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THE TAIL-MEN OF KINCHINGUNGA

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THE

MERRY

MAGAZINE



2180

Vol. III Madras, 22 June '35 No. 25

Chattopadhyaya
Joyfull
A. A. Roland

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THE MERRY MAGAZINE

(PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY)

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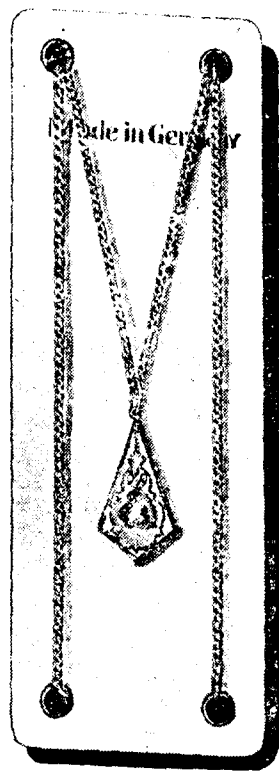
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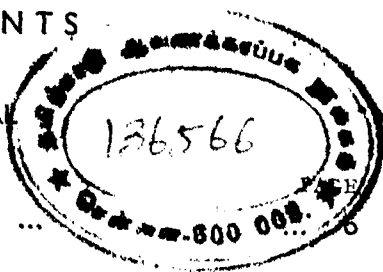


MERRY MAGAZINE

MADRAS, JUNE 22, 1935

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HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

The Angels' Drawing Room.

A POEM

"O Love! Those Lovely
myriad stars,
Are but fiery ends of
superior cigars."

RAJARAM

Who has probed into the
soul of an under-graduate?
Shades of Milton, Shelly
and Wordsworth rest in
peace!

EMBUSQUE

Taken For A Ride

Not by Dillinger or Baby-
face Nelson, but by the
Indian Police. A great
vow and a great ride!

KAMAKSHI

A scandal discussed.
Questions in Maths,
metalling roads leading to
our jolly communal
dispensation.

A free one-week
'competition'

SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL



THE Chinese Government has
acceded to all the fourteen
demands made by Japan.

We gather that, in military circles,
it has created acute disappointment.

From an account of the 'shooting'
of *Bhakta Nandanar*: 'In another
scene she (Sundarambal) was tied to
a tree and beaten. Lash after lash
was rained down upon her face and
body, which left actual marks. But
the only effect upon her was a silent
prayer to God, and we who stood
around behind the camera recoiled
as each below fell.'

We are eagerly looking forward to
see this part of the film.

The false report of the death of
Md. Nissar, the fast bowler, is
explained as due to mistaken
identity of names.

But no one has thought of divert-
ing the condolences to the members
of the family concerned.

Md. Nissar himself got into touch
with the A. P. I. at Lahore, and is
said to have declared that far from
being dead, he is alive and kicking.

It is to be hoped that he is not
kicking the wrong person.

In connection with the Garn Chaco
war, it is stated that Bolivia has
agreed to the terms of an armistice
formulated by South American
mediators.

It is satisfactory to note that the
League of Nations was not responsi-
ble for this.

Referring to the anti-British
speeches of Sgr. Mussolini, Capt.
Eden is reported to have said that
rumours of Britain secretly support-
ing Abyssinia were as fantastic as
that Colonial foot-ball fields were
aerodromes in disguise.

This is due, we think, to the other
fantastic claim that Waterloo was
won on the playing fields of England.

Speaking elsewhere, he said:
'Friendship with the United States
is of the first importance to-day, and
everything we can do to promote it
will be readily and eagerly done.'



Except, perhaps, pay the debts due
to her!

The rumour has again been reviv-
ed that Sir R. K. Shanmugham
Chetti is to be appointed a Deputy-
Governor of the Reserve Bank.

We think it would be lucky for
Cochin!

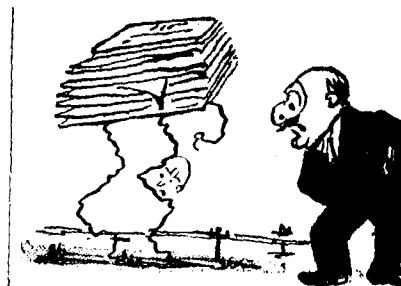
Among the recipients of Birth-day
honours are the Rajah of Bobbili and
Sir A. P. Patro, both of whom get
a K. C. I. E.



Each is wondering why it was
given to the other!

The India Bill has gone up to the
House of Lords.

We are assured that, despite Lord
Salisbury, it will go down.



Opposing it, his lordship said that
the wires to India must almost be
tired of carrying messages of pressure
on the Princes.

Being however in Government
service, they are unfortunately pre-
cluded from voicing their grievances.

Addressing another meeting of the
Europeans, Mr. F. E. James began
by saying that his previous speech
had received a flattering notice in the
press.

Then obviously the press was not
speaking the truth!

Replying to an address presented to
him at Salem, the Hon'ble Mr.
P. T. Rajan confessed that the
Ministry owed their present position
to the solid support the party received
in the country.

This is in accord with the general
impression that it is not due to the
ministers themselves!

In his last message as premier,
Mr. Macdonald declared that he was
temporarily relinquishing his high
office.

Fortunately, Mr. Baldwin has not
said that he was accepting the pre-
miership temporarily.

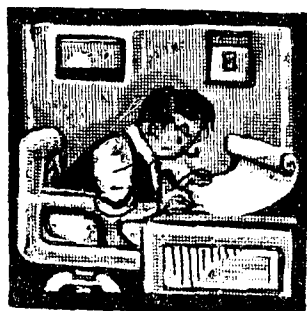
He added, as reported in the
Madras Mail: 'I am seeking respite
from the continuous strain which
the critical conditions of the last six
years have reposed in me as Prime
minister.'

What he imposed on the country
is a more controversial point.

In the cabinet re-shuffle, Sir John
Simon goes from the Foreign Office
to the Home Office.

It is hoped that he will be more at
home there.

• Next Week: Soldiers In The Making •



THE EDITOR HIS PAGE

MACDONALD

A momentous Cabinet re-shuffle took place in Britain. Macdonald, who has out-Baldwined Baldwin in his 'National' fervour, has changed places with the latter. The reason for this is not so much a respite for him as the condition of Europe.

Europe is sitting on dynamite.

At any moment now, man might do to Europe what Nature did to Baluchistan. With her unique position in the chess-board of European politics, England wants just now at its head a man of the bluest imperial breed, and not a chameleon.

Macdonald has surrendered his reins of office (if he ever held them), borrowed Baldwin's briar and is taking it easy. Searching the pages of recent English history, one fails to find a single instance where a man has left so much bitterness in the wake of his political ambitions as Macdonald did. His contribution to the British Labour Party was great: but the blow he dealt it was greater still. His impassioned orations from the Labour platform sound horribly empty beside the insuffer-

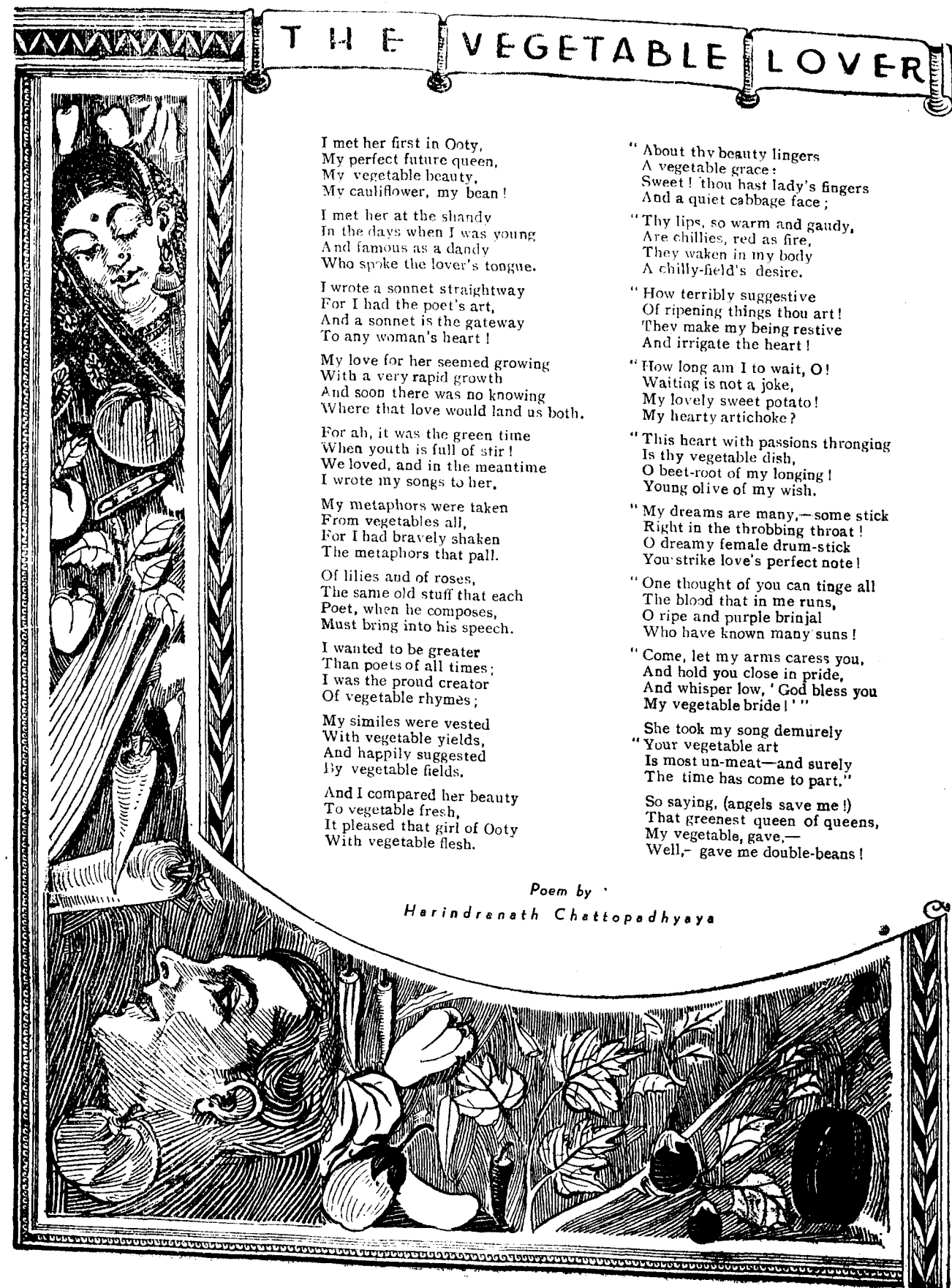
able nonsense of his latter-day utterances. Having nothing substantial to offer in his Conservative avatar, he tried to bluster his way through by pompous balderdash. A scribe once called him a mystic. From his socialist ideology of the eighteen eighties to the lurid economic nationalism of this century is an impossible cry. But Macdonald achieved it. Therein lies his mysticism. As a quick-change artist he has few equals in history.

Abhorred by his first love, made a cats-paw and treated with cool contempt by the cave-men of the Conservative jungle, floundering in political waters beyond his depth, Macdonald passes out of the front page of British politics. His contribution to the solution of the European cross-word puzzle is nothing. His contribution to the settlement of the Indian question is less than nothing. It was a betrayal. Sometime ago there was a talk of translating him as the Burra Sahib of New Delhi. We are happily saved from that humiliation by new names which have shoved him to the heap of discards.

THE GREAT CHANGE-OVER



The British Cabinet re-shuffle is more thorough than mere exchange of office between Macdonald and Baldwin.



THE VEGETABLE LOVER

I met her first in Ooty,
My perfect future queen,
My vegetable beauty,
My cauliflower, my bean!

I met her at the shandy
In the days when I was young
And famous as a dandy
Who spoke the lover's tongue.

I wrote a sonnet straightway
For I had the poet's art,
And a sonnet is the gateway
To any woman's heart!

My love for her seemed growing
With a very rapid growth
And soon there was no knowing
Where that love would land us both.

For ah, it was the green time
When youth is full of stir!
We loved, and in the meantime
I wrote my songs to her.

My metaphors were taken
From vegetables all,
For I had bravely shaken
The metaphors that pall.

Of lilies and of roses,
The same old stuff that each
Poet, when he composes,
Must bring into his speech.

I wanted to be greater
Than poets of all times;
I was the proud creator
Of vegetable rhymes;

My similes were vested
With vegetable yields,
And happily suggested
By vegetable fields.

And I compared her beauty
To vegetable fresh,
It pleased that girl of Ooty
With vegetable flesh.

"About thy beauty lingers
A vegetable grace:
Sweet! thou hast lady's fingers
And a quiet cabbage face;

"Thy lips, so warm and gaudy,
Are chillies, red as fire,
They waken in my body
A chilly-field's desire.

"How terribly suggestive
Of ripening things thou art!
They make my being restive
And irrigate the heart!

"How long am I to wait, O!
Waiting is not a joke,
My lovely sweet potato!
My hearty artichoke?

"This heart with passions thronging
Is thy vegetable dish,
O beet-root of my longing!
Young olive of my wish.

"My dreams are many,—some stick
Right in the throbbing throat!
O dreamy female drum-stick
You strike love's perfect note!

