He sat staring at the blank wall entirely perplexed.

At eight next morning, the fellow came.

"The money, I suppose, is ready?"

"Yes," Naicker growled and he took out a wad of bank-notes from his pocket. "You can count them. There are twenty ten-rupee notes."

The young man counted them leisurely.

"Here, listen, young man," Naicker said in a confidential tone.

"I am going to trust you with a secret."

"You may, sir," replied the other.

"Your name?"

"Ramu, if you please."

"Well then, Ramu, we know that you can keep a secret. What I am about to tell you is in strict confidence."

"H-m."

"Yes," Naicker continued. "You know that I am rich. Now do tell me where I can find my brother?"

Ramu looked surprised.

"Good-bye," he said, and the shabby intriguer whose own ingenuity and double-dealing were little short of marvellous, stood in the doorway for a minute, before he disappeared.

"He died just two days ago in a toddy shop," he said. "I was with him when he died. He died with all his secrets sealed in his breast. He did not tell us any of your secrets, though he remained a good friend, but from what we heard now and then from his lips we could understand somehow that you were involved in some shabby affairs. Good-bye, sir!"

Naicker, his cigarette stuck carelessly between his lips, stood watching the disappearing figure.

"Poor fellow."

Two days later, young Ramu, and an old associate of his, were arrested in Rattan Bazaar when trying to change a ten-rupee note, which the policeman stated, bore one of the numbers reported to be missing from Mr. Muthusami Naicker's house in Kilpauk. When they were further searched, it appeared, nine more notes were found in their pockets.

HARLEQUIN INSURANCE

MY friend, Subbarao, is a man of startling ideas, a unique personality. During the last triennium, he was by turns a genuine Proddatur ghee merchant, a guaranteed Nellore rice dealer, a barber, a cabbage-farmer, a tobacconist, a cobbler, a palmist, a soda-water manufacturer, a bird-fancier, a Congress-man, a vaccinator, a tailor, a journalist and Jehovah knows what else. Very catholic in his tastes where the fair sex is concerned, he was, to my certain knowledge, in and out of love one hundred and five times within the last eighteen months. As the only privileged one among his friends in whom he confided his *affaires de coeur*, I was wondering why he was heart-whole for one full month. The other day he walked into my study breezily, 'NEWS' written



in capitals across his face. "Hullo, Prasad! Howdodo and how is the Editor?"

"Both C. K. Why, Subbarao, where were you all these days? Anything special?"

"Business."

"What business?"

He swept his arm across that part of the southern horizon, which was visible through the window. That wasn't much of a help to get at his meaning, so I waited patiently for elucidation.

"Arey, Prasad, got a cigarette?"

"Lots. Here you are."

Evidently he was mighty pleased with himself and at peace with the world, for he was smiling at nothing, as he puffed at his cigarette.

"Prasad, I have found her at last."

"Her? What 'her'?"

"The one girl in the world."

"Oh! One hundred and sixth," I murmured.

"Absolutely the girl."

"Considering your hurricane methods, you were a bit slow finding her this time."

"You needn't be sarcastic about it."

"Who is she?"

"How should I know? All I know at the moment is that she is from Malabar, where the cooks come from."

"Any more details?"

"If by 'details' you mean her general make-up, she is a corker."

"Is she in the cork trade?"

"Ugh, you brute! Your ignorance is awful. You know Mae West?"

"No."

"Ass, I don't mean that way. You have seen her on the screen?"

"Certainly."

"In one word, how do you size her up?"

"Curves."

"Right! Give Mae West four and a half feet of glorious, wavy, raven-black hair, a muslin sari with a black border, a pair of velvet Punjabee chedauves and a darling dab of kunkum on her forehead—you have a working idea of my honey."



"— a working idea of my honey."

"Not bad."

He puffed at his cigarette contentedly for a while.

"Prasad, I think I can claim to be a pioneer."

"You certainly can," I agreed heartily.

"I don't mean my original business ideas. I mean in the matter of wooing."

"How do you mean?"

"You know that yarn of G. K. Chesterton, where the professor revives man's original speech by gesticulation?"

"Great Scott! You don't say you are making love to this girl by kicking your legs and sticking your arms up and down like a Burmese harlequin?"

His tone was full of pity for me as he answered. "My dear fellow, love is not a thing of the flesh, yet, funnily enough, it is of the flesh. It emanates from the soul and....."

"Damn your clumsy platitudes. All that is lurid sob-stuff, long exploded."

"A soul-less blighter like you can't appreciate the aesthetic subtlety indicated here. As I was saying, it has got an awful lot to do with the soul. And two kindred souls in communion....."