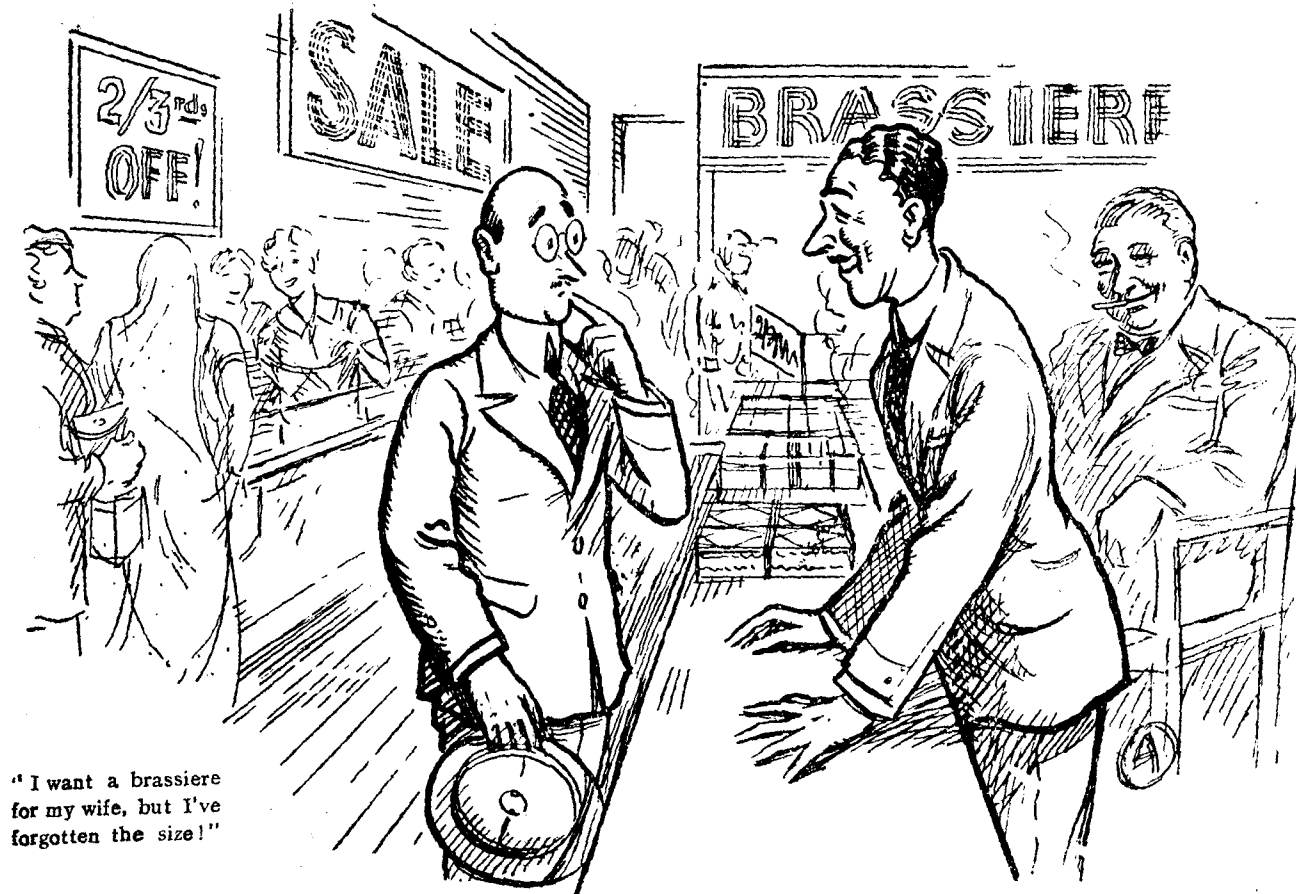
"One thought of you can tinge all
The blood that in me runs,
O ripe and purple brinjal
Who have known many suns!

"Come, let my arms caress you,
And hold you close in pride,
And whisper low, 'God bless you
My vegetable bride!'"

She took my song demurely
"Your vegetable art
Is most un-meat—and surely
The time has come to part."

So saying, (angels save me!)
That greenest queen of queens,
My vegetable, gave,—
Well,—gave me double-beans!

Poem by
Harindrenath Chattopadhyaya



"I want a brassiere
for my wife, but I've
forgotten the size!"

A Bold Front—

Prologue

by Albert A. Roland

Illustrated by the Author

"SO you see, gentlemen," gloomily concluded the President of Lusty-Bust Brassieres Limited, "our noble and uplifting industry is in serious danger. Our fate, in fact, hangs by a thread. I cannot sufficiently impress it upon you that unless we breast our difficulties with firmness, unless we employ the most vigorous methods of satisfactorily developing ourselves, we will be brought low....."

"I have listened with the keenest interest, gentlemen, to the various suggestions you have put forward in this connection. Several of these strike me as not only practicable but distinctly ingenious. And I trust that at our next Annual Meeting we shall have the pleasure to record the brightest boost, the biggest boom in Lusty-Bust shares our business has ever known!"

"That is all, gentlemen. And may fortune smile on all our efforts!"

The Story

Violet Bannister raised troubled blue eyes to her fiancé, Robert Locke the artist.

"I mean exactly what I say, Bobbie," she declared. "Six months ago, you were my absolute ideal of a man—all a girl could possibly wish for, all she could look up to and admire. But now, what's come over you? What has happened to all your fine ideals? Once upon a time, nothing would induce you to read anything but the best literature. Now your preference seems to be for the sexy type of mucky American and Continental magazine that is flooding the bookstalls. Once——"

"But, Violet——"

"Let me have my say. And then we'll have this out in earnest! Once you scorned vulgar cartoons and obscene jokes. Now you actually contribute shameless drawings to the many periodicals that plaster their pages with such filth. Some of your illustrated jokes make Mae West sallies look like sermons! The women you draw, too, are mostly grossly obese, with monstrous bosoms generally encased in absurd brassieres marked 'Lusty-Bust: Guaranteed!' I see no humour in such——"

"But listen, darling, I'll explain——"

"I will *not* listen, yet! You can have your say later. In this life, there is so much that is beautiful and perfect——" why, then, is it necessary to poke fun at others' imperfections? Oh, Bobbie! You have acquired the 'La Parisienne' complex in earnest! Only you're more gross. Take that last joke of yours, where a gentleman—a gentleman—is saying to one of your voluptuous creatures; 'There's something about you that reminds me of Mae West, but I can't quite put my finger on it!' Don't laugh, or I'll give you back your ring right now! It's not as if I'm a prig or a goody-goody. But Bob, the line must be drawn somewhere! Now, listen, this is my ultimatum: Either you promise to chuck all this depravity, for good, or you and I part company for good!"

"Please hear my side of the question first, Vi! Six months ago, I was struggling and poor. Now I'm well on my way to affluence. This work is just as distasteful to me, as it is to you, darling. But there's a reason—a substantial, monetary reason! I have signed a twelve-months' contract with Lusty-Bust Brassieres Limited to do everything in my power to boost their sales. Only another six months, dear, and then I'll return to the straight and narrow path of higher art!"

They were married six months later. One of Bobbie's intimate presents to his bride was a beautiful brassiere made of cloth of gold. It formed a significant, but totally unnecessary, adjunct to her trousseau.

"Yes, sir?" said the Advertisement Manager to the Editor and Proprietor of one of the most important newspapers in the land. "You wanted to speak to me on an urgent matter?"

"Sit down, Mullins. It's about our advertisement pages. I notice an alarming increase in the number of ads. dealing with—er—er—bust improvers. I can't pick up an issue, not only of our major publication, but of any of our sister journals, but several of these advertisements hit me in the eye. Aren't we rather overdoing it, Mullins?"

"You see....."

"I'll allow, Mullins, that one or two of the more dignified ads. won't do us any harm, but hang it all, our columns are positively bristling with bust-culture and brassieres! What the hell are you thinking about, Mullins?"

"Well, it's like this, Chief. We've signed a year's contract with the Lusty-Bust Brassiere concern, and we can't get out of it. They've bought the space in advance, and, short of obscenity, we've no excuse for refusing to accept the matter they send. And they take particular care to word their advertisements——"

"Look here, Mullins, in future I O.K. all such ads. Something must be done about it! Why, yesterday you admitted an ad. which was headed, 'Bust your way into the best circles by putting up a big front!' Scandalous! By the way, what rates are they paying us?"

"Four times the usual rates, Chief, for next-to-news positions."

"Well, in that case, I suppose we'd better stick out the contract....."

The sub-manager (undies section) of the largest departmental stores in town smiled a welcome as Johnstone, one of the directors of Lusty-Bust Brassieres Limited entered his domain.

"Come right in, Mr. Johnstone!" he invited, "and take this seat beside me. Then you can see at first hand how tremendously brisk our brassiere business has become since you started intensive advertising. Excuse me one moment, while I attend to this customer myself.....Yes, sir?"

"I want a brassiere for my wife, but I've forgotten the size!"

"45 and a half inches?"

"That's it! I remember now; but how did you know?"

"Well, sir, wives who get their husbands to buy their brassieres are usually about that size. Here you are, sir. Thank you, sir. Pay at that counter, please. Ah, Mr. Johnstone, that was a good guess, but what I said doesn't always apply, as witness the mountainous lady waddling towards me now.....Yes, madam?"

"I should like to see an L-B Brassiere my size!"

"So should I!" said Johnstone to himself.

As, a little while later, he rose to depart, the sub-manager informed him apologetically: "I trust you don't mind, Mr. Johnstone, but we altered the wording on those coloured show-cards you had put up. Some of our customers found them a source of amusement. The ones that announced: 'L-B Brassieres, 1st quality: 1/3rd off. Cheaper quality: 2/3rds off'."

The oldest inhabitant of the nudist colony snorted his disdain.

"Things are not what they used to be!" he told the latest recruit, a very fat young man of twenty. "When I first joined this colony, I was made to cut off my beard. Now they permit brassieres. Made of sheer silk, of course, but brassieres for all that. Everyone seems to be wearing them! Then where does the principle of nudism come in? Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!—I didn't notice you were wearing one!"

The curtain of a well-known music hall was rung down to the accompaniment of vociferous cheering from the almost exclusively male audience.

The curtain was raised again for a few moments while the chorus and the stars took a further bow. Then the only male member of the troupe, and incidentally the only one who could lay claim to being clothed, stepped forward to make a short announcement. He concluded:

"And don't forget, folks: next week an entirely new programme, with brand new costumes!"

The almost exclusively male audience left the theatre with feelings of regret.

(Continued on page 20)



"Will you still love me when my hair is grey?"

"Well, darling, I've stuck to you through brown, black, red, gold and platinum, haven't I?"

"That's a good little boy," said the visitor, as Johnny picked up his scattered toys. "I suppose your mother has promised you something if you clean up the room."

"If I don't," he corrected her.

A man offered his seat in the tramcar to a woman passenger. As the car started it gave a sudden jolt and he lunged forward, clutching wildly for a strap. He grabbed at the nearest one, which was already held by young woman.

Looking up, she said, "Evidently we must hang together."

The man, looking down at the pretty owner of the hand, replied, "Capital punishment!"

"It seems to me I've seen your face somewhere before."

"How odd!"

"It certainly is."

First Girl: "I never worry about my fiancé paying attention to other women—he's crazy about me."

Second Girl: "That may be so, dear, but he may have sane intervals."

Mrs. Diamonds was making the final arrangements for a reception. "Betty," she said to her handmaid, "you should stand at the drawing-room door and call the guest's names as they enter."

Betty's face lit up.

"Very well, Ma'am," she replied. "I'll do my best. I suppose the first thing that comes into my head about them will do?"

"I want a shave," said the disgruntled customer as he climbed into the barber's chair. "No hair-cut, no shampoo, no rum, witch hazel, hair tonic, hot towels or face massage. I don't want the manicurist to hold my hand nor the boot-black to handle my feet. I don't want to be brushed off and I'll put on the coat myself. I just want a plain shave with no trimmings. Understand that?"

"Yes, sir," said the barber quietly and added "lather, sir?"

Instructor: "Well, do you understand the car now?"

Beginner: "Perfectly. By the way, do you put the water and the petrol in the same hole?"

Milkman: "Yes ma'am, I had my milk analysed last week."

Old Lady: "Good! And did they find any?"

Milkman: "Find any! Find any what?"

Old Lady: "Milk!"

"When is the next train out of this town, mister?"

"Twelve o'clock, sir."

"What? Isn't there one before that?"

"No, sir; we never run one before the next."

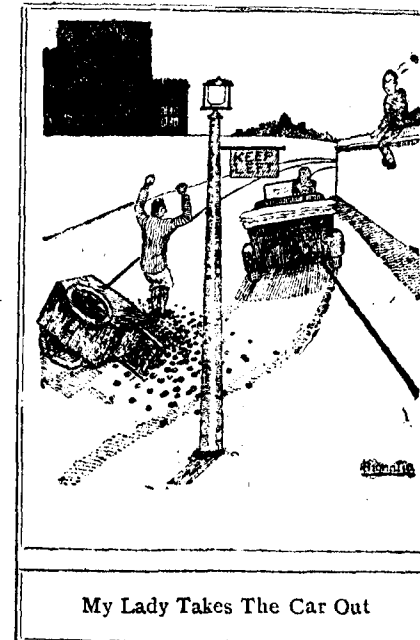
Foreman (to new hand): "We start work here at eight o'clock."

New Hand: "Righto, sir, if I'm not here by then, don't wait for me."

"I hear your cashier has absconded—did he take anything with him?"

"Yes, my wife."

"Anything of value I mean."



The MISFORTUNES of Meena



STORY BY
DIEI SVI
ILLUSTRATED BY
S E I K A R

In the previous four instalments

Ramathilakam, a pretty young woman of the labouring class, alarmed at the depravity of her drunken husband, determines to put an end to her life. She travels without a ticket to Chingleput with the intention of drowning herself in the big lake that adjoins the Railway Station.

A ticket examiner hands her over to Railway Police Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, for the offence of travelling without a ticket. When she says that she came to Chingleput with the intention of drowning herself, the Head-Constable dares her to go and do so. She does so to the amazement of Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, who has to rush into the waters and rescue her. The Head-Constable suspects that the woman must have committed some dreadful crime to contemplate suicide. He hands her over to the Inspector in charge of the local Police-station, and sends a messenger to Madras to find out if a woman of her description is wanted there. As he awaits the reply, news is brought to him about the removal of the woman from the Police-Station by the Inspector, to his house, with intentions suspected to be far from honourable. News is also brought to the effect that no woman of the description of Ramathilakam is wanted by the Madras Police. Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer again rescues Ramathilakam—this time from the Inspector's house. He takes her over to Madras to restore her to her husband from whom she has fled, but finds that the husband had been locked up for stabbing his *maistry* in a drunken brawl. As Ramathilakam has nowhere to go, Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, leaves her in charge of an old quack-doctor at Saidapet.

Eventually and sometime later, Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, has to return to the doctor for treatment. While staying at the doctor's house he falls in love with Ramathilakam.

A year later Ramathilakam gives birth to a girl-baby and dies. Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer is hard put to it to rear the baby and when the baby is ten months old, he takes her to his sister at Mayavaram, and tells her that the baby is an orphan, having lost both her father and mother, and that he is her guardian and custodian. The sister believes the story, receives the child Meena, and treats and brings up the child as if it were her own. Two years later, her husband,

in the course of certain negotiations for the marriage of his first son, comes to Saidapet, and there learns the truth about Meena. He returns post-haste to Mayavaram and tells his wife Kamakshi, that her brother Rangaswamy has foisted a *Sudra** kid on their Brahmin family.

The Dikshidar commands his wife to send back Meena to her father, but his wife refuses, saying that she doesn't believe his story. A quarrel ensues and Kamakshi walks out of the house with baby Meena, threatening never to return.

Fifth Instalment

"Mother! Who Is My Mother?"

THE Dikshidar could hardly believe his eyes. His wife was deserting him and his five sons, for the sake of a bastard kid! She must be stark staring mad to do such a rash thing as that! But there she was, going away without so much as a look-back at all that she was leaving behind! Where could she go? What could she do? Would she come back at all?

If an attempt were to be made to analyse the marital life of the Dikshidar, the outstanding feature would be found to be the success of Kamakshi all along the line, over a period extending over 18 years. Early in their married life, the Dikshidar had to yield to her wishes, because he was made painfully conscious of the fact that she was too good for him, backed as she was by a decent dowry and good looks. Later on, as the children began to arrive one by one, he had to subordinate his predilections in the interests of the children and to ensure domestic peace. Even her latest craze of rearing a daughter was harmless enough so long as money was found by someone else for the child's maintenance. But to stick to the kid even when she was told the truth about its parentage, and forsake her home, children, and husband, was too much for flesh and blood to bear.