"Go on."

"But you are laughing."

"I won't."

".....in communion don't need the mere spoken word to understand each other."

"Well?"

"So I proposed to her last week that we should dispense with speech altogether and adopt the language of the soul—an inclination of the head, the raising of a finger, a shuffling of the eye-brows, a little squirming of the body....."

"You don't say she agreed to that asinine folly?"

"Readily. That is why I am telling you I have found my girl at last."

"That way you really understand each other?"

"Perfectly."

"Then you are indeed a pioneer. We must stick up a statue of yourself in the Moghul garden of the Viceregal Lodge. I will speak to Bhulabhai Desai about it."

"You can't hurt me with your ill-timed levity. I pity you, that's all."

"What next? What about congrats.? Shall I hand them out?"

"Not yet, not yet," drawled Subbarao dreamily. "By the way, what time of the day is it?"

I consulted my wrist-watch. "Five forty-five."

He shot up. "God! 5.45! And I am to meet the darling by six at the Roxy! See you later, Prasad." He rushed out madly.

A week later he came again.

"How are we getting on with the original speech?" I enquired, expecting to be told that it was all off. But I was disappointed.

"Oh, famously. Are you doing anything special now?"

"No. Why?"

"Nothing. Only I want to do a little blab with you. If I am disturbing you, I will fade."

"No, no. Stay right where you are. You are always welcome, my dear fellow, my little shower in summer. Your speech improves one's mind tremendously. Can you guess who was here just now, before you trickled in?"

"No. Who was it?"

"Kumarasamy, that insurance fellow. What cheeky stories those fellows do tell! I wish I had one hundredth of that gift in me."

"Speaking of insurance agents, there is a lot to be said in their favour. Nice fellows."

"Oh! Since when did you veer round to that view? I was under the impression that there was just as much love between you and insurance agents, as between a red-hot sanatanist and Harijans."

"That is all a thing of the past, buried, I hope, twenty fathoms deep. I am hot for insurance. In fact my presence here now is about insurance."

"Holy Oriental! You haven't turned insurance agent?"

"I haven't. Though I don't see why I should not. Prasad, I am making a proposal for Rs. 10,000 on my own life and I want you to witness the proposal."

I was nearly as flabbergasted as the Justice Party at the recent elections. "This is not one of your jokes?"

"Jokes be blown! This is no more a joke than you are the Nizam."

"Oooooof! Ten thousand rupees! Do you realise what that means? And the premium?"

"A paltry four hundred odd. The gov'nor will rally round with the specie." He pushed before me a proposal form ready filled up. It was indeed for Rs. 10,000 "Hurry up, my dear fellow, I must be off."

"Are you doing this out of your own free will? Nothing behind all this?"

He shook his head. "Do you take me for a lunatic?"

"You certainly are a lunatic, if there is one in the world." I witnessed the document and passed it across. The fellow helped himself to a few of my cigarettes and with an airy 'So long' was off like a rocket.

(Continued on Page 40.)

THE SLENDER CLUE

By M. S. KALYANASUNDARAM



He found Sumathi in front of the dressing table



SUMATHI could bear it no longer. "Are there Indian operators in your Exchange, Prabhu?" she asked her husband. Prabhu was short for Prabhakaran and, incidentally, a good form of address.

He looked up from the Jacob story. He was absorbed in, and replied facetiously, "No such good luck, *munni ki ma!*" *Munni ki ma* is Hindi for 'mother of (our) child', and hence one's wife—though here, the *munni* is yet to come.

Silence.

He broke it with, "Why?"

"Nothing. Just wanted to know, that's all."

"What is the train of thought, Sumati?" he asked, turning round and showing more interest.

"Nothing at all. Why don't you believe me?" she said, hurt.

"It is not a question of *my* believing or not. The greatest psychologists of the world," he went on seemingly on sidetrack, "have to believe it. They all affirm that thoughts do not jump from nowhere, but lead from one to the other. So,....."

She hastily left the room.

It cost him Rs. 6—8—0 that evening in taxi-fare and about a rupee in miscellaneous sight-seeing expenditure.

Prabhakaran was a Supervisor in the Wazirnagar Telephone Exchange, up in the north. He was a good workman and an understanding master; so he was trusted by his boss and adored by his staff. His office life was as successful as his home life was sweet—that is, till Sumathi took it into her head to put that fateful question.