His first thought was to run after and remonstrate with her. But a public exhibition of their domestic bickerings in the middle of the road would give to the real nature of Meena's parentage wide publicity which he was anxious to avoid. If it were to become known that he was rearing a *Sudra* kid, he certainly would not be in demand at the many religious functions in the city and suburbs—functions from which he netted not an inconsiderable annual income. Curbing the rage that was choking him, he followed Kamakshi, his wife, at a respectable distance. But she, however, never once turned back to see if she was being followed.

He saw her engaging a *jutka* and driving towards the railway station. It was sometime before he could engage another and follow her. On reaching the station, he searched for her high and low and finally found her sitting in a secluded corner, with baby Meena on her lap. She was counting some change and handing it over to a porter.

"Where are you going?" asked the Dikshidar. But Kamakshi merely turned her head away without replying to his question.

"If it is a ticket she wants, I'll buy it for her; you can go!" said the Dikshidar to the porter, and the latter handed over the change reluctantly and withdrew.

"Come home: we will talk it over there! Be sensible!" pleaded the Dikshidar.

Kamakshi was silent.

"You can't do this to me—after all these years. Have you no heart? Would you forsake five of your own children for the sake of an out-caste orphan?"—and the Dikshidar was about to wax eloquent, when his wife cut short the peroration.

"I am going to my brother," said she. "I don't believe your story. Look at this child! Does she look like a low-born one?" asked Kamakshi.

"But you forget your brother is her father and that accounts for it," argued the Dikshidar.

"I neither remember nor forget anything. I'll go to my brother and find out if your story is true?"

"Very well: if it is true, what you are going to do about it?"

"I don't expect it to be true."

"Alright: have your own way. There is no need to go all the way to him. We will write to him and ask him to come down here. I'll confront him with the story as you call it. Let him deny it, if he can."

"If he is able to prove that you are wrong, that your story is false, what are you going to do about it?" asked Kamakshi.

"Very well: if he is able to prove that, I tell you what, I shall treat this child as my own daughter."

"That settles it then. I have not the slightest doubt that some one has been telling you stories. I know my brother. He is not the sort of man who would foist on me a *Sudra* child. Have you no eyes? Could you look at this lovely child and yet say she is of lowly origin. Go and get a *jutka*! We are going home and you shall straightaway write to Rangu."

The letter which the Dikshidar had to write to his brother-in-law was dictated mostly by Kamakshi. It was more or less her letter to her brother. Beginning with an elaborate description of Meena's latest pranks, the letter went on to describe the visit of the Dikshidar to Madras and the proposals for Subbu's marriage. The negotiations at Saidapet were set down in detail and the reasons for their sudden termination, as narrated by the marriage-broker, were adumbrated. The Dikshidar's second visit to Saidapet and the result of his enquiries were then touched upon. And finally Kamakshi dictated, "I refuse to believe all that has been said to me.

* Low-caste

I feel that he (the Dikshidar) would have done well if he had met you before returning to Mayavaram. There has been an acute misunderstanding between us over this matter. Please come here on receipt of this letter and set all our anxieties at rest by refuting the allegations made against you."

Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, on receipt of the letter promptly took the cue, and refuted the allegations *in toto*. He regretted his inability to secure leave of absence and promised to visit his sister as soon as he could. Meanwhile he was writing by return post, said he, to express his horror at the calumny that was being sought to be attached to his fair name. He had never lived at Saidapet: had not seen the face of any woman after his wife's death: could produce evidence to prove Meena's unblemished origin, he wrote, and so on and so forth. And he concluded it all by appealing to his sister not to listen to such infamous stories, not to love Meena a whit less because of such stories, and to be always a mother to the child.

Though the Head-Constable bluffed it off in the letter, he was greatly worried over the trend of events. After sending the letter to the post, he set about thinking of ways and means of meeting further complications which the situation was capable of developing. How much did his brother-in-law, the Dikshidar, find out? What effect would his reply have on him? Would he be satisfied with its contents or would he pursue further the mystery surrounding Meena's birth? In the latter event, what steps should he, the Head-Constable, take to thwart the attempts of his brother-in-law?

Years of service in the police department gave Rangaswamy Iyer the facility to build-up mentally his opponent's case and seek to smash it. The old quack-doctor who knew all about Meena's mother, was dead. There remained only the wet-nurse who had reared the baby from its birth, right-up to the time when Meena was taken down to Mayavaram. The wet-nurse could be squared. Perhaps some of the neighbours knew a thing or two. He must find out if and how they could be silenced. Side by side, he must also try to create evidence, spurious though it may be, to prove that Meena was born, as he made it appear to his sister, to Brahmin parents at Bezvada. A visit to Mayavaram was also necessary to allay any suspicions which his sister might develop. The situation bristled with mischievous potentialities and Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer bestirred himself into action.

Meanwhile, at Mayavaram, Kamakshi was eagerly awaiting her brother. Her husband went about the house with an air of confidence about the result of the impending investigations. When the post-man delivered the letter at Kamakshi's house, the Dikshidar was out. Kamakshi, though she could neither read nor write, knew that the letter was from her brother. She tore it open and called in her second son. "Read this! It is from your uncle!" said she. The boy was only thirteen and his uncle's hand-writing was none too clear. Egged on by his mother, he waddled through the four pages of his uncle's script, slowly and painfully.

"Hm!" said Kamakshi when the ordeal of reading was over. "Now, don't tell a word of this to your *Appah** or to anyone else."

* Father.

"What is it all about mother?" asked the boy.

"You read it, didn't you?"

"I think somebody has been calling uncle names," guessed the boy.

"Never mind. You run along now and keep your mouth shut."

The Dikshidar noticed at the mid-day meal, a quiet cheerfulness in his wife's manner and an unusual lightness in her gait. He was not aware of the receipt of the letter from his brother-in-law. After the meal was over and while he was chewing betel and leaves leisurely, his wife placed before him a *kooja* of drinking water and a tumbler and casually remarked, "Have you fixed an auspicious day?"

"For what?" asked the Dikshidar.

"Why, of course, for adopting Meena."

"Let your brother come!" said he grimly.

"There is no need," smiled Kamakshi. "He has written."

"When? What has he written? Where is the letter?" asked the Dikshidar. Kamakshi went in and brought the letter. The Dikshidar snatched it from her. He read the letter with amazement, his eyes growing wider every second. Kamakshi looked on with an air of I-told-you-so. The Dikshidar, after reading the letter, threw it down in disgust, saying: "I don't believe a word of it!"

"Pray, why not?" asked Kamakshi.

"I never expected him to confess the truth!"

"I am reminded," sneered Kamakshi, "of the story of the man who said he had caught a hare and persisted in maintaining it had three legs. A lot of people whom you don't know tell you some tall stories which you think is *Veda vak** and you refuse to believe the words of my own brother whom you have known all these years."

"Look here!" flared the Dikshidar, "that man, the Deputy Tahsildar started this story. If the story is not true, ask your brother to go to the Deputy Tahsildar and secure the Tahsildar's daughter for our Subbu. Then I will be satisfied."

"My brother is coming here anyway. We will speak to him about it then. Meanwhile, I do hope you will fix up an auspicious day for the adoption ceremony. I want to have a big function, invite my friends and have a good party."

"Tut, Tut!" said the Dikshidar, damping her enthusiasm and indicating his opinion that the chances of an adoption were as remote as ever.

But Kamakshi was not a woman who would keep quiet once she had set her heart on doing a thing. She wrote to her brother. This time, it was her second son who wrote down what she dictated. Re-iterating her faith in the integrity of her brother, she conveyed to him the opinion of her husband. "Would it be possible to see the Deputy Tahsildar and secure the hand of his daughter for Subbu?" asked sister Kamakshi of her brother, Rangu, in the letter, and this time the letter brought brother Rangu himself to Mayavaram.

* Correct Truth.

He came with the usual presents for the children. He affected an air of nonchalance and the gaiety which he assumed, off and on, was forced. Neither Kamu nor her husband started to discuss the topic which was uppermost in their minds, till late in the night, after the children had been put to sleep. Squatting in the open courtyard, staring at the starry sky overhead, it was Rangaswamy who started the ball rolling.

"Well Kamu, here I am and here is your husband. You can start proceedings, as we say in the Police Court. Ask any questions you like."

"Have you seen the Deputy Tahsildar?" asked the Dikshidar sternly.

"Oh, yes," laughed Rangaswamy. "And I have convinced him that he has done us a grievous wrong. Unfortunately his daughter is hooked up already. But, don't you worry about that! I'll fix up a Deputy Collector's daughter, if you like, for Subbu. Boys are scarce now-a-days, you know."

The Dikshidar took up the role of the cross-examiner.

"Isn't there a street in Saidapet called Vinayagar Street?"

"Why, yes, of course?"

"Was not there in the street, a native doctor, called Ponnuswamy Naicker?"

"I knew him. The poor man died sometime last year."

"Had he a grand-daughter?"

"No. He was not married at all. But, look here, I may as well tell you that about four years back I had symptoms of diabetes and a bruise in my leg that would not heal. I couldn't work. I took leave and went to this Naicker for treatment. He was under an obligation to me. Once, he was involved in a riot case and I did something to pull him out of the mess he had got into. He was naturally grateful and he asked me to stay with him for treatment and I stayed there for a couple of months. He cured me. I was in bed most of the time and food and coffee for me were served from a Brahmin hotel. While I was there, in bed, a young woman, some distant relative of the old man, stayed there also for sometime. I was in bed, unable to move about. This girl used to attend on me. And you know people can talk. The moment we heard that some rumour was going round in the neighbourhood, the old doctor had the young woman sent away."

"And she came back, I suppose, a year later, to deliver a child," scoffed the Dikshidar.

"Why don't you believe me, *Iyah*? You could be charitable. Very well, look at this document!" said Rangaswamy and produced a sheet of paper. Kamakshi brought a lantern. The Dikshidar unfolded the paper and began to read. It was the last will and testament, written in Tamil, of one Mr. Ramachandra Aiyer, employed in the police force, appointing Railway Police Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer as sole guardian and custodian of his mother-less daughter, Meena, and administrator of certain sundry effects he possessed. The document was duly stamped, signed and attested, and was quite imposing.

The Dikshidar read the document silently and laid it down. Rangaswamy took it up and read it aloud for the benefit of his sister. She beamed on him. The Dikshidar coughed, cleared his throat and went out. A soft moan from inside made Kamakshi hurry towards the cradle. She presently came back with a precious bundle in her arms.

"Why, Rangu, even Meena wants to hear that document read. Look, she is awake and looking at you."

"Poor kid!" said Rangaswamy with a lump in his throat. "No sooner had she found a mother in you, people are trying to throw her out. She is unlucky."

"Don't say that, Rangu. She is a darling. When she grows up, she will be very beautiful. Look at her hands. How tiny, how soft they are! Look at her eyelashes! I have never seen such long eye-lashes in a baby. And her hair, and the dimples in her cheek! Oh, she is sweet, and my only regret is that I have no milk in me to give her."

The Dikshidar returned suddenly and flung at his brother-in-law a question, "Did that young woman return to the old doctor later and deliver a child?" asked he.

Rangaswamy Iyer hesitated for a second. "I don't think she did," he said. "For one thing, her husband was in jail and for another, she and the old doctor never hit off well. But honestly, do you still suspect that I am not telling you the truth?" asked Rangaswamy.

"No, not at all," mumbled the Dikshidar and again went out.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Rangaswamy of his sister, jerking his thumb towards the direction where the Dikshidar vanished.

"He is always like that. Never will admit that he is in the wrong. It's my fate!" sighed Kamakshi and added: "Do you know that he has promised to adopt Meena if it is proved that his suspicions were unfounded? I think he is sore about it just now."

"I wish you wouldn't press him about the adoption ceremony. Meena has a mother. That is enough for me."

"I have a friend next door, called Sarada. Her husband is an authority on *Sastras*. I will find out through Sarada if we can adopt a daughter. I know sons could be adopted, but I am not so sure of daughters. Anyway, if we do have a function, I'll let you know and you must come without fail."

"I wish you would abandon all these ideas of a function, ceremony and adoption."

"Why?"

"Your husband doesn't apparently like it. I don't wish that Meena should be the cause of any misunderstanding between you and your husband."

"I am sorry to tell you, brother, that from the beginning he hasn't taken to the child kindly: not that he is harsh or cruel. It is his nature. If by some method I could make him openly accept the darling as

our daughter, I thought the future would be free from worries. However, as you desire it, I shall not press the matter any further."

Content for the time being at having cleverly extricated himself from a complicated position, Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, bade his sister farewell the next morning, to rejoin his duty. Kamakshi's neighbour, Sarada, watched him depart with quizzical eyes. It has already been said that Sarada was an unintentional eavesdropper when the Dikshidar taunted Kamakshi and

called Meena a *Sudra* kid born to her brother. Sarada was not of the scandal-mongering variety: yet, she was bursting with the secret, and when Rangaswamy Iyer visited his sister, she wondered if there was any truth behind the Dikshidar's allegation. She called on Kamakshi after Rangaswamy Iyer's departure and adroitly turned the conversation to his visit. "Now-a-days, he is coming here often. I suppose it is Meena who is the attraction," said Sarada.

"Yes. He is her guardian," said Kamakshi and added: "only yester-night, he was reading to us the document appointing him as the guardian of the child. You know, it is a sad story—I mean Meena's parentage."

"I know," said Sarada significantly and changed the subject.

Sarada was vastly intrigued. Who were Meena's parents? Was it true, as the Dikshidar originally alleged, that Meena was born to a *Sudra* woman?

Why should Kamakshi's brother produce a document? What was in the document? Was the Dikshidar satisfied with the document? Unable to decide any of these questions or bear the burden of the secret, she mentioned the matter to her husband one night, and he was pleased at the welcome variation in the theme of her curtain lectures. He listened attentively till the end, ruminated a little and finally expressed an opinion. "These men in the police have no morals. I think what the Dikshidar said to his wife must be true. Good God! What a humbug the Dikshidar is! And what piety he assumes, with a *Sudra* kid in his house! The next time—"

"Aren't you my mother, amma?"



"That'll do!" said Sarada with an air of finality. "I am sorry I told you. Kamu is my friend. And, after all, the child may be of Brahmin origin!"

But the mischief was done. Sarada's husband told the story to his friend. The friend passed it on to another. And thus the story spread all over the *agraharam*. But none had the courage nor were there opportunities to confront either the Dikshidar or Kamakshi with the story.

The stigma that there was something shady about her birth struck to Meena from her third year. As she grew up and went to school, even her school-mates assumed a superior air of tolerance towards her. Till her seventh year, she grew with the belief that Kamakshi and Dikshidar were her parents. Kamakshi's sons treated Meena as their own sister and the boys were really fond of her. But as Meena grew, she began to notice certain peculiarities in the attitude and behaviour of people in the *agraharam* towards her. When with a girl-friend, Gowri, she went into the kitchen in Gowri's house, her friend's mother bade her get out, almost in a harsh and outraged manner. Then, there was the incident of Subbu Patti who used to throw the vessel from which Meena drank water in a corner whenever Meena sought a drink from the Patti's house, which adjoined the school. Meena had also noticed that Subbu Patti never threw into a corner vessels from which other children drank water. A hundred little things like these worried Meena and to crown it all, she was dragged into a quarrel, one day, after the school hour.