"What could Sumathi have meant by it?" This thought kept hovering in the recesses of Prabhu's brain for a day or two. Then he, more or less, forgot it. A few days after the incident, he returned from the Exchange rather early one evening; and he found Sumathi in front of the dressing table, stooping over an invisible something held between her fingers. But what troubled him most was the knit brow, which he saw reflected in the mirror. Sumathi with knit brows! That was something new. He stood rooted. Now, Sumathi too saw him in the mirror, and stood up, and turned round, confusion plainly marked in every feature. She managed, however, to force a smile on her face.

"So soon?" she asked. "Anyway, I am glad," she added. "I was feeling so dejected, though there was absolutely no cause for it!"

Prabhu too could act. "Then, I am glad that I came early.....But the fact is I have a slight headache. Shall we have some coffee? Brew it yourself, please," he begged.

Sumathi went tripping.

Prabhu rapidly searched the floor near the dressing table. First he saw nothing. After a little more straining, his trained eye saw a thin, black line curled up on the carpet. He lifted it delicately in his fingers and examined it in the light. It was thin and round, jet black, smooth and glossy, and about two feet long. Hair? What if? He fingered it for a minute and looked at it from different angles. Then a suspicion dawned on his mind. He scratched the black thing with his nail; and beamed like his namesake, the sun. But he had to play-act again. He heard Sumathi coming with the tray. He dropped the hair where he found it, and busied himself with the Amrutanjan bottle.

Hair looks frail; but there is hidden strength in it. Samson lost his hair, and lost his strength.....The Sikhs keep their hair, and are a strong race.....It is the floating hair in the fairy tale that brought the Prince and the Princess together.....Hair it was that saved the honour of Sati Anasuya and Lady Godiva.....Has not Miss Tara Bai taught us not to despise hair, by lifting heavy stones tied to it?.....And here too, it was a single hair, which caused the rift in the family lute!

Now, the matter became an obsession with Sumathi. Sumathi, sweet and gentle and trusting, now became moody and rude and suspicious. She looked for new meanings in every word and gesture of Prabhu. And looking for trouble, she found it in plenty. She developed a new interest in brushing and arranging his clothes, when he returned from work. And every now and then there was a fresh hair, sometimes a yard long, sometimes longer still, which cut her to the quick. Strangely enough, she fingered the hated thing with care, and put it away neatly coiled up in a little silk-lined casket. Oh! Jealousy! What bundles of paradoxes your votaries are!

About this time, Prabhu had to stay for longer periods in the Exchange. This made things worse for Sumathi. One day, she caressingly stroked his forehead and said lispingly, "What is worrying my Prabhu's head these days, I wonder!"

"Why, nothing!" he said, smiling into her eyes.

"I thought that there was some little worry, which my Prabhu does not want to trouble me with!"

she said, lovingly. "Anything wrong in the Exchange?" she asked as an afterthought.

"None at all, my dear," he assured her.

"Long time since you took me to the Exchange..... Have they put up the new lights you proposed?"

"Oh, yes! Didn't I tell you? It is about a week now."

"Really? How do they look?"

"Grand. Come on. Let us go to-night and see."

They went. The girl operators were all fond of Sumathi; and they bowed her in, smilingly. She talked to them for a while, looked at the new lights and got ready to return.

All the girls had bobbed hair, except Miss Primrose; and hers was flaxen.

Sumathi had a habit of, phoning up her husband, once or twice in the day, to remind him of some little commission. Mornings, he was generally out on inspection; and afternoons he invariably was at his desk, unless there was an urgent call. About this time, however, Sumathi failed to get him on the phone for three afternoons running.

Things were getting beyond the point of endurance for her. By dint of sheer good breeding, she managed to keep smiling in Prabhu's presence, but she was eating her heart out, as the saying is.

"What is the matter, Sumathi?" he asked, repeatedly. She kept on saying "Nothing at all. I was never better."

He thought that things were moving rapidly and he should bring about the crisis soon.

One evening Sumathi was particularly dejected, because she had been disloyal enough to request a visit from her mother and sister, all the way from the south. That night, as she was brushing Prabhu's coat, she had a shock. There was yet another dreaded hair; but it was its length which made her feel stupid. It seemed to be about a yard long, when she first took hold of it, and then there seemed to be a foot more of it



"Oh, how splendid!"

sticking to the coat, and another foot, and another, and another, till the whole thing was about twenty feet long. She sat on the floor, non-plussed. Tears, some as yet of unknown shame were trying to burst their bounds. That moment, Prabhakaran came in. Clever Sumathi controlled herself, and asked tentatively, "Why do you bring office property to the house?"

"Oh, this enamelled wire?" he asked, eyeing the 'hair'. "Where did you find it? On my coat?" he asked innocently.