A boy was bullying a young child who had bought some sweets. The bully demanded half-share and the younger one refused. A tussle ensued. Meena and some of her class-mates who were looking on, but afraid to interfere, called the bully a choice string of names. The bully retorted. He found vivid appellations for every one of his traducing girl-friends. And when he came to Meena, he roundly called her as one "Who didn't know who her father and mother were." As he threatened them with bodily violence, they ran helter-skelter, and Meena found herself breathless, after an exciting run. She rested in the *Pillayar Mantapam* and only Sokku who was three years her senior was with her.

"Sokku dear," said Meena, "did you hear what that brute said about me?"

"I did. I have also heard people say that you are not your mother's daughter."

"Not my mother's daughter! What do you mean?"

"They say that your mother only adopted you when you were a baby."

"Who then was my mother? Who was my father?"

"I don't think I should tell you all that?"

"Why not?"

"I once heard my mother telling something to my aunt, and when I questioned my mother further, she shooed me off. This much, I think, is certain. Kamakshi amma is not your mother."

"Could it be that my parents died when I was young?"

"I heard that your mother died after giving birth to you."

"And my father?"

"—is living."

"Who is he?"

"They say your uncle Rangu is your father."

"I am glad. I like him very much. But—"

"But, what?"

"Why is he uncle to me and not father?"

"Listen Meena. I might as well tell you the whole story. Your mother was a *Sudra* woman."

"What!"

"That is what everybody says. Some don't believe it."

"I see!" said Meena with understanding. "That accounts for a great many things which were puzzling me. Subbu Patti throwing away the vessel from which I drank water; Gowri's mother warning me off the kitchen. But—"

"Go on!"

"If my mother was a *Sudra*, why do you say uncle Rangu was my father. He couldn't have married her."

"He couldn't, even if he tried—and that is the trouble."

"I don't understand."

"You will, when you grow-up. If I were you, I wouldn't worry over all these things. No one seems to know for certain who your parents are."

"But I must know. I can't bear to think that the *appa* and *amma* I have been calling all these years aren't mine. As soon as I go home I am going to ask *amma* about this. Oh, dear, to think she isn't my *amma*. Why, my heart would break. Come, let us go."

"Don't tell her that I told you all these things," warned Sokku.

Kamakshi was waiting for the return of Meena from school. She had gathered together comb, oil and flowers for doing Meena's hair, and in the almirah was a little sweet, set apart for Meena. Cooking for the night was over and her boys had gone out to play. The Dikshidar had left the day before for an adjacent village and Kamakshi was alone.

There was a patter of little feet, school-books were flung away and Meena came rushing in and hugged her mother.

"Aren't you my mother?" sobbed Meena.

"There, there, there! Whatever is the matter?" asked Kamakshi alarmed at the child's pitch of emotion.

"Aren't you my mother, amma?"

"What a funny question! I am your own mother, darling!"

"And I am not a *Sudra* kid?"

"Good lord! Whoever put the idea into your head!" And Kamakshi hugged Meena closer to herself.

[What is in store for unfortunate Meena?]



Is it Hollywood Cricket?

THERE have been plenty of excellent films this half year—possibly a better average than ever before for any first half-year—but each of the outstanding hits has been of a distinct mould. Musicals, adventure films and even those items called society plays have been spaced with a nice regard for one another; and the picture-houses have not been cluttered with too many imitations of the big successes.

From the stand-point of courage and awareness of new and vital fields for dramatisation, Walter Wanger's *Private Worlds* and Warners' censor-mangled *Black Fury* mark Hollywood's highest attainments for the half-year.

With the *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* and *Clive of India* leading the way, the studios are doing everything possible to show colonial Englishmen as the brave and honourable gentlemen as they no doubt were. But there has never been shown the 'natives' side at all. That will never happen until we in India come to our own. So, for sometime to come, world-audiences will be fed on this propagandist muck and make them say that it is a fine thing for imperialistic nations to exploit 'uncivilised' people, and that it is something less than cricket for 'the natives to defend their homes by any possible means'.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, now almost ready for the cash customers, seems likely to break all the records for length.

The release version of this drama will probably run to 13,000 feet. A midsummer night's session! *David Copperfield* is a mere 11,700.

It was originally intended to show the Warner film at a length of 18,000 feet. By trimming the speeches, however, they removed another 5,000 feet before the picture was shown in Will Hayes' office for his blessing. A *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a film of impressive figures in another direction. Totalling up the accounts to date, the enterprising "Bros." estimate that the picture has cost them 1,800,000 dollars to make. They think something ought to be done about it—and they hope we are going to do it.

What's Good For Kiddies!

A League of Nations Committee, examining the effects of cinema on children, reached a strange conclusion that screen pictures are not doing any harm to youngsters. This, I must say, should be accepted with a qualification. Only the sex pictures seem to have concerned them!

The things that do matter however are the knives and guns shown in action. This is not only unwholesome entertainment but a dangerous example to the easily susceptible minds of the imaginative and imitative kids! What have they done about this?

Vina Delmar

Miss Vina Delmar is a novelist of the best-seller variety and is in a position to reject many offers for her work.

One day she accepted an offer to go to Hollywood immediately and write an original for Joan Crawford.

On her way, Miss Delmar outlined the Crawford story. A few days later she reported that she was working on the script.

The authorities changed their mind about her work and wished her to adapt a property they had. Miss Delmar agreed, finished the job and left M. G. M.

Now Miss Delmar had, left with herself, a very original story. She made it into a novel and sold it to an American magazine for 20,000 dollars. M.G.M. bought the story for another 20,000 dollars! The picture they made from it was *Sadie McKee*, starring Joan Crawford!

Mae West

Mae West, as a connoisseur of masculine charms, has bravely chosen the screen's most romantic men, who can do the most damage to feminine hearts.

Her list is:

James Cagney, Paul Cavanaugh, Gary Cooper, Bing Crosby, Clark Gable and George Raft.

It is interesting to note that Mae West is an admirer of Clark Gable.

All her other nominees, with the exception of Cagney, work on her home lot.

Will Paramount and Metro enable us to see Mae West and Clark Gable as a team?

Exeunt Doctors!

by M. S. Anantha Row

Sketches by Meli

MARK Ye my words and take notice! I am inspired by Dhanvanthri and the Chinese sage Shen Nung.

Your Homeopathy, Allopathy, Sabhapathy and Venkatapathy will dwindle into tommy-rot before my simple tips.

We are in the grip of depression, which means there is not much money about. And money is on a long holiday. That being so why spend the little you have on costly doctors?

If you make use of my prescriptions hereinafter appearing, it will mean to you more than an apple a day to keep the doctor away!

A word more. I'm in *Samadhi* in the Himalayas, communing with the Infinite, so don't try to thank me, because there is no post-man here. Anyway I don't want thanks.



Cold: There are no filthy inhalants to sniff at; no bandages. The patient should adjust three *beedies* side by side between his lips and puff away right to the end. As a diet, three spoonfuls of chillies' powder and three spoonfuls of pepper thrice a day will aid a rapid cure. If no relief is obtained, brand the nose.

Head-ache: Shave that part of the head where the pain lies. If the whole head is affected, deal accordingly. Take two over-ripe brinjals and two rotten oranges. Make them into a thick paste and season with an ounce of kerosene oil. Rub the mixture on the affected part with as much pressure as you can. You may also make the patient smell the above-said mixture in lieu of smelling salts. Two applications will suffice. If the pain persists, hang him (the sufferer, I mean) to the ceiling. He is a disgrace to humanity and beyond the purview of science.

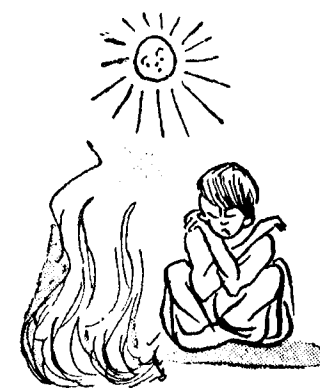
Jaundice:—Calomel, Rhubarb, ox and pig-bile are all bunkum absolutely! Give the victim a piece of blue litmus to chew. If it turns red, it is jaundice pure and simple. Coat the body with a concentrated solution of silver nitrate, expose him to the sun for half an hour and dip him in a five per cent solution of sodium thiosulphate. This process gives him a fine blue-black colour, effacing the hateful yellow.

Tooth-ache:—There is practically no use in administering oil of cloves or carbolic acid. Fomentation is worse. Engage the patient in politics, which should make him forget his pain. If this method fails, give him a jigsaw or crossword puzzle. As a last resource you may propose a riddle to him. Before he proceeds to answer it, give him a sharp slap on the affected part. That will fix him up.



Calculi: This is no disease at all, being but a plural of that branch of mathematics called calculus. If anybody wishes to contradict me and seeks to prove that I'm wrong, he may apply to me with Rs. 50 contradiction-fee, liable to forfeit in case he fails. Letters should be registered and marked "Calculus—Calculi" P. B. 78, Hunsur.

Pleurisy: It was believed that the disease was due to an inflammation of the lungs. That is exactly where my system differs. It diagnoses the complaint thus: A man is in possession of a terrible secret and it sits heavily on his chest. He wants to say it but cannot. His breath comes up to the lips and goes back. A surprising number of to-and-fro journeys of this breath brings about this disease. Buy him a clarinet and give him five hours' practice per day for a week. At the end of that period, either the disease will go or he will.



Fever: The time-honoured and empirical quinine bisulphate is no good—a perfect wash-out. Instead, ask the patient to sit in the sun all day long with a huge fire burning before him. If the fever doesn't fade off by evening, plant his wife or aunt before him with a broomstick in her hand.

Ear-ache: Release a mating hornet in the affected ear. By evening, there will be no more trouble.

(Continued on page 21)

The Letters of Private

54. Entertaining the Visitor

Madras, 22nd June 1935

Dear Mother,

DO you remember Jacques, the French sailor? After showing him some of the sights of the town, Boggins and I took him towards the Fort.

"Hey, Jacques," said Boggins, as we made for St. George's Gate, "*Mongey*?"

Mongey is a wonderful word. It is pidgin-French, and in almost every country the people seem to know that it stands for food. If you say "*Mongey*?" to a Hottentot or an Eskimo, he immediately looks hungry, and rubs his stomach.

There is no universal word for drink, but one is hardly necessary. You simply have to crook your elbow and cock your head on one side, and your guest shows marked animation, unless he is a Scotsman. If he is a Scotsman, he betrays no outward emotion, but instantly produces a corkscrew. Many a Scot has travelled all round the world with only a corkscrew. He regards it as the one indispensable article of luggage, and it is always labelled in large letters, 'Wanted On Voyage'.

In reply to Boggins' query, the Frenchman gesticulated with pleasure, and said he was most agreeable. This is one of the secrets of talking French: any word ending with 'able' is a French word; only you pronounce it as if there were no 'e' on the end. This rule gives you a large number of useful terms, such as formidable, terrible, comfortable, and admirable. You are thus supplied with a stock of adjectives. For your verbs, you keep to the longer English ones that come from Latin, and put an 'e' on the end. For your nouns, you employ gesture, and a system of trial and error. The resulting jargon is atrocious, but it is understood. Exchanging compliments and polite observations in this language, Jacques accompanied us into the Fort.

After proceeding for some distance, Jacques came to a halt. "*Tiens!*" he cried, "Behold, a veritable ancient building! Your Government has great artistic taste. No doubt this place is preserved for reasons of sentiment? What a magnificent ruin!"

"That isn't a ruin," I protested, "it is our barracks."
"But how it is antique!" marvelled Jacques.
"I'll show you something," said Boggins, and led him to the upper storey. "Look at that flooring," he continued, counting the date on his fingers, "it is good French oak, laid down in 1782."

He described how it got there. In 1782, the soldiers went out in small boats, and captured by surprise a French war-ship called *La Gloire*. The floors of their barracks were rotten, so the soldiers used the decks of

the French ship in replacement. They similarly re-floored the Officers' Mess. Finally, they erected the ship's main-mast as a flagstaff; the one that still stands by the South Sea Gate.

Jacques expressed polite interest, and hoped that soon a war-ship of some other nation would pass by and expose itself to capture, as it was time for the barracks to be repaired again.

We led our friend across to the Regimental Institute. It is surprising to think that this building was originally part of an Armenian monastery. The monks were turned out in 1702. They moved their church stone by stone, and re-built it in Armenian Street, where it still stands.

"Sammy!" cried Boggins, leading the way into the erstwhile monkish refectory.

"Sir!" replied Sammy the waiter, with a broad grin.

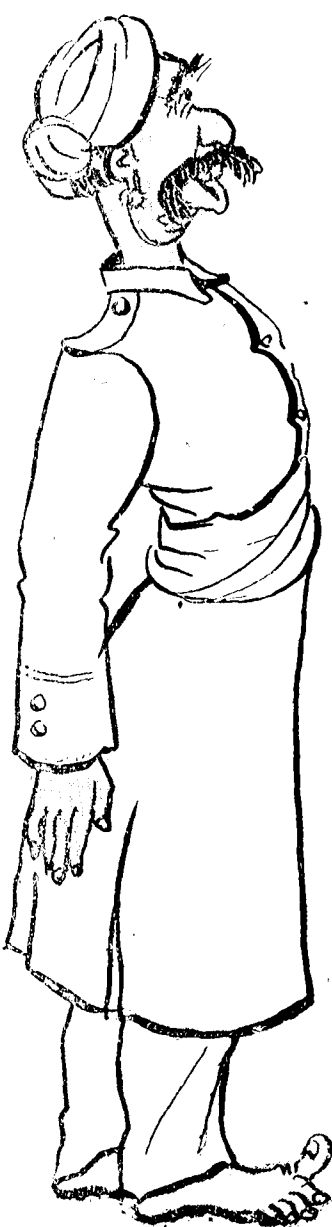
"Recite the menu!" ordered Boggins.

Sammy's grin grew wider. He put his hands behind him, like a little boy at a concert, and rapidly chanted a long list of dishes, starting with mutton-cutlets, and ending with haricot-beans. Boggins beat time as if conducting an orchestra.

"There!" said Boggins to Jacques, when this rapid-fire performance was over, "what will you have?"

"Please?" said Jacques feebly.

"Repeat!" cried Boggins. Sammy chanted his bill-of-fare again, and all the soldiers joined in as if it were an anthem, while Boggins conducted,



Joyfull

"Excuse me, I do not comprehend," said Jacques.

"Well, have the same as we do," suggested Boggins.

"With pleasure," assented Jacques.

"Right you are!" replied Boggins. "Now, Sammy, take a shipping-order. We'll have dead sailors and coffin-nails, babies' heads, and three lots of T. N. T."

Jacques seemed alarmed at the cannibal nature of the menu. When the first dish was brought, he examined it with some anxiety. Then he laughed. "Dead sailors!" he said, pointing to some fish-cutlets. "And coffin-nails!" These were fried potato-fingers. "Very good!" he added, highly amused.