"Yes," she said, suppressing her excitement. "But how thin!"

"Yes. This is high resistance wire. You remember that burnt coil which kept me busy one whole night last winter? This is from one such coil. You remember the coil is only as big as your cotton reel—the smaller one—but has a resistance of 700 ohms. Our bell-coil has only 3 or 4 ohms resistance. That will just give you an idea.....But I am afraid you are bored."

"No, no; not at all. I am very much interested. How is it made?"

"It is very fine copper wired with an insulating enamel on.....In fact, do you know, I made this! I think I have invented a new enamel, and only today I

submitted my report with samples. I have been keeping it from you, so that, if my work is recognised, the surprise will be a great and a pleasant one for you."

"Oh, how splendid," chirped in Sumathi; "but....."

"But.....what? Tell me, like a good girl!"

"You see, I have acted so silly! Of course, I was feeling lonely, because you were staying longer hours in the office, but I ought not to have.....You see, I have written to mother asking her to come here, and bring little Meeni along!"

"Oh, there is no harm at all! Only, I have done something without consulting you which rather comes in the way. I have asked for two months' leave from Monday next, so that we could summer it in Kashmir. I was reserving it as a surprise for you."

"Oh, how splendid!" cried Sumathi again, clapping her hands in joy. "I will write again tomorrow canceling my letter.....Oh, you are so good, Prabhu! I wonder whether I am playing the-game!" said she, pensively. A tear stood in her eye.

"Never you worry about it! Prabhakar, the judge, will hasten to let you know," he said facetiously and kissed the tear away.

Harlequin Insurance—(Continued from page 37)

A fortnight passed before he came again. The poor fellow's face was wan and sickly. He sat down limping. I nearly laughed at that comically woe-begone figure before me.

"What ho, my dear Punch, we don't appear over-festive today."

"Oh, God! Oh, Hell! Oh, Prasad!" he moaned.

I was really concerned. "What's the matter, Subbarao?"

"Have you got a drink on the premises?"

"Haven't got anything stronger than tea."

"Feed it to your grandmother."

"But what is the matter with you?"

For reply he placed in my hand a piece of pinkish paste-board. It was a marriage invitation.

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Programme on reverse.

I was puzzled. So I said "Well?"

"Well yourself," he barked. "Don't you see the tragedy, idiot?"

"But this is a marriage," I persisted.

"It is *she*. Oh, perfidy!"

Light dawned upon me. "Oho! Kamakutti is your Malabar Mae West? Serve you right. Language of the soul! Squirming of the body, shuffling of the feet....."

"Eyebrows," he corrected. "I don't mind that. I don't care half a hoot if she marries Judas Iscariot ten times over."

"Why all this melodrama, then?"

"That insurance policy."

"What!!!!"

"Yes."

"She was the agent?"

He nodded in mute affirmation. I raised my ruler and aimed it at his head; but thought better of it.

"What is the next move?"

"I will commit suicide."

I was in complete agreement. "Splendid! Do it by all means. But before you bump yourself off, assign that insurance policy to me."

"Prasad, the joy is gone out of me. I am hungry, let's go to a 'neo' coffee hotel."

"All right."

NO ENTRANCE FEE!

Rs 10000!

"GIVE & TAKE" COMPETITION

First Prize Rs. 600

Second Prize Rs. 400

CLOSING DATE 13-2-1935

There are nine simple words given in this puzzle, but each has either one letter too many or one letter missing—

Where you see "Give", ADD one letter which completes the word.

Where it says "Take", TAKE away a letter to leave the right word.

A clue to each word is given. In the first line, for instance, the clue is "Young of Horse". And you have to take away a letter from 'COALT' to get the right word. On removing (A) from the word, you get the solution—"COLT". Solve similarly the other eight.

IMPORTANT RULES AND CONDITIONS.

A. GENERAL.

(1) This Competition comprises FOUR sets of the "Give & Take" Puzzle appearing in the consecutive weekly issues of the *Merry Magazine*. The Fourth Set appears in this issue (26-1-35).

(2) Competitors may send in any number of complete attempts. A complete attempt is one which contains entries in all the four sets: I to IV.

(3) A competitor can use a blank for only one solution; if there is a mistake, the competitor must cross out the word and rewrite it.

(4) Each Entry Form must be filled in and signed by the Competitor.

B. HOW TO SUBMIT ENTRIES.

Now you have the fourth set. Let us assume that you wish to send in 20 entries. You must have exactly Twenty Entry Forms in each set making altogether eighty.