The babies' heads turned out to be apple-puddings, but Jacques was still puzzled about the T. N. T. "Is it not a powerful explosive?" he asked. "Make you burst, bang?"

"That's right; and here it is," agreed Boggins, producing three bottles of aerated lemonade.

When the banquet was over, Tiny Hopkins suggested an impromptu concert for the entertainment of our guest. "Order!" cried Tiny, rapping on a table with the mallet used for broaching beer-barrels, "I call on Freddy Moore!"

Everybody groaned, because Freddy Moore is one of those singers who defy the will of God that they should confine themselves to sawing wood. However, Freddy Moore was pushed forward, and another chap called Chalky White sat at the piano to accompany him. Chalky White is no relation to Nigger White, the footballer. Chalky White is the one who has an ear for music, but in my opinion his ears were constructed for brushing flies off the top of his head.

Freddy Moore sang a lugubrious ballad about a soldier dying on the battle-field. Soldiers always sing lugubrious songs when they are feeling merry. However, the chorus was quite lively.

"And when I'm dead....." piped Freddy Moore in a high voice.

"And when I'm dead....." we repeated, in our lowest bass.

"Don't bury me at all....." continued Freddy; and we all expressed the same desire, but an octave lower.



"Just pickle my bones.....
In alcohol....." sang Freddy.

"In alcohol!" we chanted, at the bottom of our boots.

Freddy brought his song to its conclusion, after relating all the surprising last requests of the soldier dying on the battle-field. We all applauded, crying, "Chuck him out!" Tiny Hopkins chuckled him out, but he sneaked in again by the back way.

"Order!" cried Tiny. "In honour of our distinguished visitor, we will now present that favourite item, 'The King Was In The Counting-House'. Gentlemen, stand!"

The pianist struck a mighty chord, and we all rose to our feet and began to sing:

"The King was in the counting-house
Counting out his money.
The Queen was in the parlour
Eating bread and honey.
The maid was in the garden
Hanging out the clothes,
When down came a black-bird
And bit off her nose."

This song is performed with an elaborate ritual. At mention of the King, we salaam with the utmost veneration. Then we indicate a dignified counting-house, and start counting coins. When we come to the money, we gesticulate like misers, and sing the word in a smug way. After showing the Queen wearing her crown and sitting in a regal parlour, we eat the bread-and-honey with every mark of greed. Then we impersonate the buxom maid tripping into the garden and methodically pegging the King's underpants on the line. Now comes the climax. We spread our arms like hawks, swoop down on the unfortunate girl, bite her nose off, and collapse on the floor in confusion.

Jacques shrieked with laughter at this absurd exhibition. We invited him to join us in an *encore*, which he did with alacrity, though almost helpless with mirth. We laughed all the more because he was not perfect in the ritual. He pegged the Queen on to the clothes-line, and when he should have been counting his coins, he was flapping his arms like a black-bird.

"Hurrah!" we shouted. "Now Jacques must give us a song!"

Jacques announced that he would sing a French song that we could all understand. First he strutted up and down with his hands stuck out behind him like a tail, and sang some words ending with 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' Then he ran round in fussy circles, singing a line which ended, 'Cluck, cluck, cluck!' And so he went on, imitating a cock and a hen, until at the conclusion of the song the two birds were roosting on the same branch, crowing together.

This comical song greatly took our fancy, and we all began to practise it. We perched on chairs and tables, imitating cocks and hens, until the place was like a lunatic farm-yard. Tiny Hopkins, crowing strongly, pursued Boggins round the room, while the latter fled, clucking in alarm. In the midst of the pandemonium, there came the sound of a stick thundering on the door.

"Time, gentlemen, please!" cried the Sergeant on duty.

At this, half-a-dozen fellows joined hands, and danced round the Sergeant, singing. Chalky White danced outside the ring, pretending to be a fairy scattering rose petals on the Sergeant.

"That's all right boys," said the Sergeant good-humouredly. "Come on, now. Haven't you any homes to go to?"

"Please, Sergeant," we pleaded. "Can't we escort Jacques to the gate?"

"You'll have to get a move on," said the Sergeant. "You must all be in by tattoo."

"Right you are, Sergeant!" we promised, and we led Jacques in procession to the South Sea Gate, singing that cryptic ditty,

"Some say, 'Good Old Sergeant!'
Others say....."

What the others say is never ascertained, because everybody coughs.

Jacques delivered a stirring farewell speech, and wept a few tears, and started to kiss us all good-bye. Fortunately, before it was my turn, the bugler began to sound 'First Post', and we had to hurry back to barracks.

Your Loving Son,
OBEAH JOYFULL.

THE END

A BOLD FRONT

(Continued from page 8)

And afterwards, the manager sent through the following order to the costumiers: "We're changing the pink brassieres next week. Send us a similar number of yellow ones. The girls are doing a Chinese number."

Epilogue.

"So you see, gentlemen," brightly concluded the President of Lusty-Bust Brassieres Limited, "fortune has smiled on us and on our works, and we can confidently look forward to a long period of prosperity."

I need hardly remind you, gentlemen, that at one time our greatest anxiety was the nudism movement which has gathered such strength throughout the country. But thanks to the invention of our Mr. Jones, a sheer silk model was evolved which proved acceptable to all but the most fastidious nudists.

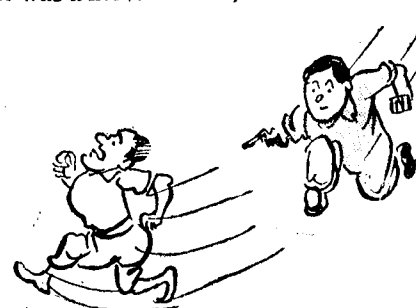
Another of our serious problems was successfully solved by our ingenious Mr. Smith. I refer, of course, to the admirable air-filled brassiere he especially designed for the less robustly built of the fair sex. Now that this model has been made thoroughly leak-proof, it should have enormous sales.

"Ours is now one of the greatest industries of the world, gentlemen. And I think we may be excused for patting ourselves on the back when we reflect on the substantial part we have played in remodelling the tastes and ideals of that world!"

THE END

Exeunt Doctors!—(Continued from page 17)

Insomnia:—The medical guys of olden days thought it was a nerve trouble, usually accompanied by dyspepsia.



On the other hand, it is due to a staggering increase of members in the family and an ever-ebbing pay. The usual mustard foot-bath and alcohol, only breed trouble. Chase the patient round and round the room, armed with a revolver. Dart murderous glances at him. Repeat "I'll hang you if you don't trot off to sleep this minute," two hundred times. This is the best course.

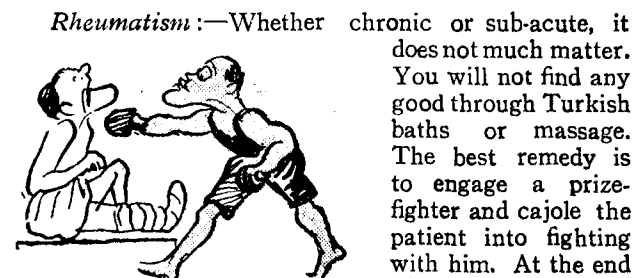
Hysteria: This disease is the trade-mark of young and beautiful women. The writer-chappies make use of this petticoat psychology in their tosh and make money. If a girl goes into hysterics, the best method is to bring another girl on to the scene and ask her to make horrible faces at the patient. The hysterics will stop at once.

Palpitation:—It is true that this disease pertains to the heart. Whether everybody has got a heart in his tummy is a question that has perplexed many pathologists. When the editor refused my A1 skits, I doubted whether he had a heart, and wrote to an eminent pathologist in Andamans. Mr. John Crab (that was his name) thought he had one in his carcass but was surprised to hear that others too had it, i.e., had it not. At any rate, I have come to the conclusion that everybody possesses a pear-shaped organyclept the heart—except editors and their subs. Only those who have a heart can suffer from palpitation or heart-burn. The cause of palpitation is not over-work or fatigue but the result of being badly jilted by the idol of one's heart. My system is equal to the occasion and gives you the following remedy. Climb to the tallest tower in the market-square and call the passers-by below all names you know of. As a shield, you may use a deal-board or an umbrella. This amusement will drive off your palpitation. Or possibly somebody might come stealthily at your back and trip you over. This will do the trick completely.

Plague:—If it is bubonic, cut off the bubo with one of the Sheffield scalpels and apply mango *chutney* to the spot. Next give him large doses of brandy. You'll have no worries from the patient afterwards except a few groans. In case it is sceptic, give him a drink comprising

sixteen ounces of sulphuric acid and four ounces of milk. In a couple of hours, all that you need will be an undertaker.

Sleeping-sickness: A very pardonable complaint. The day following a night of reckless roving or attending a drama is very auspicious for this disease. Sometimes you'll get this complaint and snore off precisely at the hour you had to keep an appointment or catch a train. The best preventive is to keep a fifty-pound weight on your belly before you retire.



Rheumatism:—Whether chronic or sub-acute, it does not much matter. You will not find any good through Turkish baths or massage. The best remedy is to engage a prize-fighter and cajole the patient into fighting with him. At the end of the day, give a coating of tar to the body and stick white feathers liberally over him.

Sea-sickness: Some gossamer guys will catch this disease for a lark immediately they board a ship. Stealing others' possessions is a tried remedy. In some stubborn cases, the suffering guys will have to pick up quarrels with the Captain of the liner. This done, the sickness will vanish into the ambient air. Or drink as much bilge water as you can. The skipper will supply it gratis.

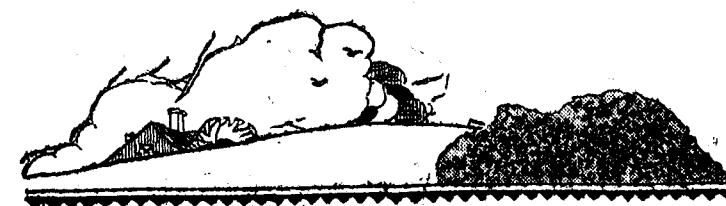
Pthisis: This beautiful scourge has chosen young literati for its prey. The chief cause of pthisis is the rebuffs the cribbed scribblers get from Editors. The victims will have no peace of mind. Johnny Keats died of this complaint. It appears John Bunyan sold his banian and hat with a view to purchase that peace of mind in Bedford market. At last he found it gratis in Bedford gaol. The best cure is to send the rejection-slips back with regrets and take to snake-charming.

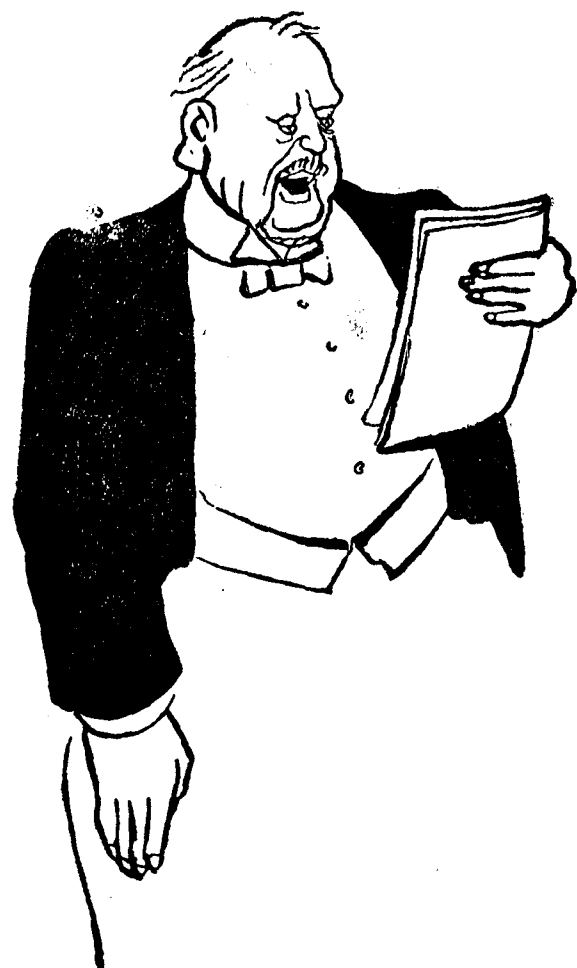


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My donkey-gland treatment will be the wonder of the age. Anybody undergoing this treatment lives a charmed life, immune from all disease. A guarantee of two-hundred years' life is also offered to those who get treated. But wait till I secure patents in all countries

THE END





Being a paper read before the Geographical Society by Doctor Bogus, the intrepid explorer; and set down by 'Embusque'.

LEGENDS have long been current of the existence of a race of men with tails, inhabiting the hinterland of Kinchingunga, but any confirmation of the story has been hitherto impossible. It is only by the accident of fortune that I am now able to throw light on the matter, following my experiences with the recent ill-fated expedition.

I will not harrow your feelings, Gentlemen, with a description of the final catastrophe that overwhelmed our venture. The sad story is but too well-known. There is a general impression that I was down at the base-camp at the time, charged with the important duty of keeping the donkeys out of the rain. This, however, is not the case. Now that I am the sole survivor of the expedition, I can reveal that I was one of the devoted little band that made the final assault on the impregnable mountain.

When the blizzard descended upon us, we were but a short distance from the top. Like my unfortunate companions, I was soon buried in the snow. However, I took the precaution of removing the snow from above me as it fell, and packing it beneath my body. After a few hours, the sun appeared again, and I found that, by having raised myself with the snow as it piled up, I was now level with the top of the mountain. With beating

The Tail-men

heart I stepped forward, fired by the ambition to plant the British flag on the topmost peak. But Fate intervened. My iron-shod foot slipped on the rocky outcrop that marked the absolute summit, and I fell—down the other side of the mountain.

I descended a distance of three or four miles, fortunately accompanied by an avalanche of snow that broke my fall. I came to rest in a sheltered valley, hitherto untrodden by civilised man. I took a long pull at the keg of brandy with which I was provided. After a copious drink, I lapsed into unconsciousness.

Some time later, I became aware of a figure bending over me. I sat up in surprise.

What I beheld was something like a gorilla. It walked on two legs, but with the body bent somewhat forward. It had long arms, clawlike fingers—and a tail. Not unnaturally, my apprehensions were aroused at this sight. I had not thought the brandy to be so strong.

I was agreeably relieved to hear the being address me in human language, though I could not follow the purport of his remarks. I gathered, however, that his name was Bo.

When I was fully recovered, Bo led me to the settlement of the Tail-Men. The valley was entirely inhabited by this race. Though cut off from the rest of mankind many ages ago, it enjoyed a highly-organised civilisation. I was introduced to Po, the chief magistrate, and to Lo, the principal of the university.

Lo had a wonderful system of teaching languages by the direct method, a system almost as magical as some of those advertised in the periodicals of our tailless countries. Suffice it to say that within a fortnight I was talking Caudalese with the greatest fluency, though handicapped by the absence of a tail with which to make the appropriate gesticulations.