Cut Here

"Give and Take" SOLUTION COUPON	
1. YOUNG OF HORSE COALT	COLT
2. FALL IN SMALL PARTICLES DRP	
3. FUSS BHUSTLE	
4. LATIN FOR PARENT ATER	
5. BREAK DOWN FAILL	
6. HOLE SLT	
7. GOOD PICTURES DO THIS THRAILL	
8. GLOW WITH COLOUR LUSH	
9. CUT UP FLIENCH	

In entering this contest, I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Signed.....

Address.....

How To Submit Entries: (See Rules.)

SET No. IV.

Cut Here

Entry Forms in each set must be consecutively numbered. There should not be any difference in the number of entries between one set and another, i.e., if there are twenty entries in set I, there should be twenty entries each in set II, III & IV.

Then fill in the solutions.

If a Competitor is unable to find twenty different solutions in any one set, he may fill in one or more of the solutions he has already entered in the other coupons of that set. All the four sets must be sent together before 13-2-35.

C. PRIZE AWARDS.

Each set of coupons will be checked separately. The first prize of Rs. 600 will be awarded to an all-correct complete set. An all-correct set means the correct solution for all the four sets which agrees in all respects with the Editor's Key Solution set, kept in safe custody in the Indian Bank Ltd., Head Office, Madras.

Only the correctness of the solution in each set and not the corresponding serial number will be taken into consideration in checking the entries. For instance, an all-correct solution may bear the reader's serial No. 5 in set I, No. 7 in set II, No. 9 in set III and No. 11 in set IV.

The Second Prize of Rs. 400 will be awarded to a complete solution set with one error: i.e., All-Correct solutions in three sets and one error in the remaining set.

If no all-correct solution is received, the first prize will be awarded to the complete solution set with one error, and the second prize to the complete solution set with three all-correct and two errors.

A reader who gets a first prize can get a share or shares in the 2nd prize as well.

Solutions must be written *only on the coupon portion*. All entries must be received by last post on 13-2-35. Any received after this date will be disqualified. Entries from local competitors can be delivered at our office till 6 P. M. on that date. In case of ties, the prize money will be equally divided.

No correspondence can be entered into nor can interviews be granted. Persons connected with the *Merry Magazine* and its associated journals are not allowed to compete.

No entry will be considered unless accompanied by the coupon portion.

Coupons must be cut along the dotted lines, filled in legibly and sent intact. This office will not be responsible for entries lost or delayed in transit.

Intending competitors who are unable to secure copies of this Magazine from the agents in their area can address our *Subscription Manager* for the required number of copies either by sending stamps or Money Order to cover the cost of the copies or order them V. P. P.

DECEMBER LUCKY NUMBER

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The Editor of THE ODD MOMENT will pay the above sum to the reader of the *Merry Mag* or The Odd Moment who correctly forecasts the first horse in the 4th Race at Guindy on Saturday next, February 2nd. In order to assist those competitors residing outside Madras entries will be accepted which are postmarked not later than 2 p. m. on the day of the race. In the event of a tie or ties the prize will be divided; and will be in proportion to receipts. No correspondence will be entered into and the Editor's decision will be final. Address your coupons: Weekly Racing Contest (Feb. 2nd) The Odd Moment, 160, Mount Road, Madras. Stamps or Money Orders will be accepted at the rate of As. 8. for each coupon, copies of which will be found in *The Merry Magazine*, The Odd Moment, Original Vel, Popular Race Guide and All-India Race Guide. Readers in Madras may hand their entries to the Odd Moment representatives at Guindy right up to 10 minutes before the race.

ALL THAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS TO FORECAST THE WINNER COUPON Entries Stamps

'ODD MOMENT' WEEKLY RACING COMPETITION

I forecast that the result of the 4th Race at Guindy on 2nd February, 1935 will be as follows:

1

I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

NAME

'ODD MOMENT' WEEKLY RACING COMPETITION

I forecast that the result of the 4th Race at Guindy on 2nd February, 1935 will be as follows:

1

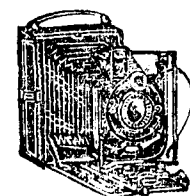
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NAME

NOTE:—Prizes will be despatched on the Monday after the race and results will be announced in this magazine and the Odd Moment in later issues.

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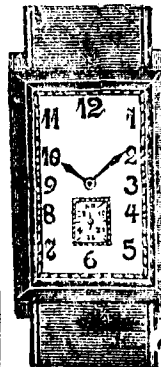
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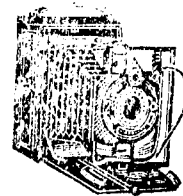
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