The Caudalese believe that they are the only people in the world who have tails, and that consequently they are superior to all others. They consider the tail to be the most sacred and important part of the body. As their bodies are well-covered with hair, they wear no clothing, but deck their tails with the most costly and elaborate finery.

The tail forms such an important adjunct to their language, that my taillessness amounted to an impediment of speech. On meeting, the Caudalese shake tails; and they use them to convey every kind of emotion. Pleasure is indicated by wagging the tail, anger by lashing it to and fro. When the tail is elevated, it signifies complacency, and when it is depressed between the legs, it registers fear. But all kinds of delicate inflexions of meaning are also conveyed by the tail. Lovers have a language of the tail, and the most sublime Caudalese poetry depends for its effect upon the emotional tail-movements of the reader.

of Kinchingunga

by 'Embusque'

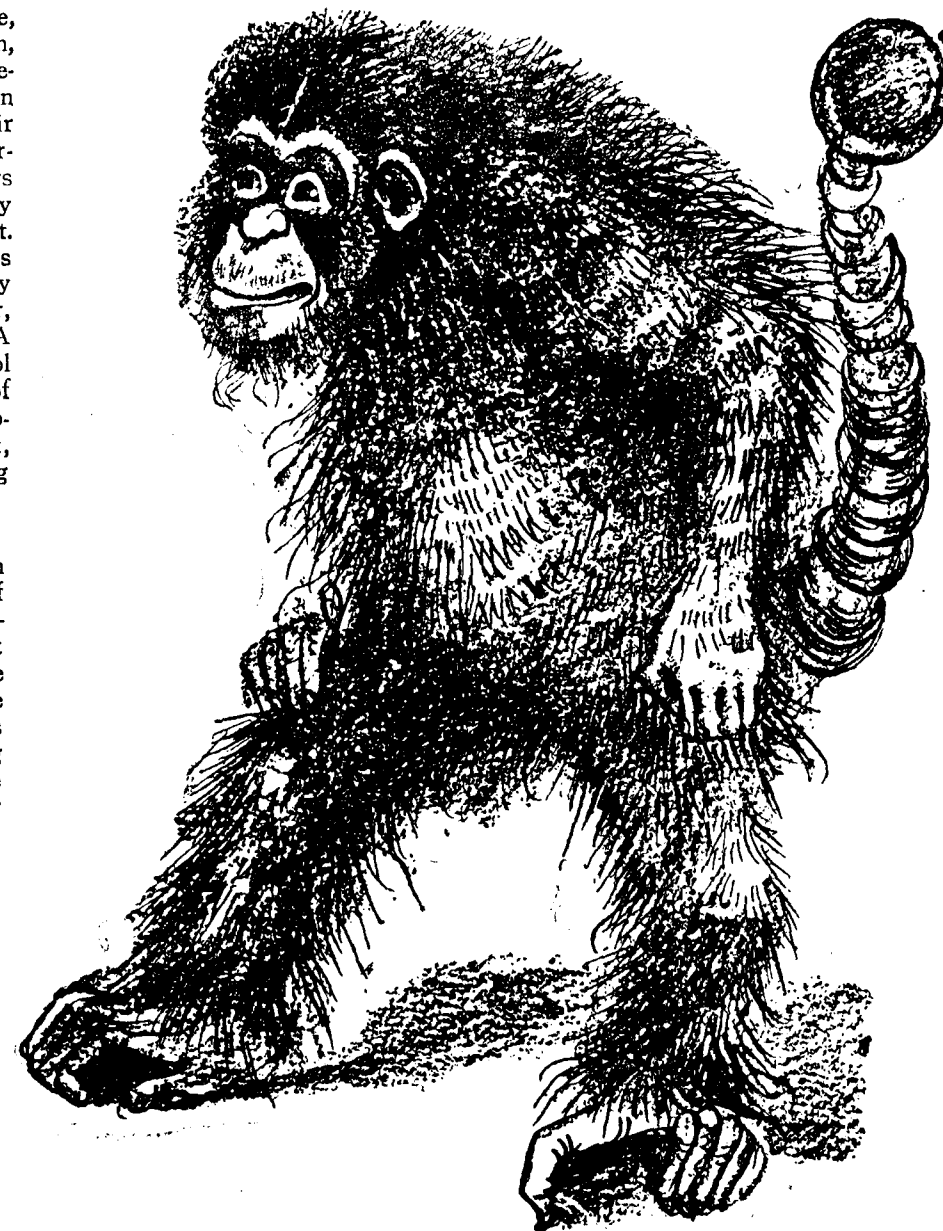
Illustrated by Mali

The Caudalian theologians hold that at one time all mankind had tails; but all except their own race lost them, as a punishment for sitting on them. A Caudalian never sits on his tail. A Caudalese chair consists of elbow and knee-rests, and a cushion on which to support the stomach. They may thus be said to rest kneeling forward, and not sitting backward. When taking their ease, the elders fasten feathers to their tails, and, raising the tail over their heads, fan themselves and keep-off the flies.

The inhabitants have many games of skill, such as battledore-and-shuttlecock, played entirely by means of the tail. Championship-matches attract a larger concourse, and arouse keener enthusiasm, than even our own at Wimbledon. The *virtuosi* play certain musical instruments with their tails, and give concerts by performing on sets of bells. Others apply rosin to the tail, and play on it with a bow, like a violinist. The children fasten two reeds to the tip of the tail, and, by whirling it around in the air, produce aeolian harmonies. A mass-performance by school children, with thousands of tails gyrating in unison, produces a sublime musical effect, and provides a staggering spectacle.

There is no traffic-problem in Caudalia, as the practice of walking arm-in-arm is unknown. The people move about in single file, each holding the tail of the next ahead. I once saw no less than 5,000 persons in such a procession, winding across the valley like a huge serpent. They were on their way to a tail-beauty contest.

The colour, size, shape, and general appearance of the tail are matters that constantly engage the thoughts of all Caudalians. A stumpy tail is considered vulgar, as is a hairy tail or a bony tail. The best tail is of smooth contour and pink texture, tapering evenly to a point. It is a common practice for young ladies to put their tails into curlers at night, so that they may acquire the



most-admired proportions. A young lady's tail is carried with a slight modish droop, while a gentleman of fashion wears his tail judiciously elevated.

Even the poorest classes pay much attention to the adornment of their tails. They use flowers, feathers, lace, and jewellery, arranged in the most fantastic modes. The fashions are constantly changing. One fashion consists in puffing-out the tail with feathers into the form of a brush, with a bladder at the end. Another consists of coloured rings fixed at equal distances along the tail, with a thimble-like jewel at the end. Another greatly in favour among the ladies is a series of bows in multi-coloured ribbons, finished off with a nosegay of flowers.

The barbers do a great business in Caudalia, and are considered the ruling class. Every Caudalian has his tail shaved, washed, shampooed, and perfumed each morning, before it is adorned for the day. The barbers annoint and tattoo tails, and make sheaths to protect tails, from becoming roughened or chapped in cold weather. They also make false tails, for those who have been unfortunate enough to lose or be deprived of their tails.

The greatest punishment known to the Caudalian penal code is the total amputation of the tail. This is only applied in cases of murder, or where the *lex tailonis* is invoked—the law of a tail for a tail. He who deprives another of his tail, shall lose his own tail.

There are no prisons in Caudalia. When a man is arrested by the police, his tail is tied to a post outside the court, and there he remains until brought to trial. Owing to the sacred nature of one's tail, the criminal never presumes to release himself. Similarly, a felon

sentenced to close confinement simply has a string tied to his tail, and the other end held by a warder.

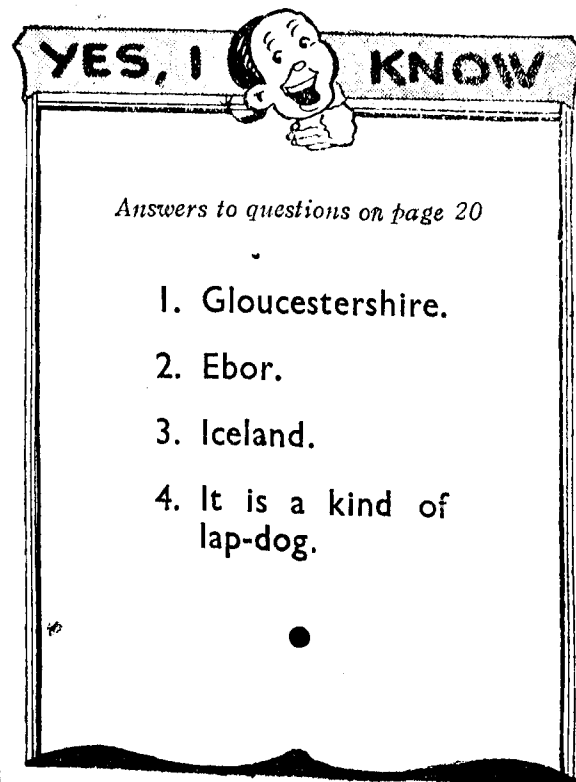
In the university, there is a strong Faculty of Tailology, which deals with the philosophy and physiology of the tail.

The valley swarms with Tailomancers, who profess to tell fortunes, solve problems, and predict events, by studying the peculiarities of individual tails. The Tailomancers also pretend to supply remedies to make the tail beautiful, and to brew philtres by which a maiden with a commonplace tail may win the love of the most handsomely-tailed man in the valley.

It was my intention to bring back many curious evidences of this wonderful people, but unfortunately the mode of my departure precluded the taking of any luggage. When I signified my wish to return to the other side of the mountain towering over our heads, my good friend Po procured four of the strongest tail-wrestlers in the valley. These remarkable men had so cultivated their tail-muscles, that they exceeded the strength of the strongest steel springs. Coiling their tails beneath

me, they suddenly exerted the full force of their strength. I was shot high into the air, just skimmed the summit of the mountain, and descended in an avalanche to within a short distance of the base camp on the other side. Here I found the donkeys still unharmed. Much shaken by my perilous passage through the stratosphere, I resorted to a deep draught from my brandy-keg, and sank to the ground completely overcome.

It was thus I was found by the rescue-party, still clasping the brandy-keg which had accompanied me throughout my adventures.



XXXV

"DEAR Auntie," writes a sprightly youth, "you are always pretending that you are a terrible old gargyle who is scorned by men, and endures all sorts of ridiculous slights. Actually, I wouldn't mind betting that you are one of the smart young women-writers who are springing up now-a-days. I know you are a woman, because your replies have a feminine, as well as a feline touch."

Isn't that sweet of the dear boy? Though I'm not sure that I like the word 'feline'. To settle the question, Auntie will hold a referendum of her readers, on Nazi lines. You all have to vote on the question: 'Is Auntie feline?' The papers of those who answer in the affirmative will be destroyed, and then a count will be taken. Auntie is sure that the result will be overwhelmingly in her favour.

Regarding the other point, Auntie can remember a time when she was hailed as a beauty-queen. It was at a big party, and we were playing forfeits. The mistress of the revels was Auntie's dear old friend, Gabitha Gumboil. Auntie privately asked her that, when it was Joe Smith's turn to pay a forfeit, Gabitha should order him to kiss the prettiest girl in the room.

Then your clever Auntie got Joe Smith into a corner, and promised him ten rupees, on the understanding that he would kiss Auntie when the time came.

Gabitha played her part like a true friend, and Joe Smith kept his bargain. "Kiss the prettiest girl in the room!" ordered Gabitha; and you can imagine the hush while Joe's eyes travelled round the circle of blushing maidens. At last he stepped forward and dealt Auntie a resounding buss on the cheek, and the silence could be felt.



At last he stepped forward and dealt Auntie a.....

It was a great triumph for your Auntie, but in the end she had to pay Joe twenty rupees, as well as the doctor's bill. You see, all the other young men waylaid him after the party. They were jealous, my dears, because Joe had not chosen any of their sweethearts; though, really, Auntie did not think much of the charms of the hussies. Anyhow, chickabiddies, your Auntie was the undisputed queen of beauty on at least that occasion.

Toper (Manovi). As far as Auntie remembers, the 'Old Toper's Litany' starts somewhat as follows: "From a wife that doesn't love us, from slow horses and fast women, from over-lubrication and tight boots, and from folks who won't laugh, Good Lord, deliver us!" All good Topers believe that outbursts of merriment stimulate the system, tone up the arteries, and improve the circulation. In fact, one good jest does more good than twenty asses laden with medicine. So continue to take the *Merry* regularly, my good sir.

D. B. (Bombay). Although *Quo Vadis?* is quite an old film, I was greatly affected by it. I felt so sorry during the scene when the Christians were thrown to the lions. Yes, dear girl; and Auntie confesses to having been similarly moved to pity. She distinctly remembers that there was one poor little lion that didn't get any Christian at all.

Insomnia (Oorgam). The following is an excellent method of pacifying a squalling baby: smear its fingers with treacle, and give it some feathers to hold. It will spend hours peacefully transferring the feathers from one sticky finger to another.

Freddy (Park Street). "I see in to-day's paper that the word 'Buss' is Shakespearean English for 'Kiss'. Are there any derivatives still in use?" There are, dear boy. Rebus: kiss the girl again. Omnibus: kiss all the girls.

Blunderbus: kiss your mother-in-law. Syllabus: one girl kissing another.

Precaution (Alleppey). Love-letter ink, dear boy, is a special preparation which fades completely away in a fortnight. It is an invaluable prophylactic against actions for breach-of-promise.

Ducky (Dhantoli). "My daughter wants a duck. Where can I get one, and what will it cost?" It all depends, dear sir, whether she wants a duck of a hat, a duck of a motor-car, or a duck of a husband.

Unnumbered (Khardah). The number of hairs on a woman's head is about one lakh, dear boy. The number of hairs on a man's head depends on the length of time he has been married.

Fender (Hebbal). "I laughed about the mystery of the marble and the soda-water bottle. What other scientific mysteries remain unsolved?" Well, dear boy, no one has discovered why a man, when he undresses, starts with his shoes, while a woman starts at the other end, with her hair-pins. (I have: people keep the best bits to the last—*Ed.*)

Sahib (Calcutta). To stop your servant from stealing your hair-oil, dear boy, empty the bottle, and fill it with liquid glue.

Student (Huliyurdurga). "What does Shakespeare mean by his frequent use of the phrase, 'Go to'?" It was a common expression of mild reproach, dear boy, in the same way as we still say, 'Go along with you!' But some authorities think otherwise. They believe that the bard thought it would not be polite to finish the sentence.

Neglected (Kumbakonam). To cure your husband of coming home late, my dear, go to the door when he comes home, and whisper through the key-hole, 'Is that you, Jagam?' After that, he will not only stay at home every night; he will sleep with one eye open, and with a revolver under the pillow—that is, assuming that his name is Gopu.

Rural Reconstruction (Bengal). "After addressing the meeting regarding the urgency of the campaign, and the great need for funds, I passed the hat around. It came back empty. What do you think of that?" Auntie thinks you were lucky to get the hat back, dear boy.

Interested (Shimoga). "Should the husband of a film-star settle all his money upon his wife?" Perhaps it would be better, dear boy. For instance, the poor girl's next husband might be quite without means.

Lily (Calcutta). "I have fallen in love with a young man in a music-shop, but he is very shy, and I

am soon going away up-country. How can I encourage him without betraying myself?" Go into the shop at a time when there are no other customers, my dear, and ask him if he can give you "One Kiss Before We Part".

Not So Well (Robertsonpet). "I have been attending the doctor's for some time, and lately he has started giving me a new prescription. The chief item is Syrup of Ram Cats. Surely there is no need to give a respectable lady such a thing?" There is a slight misapprehension, dear Madam. 'Syrup Ram. Cats' is an abbreviation for Syrup Ramus Catharticus—that is to say, syrup of hartshorn. It is on account of such misconceptions that doctors invariably write their prescriptions in mysterious symbols.

Dorothy (Poona). "I have no sympathy with these modern ideas. A husband and wife are one; I am my husband, and my husband is me." Auntie offers her felicitations, my dear. By the way, do you know that you were in the Club late the other night, singing that you were the Old Man of the Mountains?

Paternal (Park Town). "My son-in-law owns a motor-garage, and he is a great admirer of yours. He says that if you can bring him any kind of old thing, he will put it into working-order as a motor-car for you." Auntie is deeply touched, dear sir. As it happens, she does own a radiator-cap, which she picked up on Elliott's Beach the other evening. Do you think the dear boy could build a motor-car round it for his Auntie?

Horologer (Entally). "How can I tell the time of day without carrying a watch?" Carry a cat about with you, dear boy. The time may be ascertained by examining the pupils of the cat's eyes. When you want to know the hour, however, do not pull your watch out of your pocket by the tail, or it might scratch you.

Publicist (Rajapekar). "I was formerly employed at the powder-works in Kirkee. One day, owing to a sudden explosion, I was blown into a million fragments. My relatives were in despair. They tried all kinds of remedies without avail. They at last someone recommended them to use Doctor Sadhu's Miraculous Ointment. After using only one box, I was practically re-united..." Quite so, dear sir. Try the advertisement department.

S. V. R. (Sandur). "I have retired, and am living in an ideal spot. What is your favourite neighbourhood, dear Auntie?" Auntie has a preference for something in the neighbourhood of a lakh of rupees, dear sir.

Ennui (Benares City). "I have been reading the debates in the Assembly with astonishment. The only conclusion I can come to is that politicians are queer birds." Auntie does not think it is very respectful to compare our legislators with birds, dear sir. Besides, birds only feather their nest in the Spring.

The Wheel of Fortune

by K. G. Nataraj



"WHAT is that for?" asked my guest, pointing at the rusted rim of a motor car wheel lying in the corner of my room. "I suppose you are one of those who believe in luck emblems such as horse shoes etc. eh?"

"Oh, no," I replied, "I am far from being a superstitious person. Well, that wheel is not a luck-emblem, but a remnant of a fortune."

"Remnant of a fortune?—rather interesting; but unilluminating," commented my guest.

"There is a story behind it. If you don't think it will bore you, I shall give you the yarn."

"I shall be delighted to hear it."

"Very well, then. Here goes. A certain syndicate," I began, "announced the award of a car for the brightest and most snappy and humorous sketch on the theme 'The Simplest Manner on How One Could Be Harmlessly Cheated'. The organisers of this competition spared neither money nor pains to make the advertisement and literature on this competition as attractive as was possible.

"It has all along been my ambition," I continued, "to win something that I can parade before my neighbours, who do not show a proper appreciation of my capabilities, not only parade but gloat over it. With this end in view I had systematically directed all my available resources and time, in solving what the organisers call 'simple' picture puzzles. But somehow my luck had always adopted a negative attitude. This award of a car did not at all strike me at first as one in my line for three sound reasons. Firstly, my writing capabilities are limited; secondly, humour had never been my strong suit and last but not least, neither was I ever cheated nor had I practised that art on anybody to give me the necessary courage to go ahead despite the decisive and distinct handicap on the first two counts. Later on, when I found out that many others whose literary talent, if any, was nowhere in evidence were sneakishly trying for the award, my vanity was touched to the raw. If these lesser fry, I argued, could participate, there was no earthly reason for my abstention, especially in view of the fact that I had achieved some remarkable success in the three 'T's' (telling tall tales)."

"Very intriguing, pray proceed," induced my listener.

"The compilation of the story," I resumed, "gave me a lot of trouble. Reams and reams of paper were used in the process, and my servant-boy threatened to leave me if the W. P. B. continued to be over-loaded in the manner it was overloaded. Even the refuse-cart-wallas of the Municipality took up a rebellious attitude and they had to be cajoled and bribed to clear the stuff away. These obstacles and many other hurdles did not deter me from bringing my task to a successful conclusion. Despite a judicious and discretionary scissoring from several authors and blending the extracts in a manner as would defy detection, I was far from being satisfied. I revised and re-revised and ultimately had my 'effort' sent away, more to finish with the bother than with any desire or hope for the award.

"Months and months of waiting made me give up hope. Even the periodical announcement that the judges were working hard to adjudge the winning story and that the result might be expected any moment, was not reassuring. At last the result was published and it contained ten names. As the stories of all the ten successful competitors were adjudged to be of equal merit, the syndicate decided to divide the award equally. To my great astonishment and to the equally great envy of my neighbours, my name was one of the ten. I was the recipient of several congratulatory messages. Much speculation proceeded as to the manner in which the car would be equally divided, but every one agreed as if the unanimity was of any count, the best course was to sell the car and divide the proceeds equally among the ten winners. Some optimistic estimates were advanced that I ought to be good to the extent of a thousand at least. The dust raised after the results gradually subsided and all was quiet on our front.

"Well, we now come to the kernel of the story. One day I received a railway receipt covering the despatch of a crate by the syndicate. What the crate contained I did not know. I guessed that the syndicate might have exchanged the big car for ten babies for equal distribution and the crate probably contained some deli-

THE END

cate parts sent in advance of the main consignment. I got the crate home and very carefully unpacked it. What do you think it contained?"

"I suppose the rim of this wheel, eh?" replied my guest.

"Right! Well, anyway it was there, and it can very easily be imagined what my feelings were then. It completely bowled me over. I was wild. Because I would appear ridiculous before my neighbours, I decided then and there that I should at least take legal action against the syndicate for cheating, as the other remedy of personal vengeance was out of the question. The next day's mail knocked this proposition on its head. There a letter from the syndicate saying that as the ten stories were considered of equal merit, it was agreed to dismantle the car and send a tenth share of the weight of all the dismantled parts, to each of the successful competitors. As the condition of the award gave them only power to divide the prize, but not to sell the same and distribute the proceeds, the syndicate hoped that we would have received our share of the due weight in a safe manner. That is all, and there you have the reason why that wheel came to me and why I am preserving it. That, in short, represents a part of a fortune."

"Well, well," drawled my guest with a sort of superior air which I did not at all relish.

"Have you not missed the real point?"

"What real point?" I enquired.

"Look here, can't you see that the plot specified for the story has something to do with the results? You were asked to write on the simplest way of cheating, and what do you reap as a reward? You were cheated."

Put like that it did occur to me that there was a catch in the scheme. "But no one likes being told that he was the victim of cheating," I demurred.

"As you do not apparently agree with me, I am afraid I must reveal to you that I had a large share in the organisation of this competition. As the whole thing has gone off as I foresaw and planned, I don't mind exchanging confidences with you. Now, you shall hear the other side of the story."

I was taken aback, and waited breathlessly for what was coming.

"A friend of mine," continued my friend, "who is in the publishing line had a worn-out tin-lizzie of a motor-car, and all his efforts to dispose of it even at a rock-bottom price were all of no avail. Out of disgust he offered me the damn thing for a song, so to say. While

I was thinking as to what best use the car could be put, I had a brainy idea. I took up a bet with him that I would make the people hanker after that car. He took it all as a huge joke and was sure of winning the bet from me. But when I unfolded my plan of action, he was a different man. He went raving mad over the scheme. Then and there we drafted hand-bills and advertisement matter, all of which, as you yourself just now admitted, had a great pull. Over three hundred entries were received, and at least a third of these were real good stuff, worth money to any publisher. After selecting all the useful stories, we decided to announce only ten names to keep up appearances and give the competition an air of reality. We decided, as already arranged, to dismantle the car and send the parts to various successful competitors, as we cleverly inserted the condition that the prize was divisible but not the sale proceeds of the prize."

"You are all nothing but low down cheats!" I burst out. "You have not at all dealt fairly with us, whose honest and laborious efforts deserved a square deal. What did you gain after all? Perhaps some cheap notoriety and the curses of many."

"Gently, not so harsh," said my guest. "Hard words break no bones. It is not our fault if people are so gullible. We only put through a business deal, of course taking advantage of the present-day tendencies, the chief among them being a desire to amass fortunes by simple methods, such as solving puzzles etc. Our calculations to attract a sufficient number to our scheme bore fruitful results and you can't call that cheating. We had to sacrifice an old car in the process, and I admit that we came out successful. By the way, we have brought forth the best seller of the season: "How to Cheat Innocently—In Lighter Vein" by the kindness and help of all our constituents and I would advise you not to miss the opportunity of reading this book, for that will be the talk of the day. It is priced very moderately, basing our calculations on the large-scale demand—"

"Oh, stop that! I don't want to hear anything more about it."

I was furious that in spite of the presence so near me of one of the perpetrators of the fraud, I could not take as drastic a step as I would have liked to. I had a respect for the Penal Code.

"By the way," remarked my guest, "if you won't take any offence, may I point out that what was a remnant of fortune to you, was a wheel of fortune to us."

I looked at him in a certain manner. He left me hurriedly.

Lunch Homes

by A. V. V.

I believe that, like most other city-dwellers, I have spent a good part of my life in Lunch Homes—either in eating my lunch or, rather more frequently, in waiting for it. Not that I consider this any waste of time; for, I have learnt somewhat of men and manners in these idle moments.

For one thing, there is the same mood prevailing among all the eaters. It is difficult for a man to remain morose and melancholy with a plate of 'Basandhi' and another of fruit-salad right in front of him, waiting to be tasted and enjoyed. Everyone is convivial and though there is no wine, coffee flows as freely. People who have never made a good joke in their lives, under the double stimulus of nice eatables and an expectant company, indulge in witticisms. My own view is that Swaraj can be more easily attained by starting a number of Lunch Homes throughout the country, supplying eatables at very cheap prices. The mutual understanding that arises after a really nice tea-party is much stronger and more lasting than that arrived at after prolonged, laborious discussions in All-Parties' Conferences. The shortest way to the heart is through the stomach.

Many people resent the presence in most Lunch Homes of a separate room labelled 'For Brahmins Only'. I for one don't agree with this. In these days when everybody is anxious to proclaim himself a staunch Anti-Untouchabilist, the room reserved for Brahmins is avoided as carefully as the Non-Brahmins' Room used to be avoided by Brahmins in olden days. Anyway that specially labelled room is as dirty as the others.

The real difficulty comes in when you decide, on entering a Lunch Home, to keep within your means when ordering. Naturally when the waiter asks you, "What will you have?", you reply in a loud voice, "What have you got?" Off starts the waiter full steam ahead with a long list—all uttered in one breath. (What a tremendous exercise it must be for the waiter's lungs). You lower your voice to a discreet whisper and suggest, "One puri and a cup of butter-milk." But the impudence of the rogue! He repeats as if for himself, but really for benefit of those around you—your order in a loud voice. Everyone stares at you in an uncomfortable manner. There is unutterable contempt in the waiter's quiet gaze. He goes out saying, "Is that all?" and keeps you waiting half-an-hour for that single puri. It is this looking down upon indigent

customers that I have always strongly protested against. Instead of fulfilling their avowed purpose of making a man feel at home, these Lunch Homes add insult to injury in the case of the poor customer, for they not only touch his pocket, but also humiliate him.

The Military Lunch Home—as opposed to the 'Civil', I suppose, has better manners but not better customers or better dishes. I remember the days when I used to think that 'Military Lunch Homes' were exclusively for soldiers and that civilians could not even enter their precincts. Disillusion came upon me with a vengeance. I once had the ill-luck to live in a room just above a Military Hotel. Being a vegetarian myself, I couldn't take any food in the hotel, but before long I found that I couldn't even live in the neighbourhood of that awful stench of meat prepared under the most insanitary conditions imaginable.

I have never yet been able to understand the craze for gramophone-music which has taken hold of most Lunch Home managements. If anything, it appears to me to be both crude and vulgar. The man who loves music gets irritated when he sees good music spoiled by the babel of voices in the restaurant, while the man who does not care at all for music protests against the unwelcome intrusion of the loud gramophone. There ought to be a separate room in every Lunch Home, away from the noise and the crowd, where those who like music can eat to the accompaniment of good (or bad) music.

If Indian 'Lunch Homes' touch one's pocket rather too much, European 'cafes' seem to be bent on emptying it. I remember vividly the awkward situation I was once placed in when I determined, in a foolish and unguarded moment, to try one of those attractive 'cafes' in the Madras Esplanade. Finding that I had twelve annas in my pocket and a fairly smart suit on me, I entered the 'cafe' with a bold step and a commanding look. Cautioning myself, I ordered a cup of Ovaltine and nothing else. The service was prompt, the surroundings spotlessly clean and the manners tip-top, but the bill was for twelve annas! I shelled out the money and silently walked home to Mylapore, four miles away.

But—not a word about this to anybody!

READERS' FORUM

Auntie
Replies

DEAR 'TOURING GUY',

As far as Auntie's information goes, there is no large cyclists' organisation in India, that would provide facilities and encouragement for a person undertaking an All-India cycle tour.

Even the very large organisations in England, such as the Cyclists' Touring Club, do not offer any special inducements to individual members undertaking 'stunt' tours. Such individuals may simply avail themselves of the facilities and affiliations open to all members of the Club.

The touring cyclists that Auntie has met in India, invariably rely on their own resources, plus such local hospitality and enthusiasm as they are able to arouse.

In this respect, the Press is very helpful. If a tourist can make himself into 'news', the Press will help him on his way. Local leaders may also be induced into taking an interest in the wayfarer. Anyhow, the tourist must be provided with some means of paying his way.

The last touring cyclist encountered by Auntie was manfully pedalling his way up the Khyber Pass, and selling picture-postcards to the Afridis who had hoped to rob him!

Publication of your query in the *Merry Magazine*, may elicit some further information. It will not get into print, however, until the second week in July.

With all good wishes,
AUNTIE AWFUL.

This page is placed at the disposal of the readers. They can, within the bounds of decorum, discuss anything of interest under the sun. This is a repetition of our announcement made a few weeks ago—Editor.

Originality—

by 'Second-Hand'

IF some smart young journalist were asked to turn out an article on the above-mentioned subject, he would in all probability begin in some such way as this: "Originality is not a very original topic to write on....." and then, of course, he would brilliantly go on, with a subconscious feeling that he has after all struck up a very original note. Look at the way he introduces his subject!

As I am, however, not in a mood to be brilliant or original, I will modestly begin by remarking that few words have been so constantly abused as the word under discussion. It has been stretched to denote all possible quips and cranks, every conceivable oddity of temperament and perversity of demeanour till it has come to acquire its present annoying looseness as of an ill-used hand-glove. If my Lady Fitful behaves in a peculiar manner, for example, titters when she should keep silence, or remains a solemn mug when every one else is roaring with laughter, her grace is complimented on possessing a very *original* bent of mind. When some Hollywood queen offers, for the spiritual benefit of the benighted public, a perfectly stupid opinion on a perfectly silly topic, all the namby-pamby Hollywood newspapers come out with a chorus of amazed approval such as: "Miss Jumpy Maudlin, when interviewed by the correspondent of 'Beelzebub', was by no means reticent, and gave a strikingly *original* opinion on the vexed question whether it is more thrilling to be kissed by a man with a moustache than by a clean shaven fellow." Again, if some political mugwump picks up a terribly old idea from the dust-bin, dresses it up and dangles it before our nose with a whack of rhetoric and a flourish of his hand, we feel ashamed of our own mediocrity and acclaim the intellectual vigour of the man—the *originality* of his thought.

Truth to say, I am sick of this so-called originality. Whenever I see it coming up the street, I slink into a side-alley. This multiform hag has come to dominate much human activity and haunt almost every walk of life; she springs at you from alluring shop-windows and shrieking cinema-posters; from the button-holes of gent's coats and the *chic* parasols of ladies; from the obliquity of Assembly talks and the garrulity of the radio-set. Every man who is worth his salt tries to be original—to be unlike others.

In these four words—to be *unlike others*—is summed up the gospel of originality. To be unmistakably different

from others in our views, our manners, our conduct is the short-cut to the shrine of the goddess. This is the first lesson in journalism and the first tenet of the political aspirant. It is also the beacon-light of your prospective social reformer. By the way, talking of social reformers reminds me. The other day a friend of mine in a public speech before an audience of elegant ladies and gentlemen, made some infuriatingly witty and smartly heterodox remarks on the very fresh topic of marriage, and was warmly applauded for his bold and advanced views. He came back home in a mental state verging on ecstasy; and on being complimented by his wife (a rare occasion dear) for his very original attitude towards the 'unfair sex', he almost promised to buy her (a rare occasion, still!) a pair of pendants. But for my cold-blooded intervention, he would have, for aught we know, carried out his promise. After a hot discussion, in which the combined batteries of a piqued man of ideas and a disgruntled lover of pendants were levelled against me for full one hour, I contrived to convince my friend that what he took to be an original attitude was but a pose of perversity. I left him a wiser, though a less 'original', being.

The truth is that in our frenzied quest of mere novelty we overlook the fact that originality is not a mannerism but a quality of the mind. It is not something which can be bought in the market and worn on the sleeve for daws to peck at. Those who consciously try to be original end only by being peculiar. Men of original genius never take up perverse attitudes or odd angles of vision; they do not assume the trick of singularity or indulge in mental pirouettes; they never 'wear motely in their brain'. The originality of Christ lay in his boundless sympathy with the common run of men. The originality of Gandhi does not consist in the peculiarity of his loin-cloth. Shakespeare is original, because with unflinching fidelity to his vision and to his true self, he enshrined in his works all thoughts, all delights that stir this mortal frame. Mr. Shaw is original not because of the clown's cap and bells which he affects, but because of his moral earnestness to carry out what he thinks to be his mission. Originality does not consist in glaring ingenuities any more than the freshness of the dawn lies in the crowing of the cock. It is the result of self-realisation, not of self-sophistication. 'Know thyself'—is the best counsel to the wandering pilgrims after originality. To acquire a clear and sincere apprehension of what is most real to oneself, to express faithfully one's thoughts and feelings, is the true way to be useful and fresh—and original, if you will.

THE END

A Tangle for Two—

by Sheikh Iftekhar Rasool

RAMESHWAR saw me exactly four seconds after I saw him. It takes six seconds to creep from the Club library to the passage that leads to the sitting-room, and I was just two seconds too late, for Rameshwar cornered me at the very gates of sanctuary, as it were.

"Just the very fellow I want to see," he said, slapping me on the shoulder. "I want some advice, old man."

"Try Soames, the lawyer, over there," I murmured hastily. "He's the fellow who sells advice."

"I don't want that sort of advice," snorted Rameshwar. "I want the benefit of your—what d'you call it?—your literary mind. You see I am writing a book."

"Really?"

"Yes. A thriller. And it's going to be a corker, old boy, a real corker."

I could see there was no escape, so I sat down, and Rameshwar drew up a chair.

"The plot, briefly, is this," he said briskly. "Sir Adambhoy, a Parsi land-owner, is found brutally murdered—"

"His dead body being discovered by the servant in the bed-room," I cut in.

"Why, yes, that's how I've written it!" exclaimed Rameshwar in surprise. "How on earth did you guess?"

"It is part of a servant's duty to discover brutally murdered masters in bed-rooms. But carry on. Which member of the house-party is suspected?"

"I haven't told you that Sir Adambhoy was holding a house-party," said Rameshwar suspiciously.

"I know you haven't," I sighed. "But I'll bet ten to one he was."

"As a matter of fact, there was a house-party in progress at the time of the murder. A handkerchief belonging to a mysterious guest, called Annabelle, is discovered near the body. A foreign diplomat by the name of Jules Carnac placed it there."

"Aha! A touch of Oppenheim, eh? But why give the game away so early, Rameshwar? Is Carnac the murderer?"

"No. Carnac is so insanely jealous, because Annabelle has transferred her attentions from himself to Sir Adambhoy that he has employed the ruse as a revenge. But a further search reveals Carnac's own revolver, with one chamber empty, in the heart of a clump of rhododendrons immediately below his bed-room window."

"Looks pretty black against Carnac," I yawned.

"Yes, it's a neat complication, isn't it? But you haven't heard half yet. It is discovered later on that finger

"Create another problem," I said distinctly. "Shoot the author."

(Continued on page 34)



In Defence of Tufts

MISS Leela Karanjia received the following letter from her 'chum', Mrs. Kalyani Ramdoss.

My dearest, darling Leela,

Your letter gave me a surprise, a real surprise! You are going to get married? O you naughty little girl, my little bonny bird, you too trying to get entangled in matrimony! I wish you the best of luck, of course, and every connubial bliss squared and cubed and quadrupled!

You are, my darling Leela, a close girl; you don't care to tell me anything about your 'catch' beyond the casual information that it is a Mr. Chari. Who is he? What is he? How big is he, how tall, how coloured, how rich, how idiotic, and above all, what about his head?

My dear, the last bit is the really important point, you know. What about his head? I don't mean the thing *inside* his head, but *outside*—not his brains (men haven't any) but his hair! Darling, do please write to me about your future husband's head—the hair on his head.

To be precise, I ask you to write to me if your man has a tuft or has simply cropped hair. I know tufts are not the fashion now and, tragically, the whole world has gone cropping. But, dearest, you should insist that your man has his tuft long and fine.

You don't know what happened in my house last Thursday. A little storm in a tea-kettle and nothing less. Formerly I cared a tuppence whether men had crop or tuft—I had a notion that they looked foolish any way. And when Mr. Ramsey Ramdoss



by 'Rajaram'

married me, I thought his tuft rather made a fool of him, but didn't mind it all the same. And then came the sad awakening. I shall tell you the whole story now.

God knows what mischief makers have set him on, but like a bolt from the blue he came upon me the other day, last Thursday I mean. Oh, my dear Leela, would you believe it, Ramsey came to me with a cropped head, the hair blinking like stubble and the head looking like a sphere of cow dung. (Oh, pardon me my language—but how could he outrage my sensibilities like that?)

I scarcely *knew* my husband; I thought the piece-goods merchant Maulana Achcha Sahab had come with his quarterly bill. And hubby stood there in front of the mirror, self-satisfied I suppose, beaming in his own uniquely mongooish way. How he felt his head and stroked

his chin and furrowed his pointed hair with his fingers! Darling, it was a sight utterly hideous, unaesthetic, awful, indescribably ugly.

The whole day I kept within the kitchen. I was deeply wounded in my heart. Tears welled in my eyes and I thought that beauty (what little of it there had been) in my Ramdoss had gone for ever. I was whimpering and sighing the livelong day. True, my dear, every word true!

And then that night! How can I ever describe that night, dearest Leela! He came to my bed (weeping as I still was, in fact more openly so) and took me in his arms in spite of all my tearful protests, and kissed me again and again, as though nothing had happened. Oh

dear me, how I felt then! The world seemed to spin round me, I seemed to dissolve away, vanish into thin air. In short, I actually felt I was with a strange man; sure, I did not feel at home with a cropped Ramdoss.

As the minutes passed, that strange feeling only deepened. There is no charm or fun in it, my dear Leela, when your husband has cropped his hair. When he stoops to kiss you, how tame it is; the long tuft of Ramdoss's used, in days of yore, to cover my face over in an enchanting sort of way, tickling my face, invoking love in every nerve cell and chamber of the heart. And on those exquisite occasions I used to unloosen my tresses too and, in frolicsome profusion, the pleasurable chaotic things used to intersect as it were in a million points—and oh, what Elysium was there!

Leela dear, I am not joking, I am dead serious now. I have contrasted tuft and crop crucially—and found the latter woefully wanting. The man with a mere crop is no man—he is a sophisticated, globular, unmanly goose. But that other, the tufted? He is a regular human, full of the luscious poignancy of masculine charm and grit. To be embraced and kissed and fondled by such a one is great! There is beauty in it and thrill and romance.

But this cropped jackass of a Ramdoss—he was a baby, he was a boor, he was a pig, in turns. When occasionally his cropped head came in contact with my shoulder—as doubtless it must now and then—I felt that a thousand pins were pricking me and that I was on the rack. I felt like that in sober truth. And when your husband deals with you like that, what on earth could you do? You just feel tongue-tied in despair—that's all.

Oh, my dear Leela! How could I continue this terrible story? A nerve racking ordeal it was—to cut a long story short—throughout that night. Hell, in a syllable.

Next morning I made up my mind. I told my husband: "Ramdoss darling, we've been married these three years and have never had a misunderstanding between us. I had considered our match among the happy ones. Is there character similarity? There is. Is there similar slimmness in figure? There is. Is there equability in temper? There is. Is there emotional, intellectual and intellectual equilibrium? There is. And yet like a great fool you have had your hair cropped and outraged my feelings. I now abhor you. Either you promise here and now to grow a tuft again and implement the promise or I go this very day to my mother."

I did not mince matters; why should I, after the way he had treated me? It was nothing short of an ultimatum. Poor Ramsey was annihilated, visibly disintegrated. He managed to say: "Oh darling Kalyani, am I so bad as that? But, if you feel so, why, I shall grow my tuft right away. I promise, my dear girl, I sincerely and religiously promise." He said so and again kissed me, the wretched nut-headed hubby; this time somehow I thought the kiss more exhilarating than the night before. The promise stands, however.

There you are, Leela dearest. I am quite convinced now that a husband's tuft is almost as necessary for happy wedlock as his brains or bank balance. Look before it be too late. I know a thing or two and

have had (as I have taken pains to describe) recent painful experience of the undeniable absurdity and ugliness of a cropped husband wooing your affections. I ask you therefore, as befits your chum, to keep a sharp eye on your future husband's head!

I must now finish. Do write to me as soon as you receive this letter and please, naughty girl that you are, do not forget to furnish me with all available information about your 'man'.

Ever yours in Affection, Love and Esteem,

KALYANI.

THE END

Tangle for Two—(Continued from page 32)

prints on the weapon are identical with those of young Satyapal. Satyapal has an alibi, however, and confesses that he tried to frame Carnac for the murder because the diplomat holds his I. O. U.'s for a considerable sum of money."

"This yarn of yours seems certainly very involved, Rameshwar."

"That's the idea of a mystery thriller, isn't it?" said Rameshwar. "But the trail is confused more by the finding of the broken half of Sir Adambhoy's cuff-links in the bedroom of another chap named Keki Bharucha. Keki is suspected of the murder, because two servants swear that they saw him groping about the house past midnight."

A look of creative pride flashed across Rameshwar's stupid face.

"That's where I introduced a spot of romance. Keki is in love with beautiful Sheila Ray, but he has to meet her secretly because her mother wishes her to marry a man of title. Keki and Sheila had walked in the grounds on the night of the murder, so the boy obviously cannot explain his actions. Sheila's mother, however, was in no mood to worry about her daughter's actions, for she herself was being blackmailed by Sir Adambhoy."

"And is Mrs. Ray suspected too?"

"Mrs. Ray is questioned, but she proves beyond doubt that she was innocent of the crime. A perusal of papers in Sir Adambhoy's safe reveals that he and Muncherji, another self-invited member of the house-party, were partners in a tea plantation in Ceylon many years before, and Muncherji admits there was bad blood between them. But he was playing cards in another guest's room right up to the time of the discovery of the body, so that, of course, rules him out."

"You seem to have fixed up an alibi for every suspected person, Rameshwar," I murmured.

"Not only that, but I've given every character in the yarn a water-tight alibi. That's what I wanted to see you about old man. The way I've written it not one of the persons I've introduced could have committed the murder. What would you suggest doing in this case now?"

I rose, and looked him straight in the eye.

"Create another problem," I said distinctly. "Shoot the author!"

Long-nose Catches A Murderer

by J. H. Acott

Illustrated by 'Esvi'

AFTER he had made a fool of himself in his sensational Trunk Murder Case, Adolphus Long-nose soon realised that sweeping cross-roads (which pastime he had taken up after that awful failure), was not all honey. It was, he thought, even worse than a dose of castor oil. While combing his moustache in front of his mirror one morning, he came to the conclusion that he would become a man of the woods. In other words, a sort of hermit.

So, taking a few belongings with him, such as a cracked looking-glass, a moustache cup, a few bits of string, his magnifying glass and handcuffs and a spare button or two, he repaired to Dead Man's Forest, which, as the name implies, was a gloomy and sinister spot.

While cooking his breakfast of fried tomatoes one morning under the dark shadow of the forbidding trees, Adolphus was startled by the loud report of a gun, a long, wailing scream, and, a few moments later, the sound of a voice just behind him. Being possessed of wonderful self-control, Adolphus dropped his frying pan and tomatoes into the fire and made a noise like a frightened sheep.

"Good morning," said the voice, and it sounded, to Adolphus, like the groan of a dying man.

Adolphus swung round and beheld a long, gloomy-looking man who appeared to be a slice of Death warmed up sufficiently to enable him to walk about. On his shoulder he carried a double-barrelled gun.

"N-not-not at all," said Adolphus, but,

seeing that his visitor was no spook, he rapidly overcame his nervousness.

"Thank you," said the man in a sepulchral tone. Adolphus didn't like the look of his eyes. He thought that this blighter could quite easily commit a murder without even batting an eye-lid. The visitor sat down.

"Are you camping here long?" he asked, and Adolphus who was slipping a few more tomatoes into the frying pan, jumped.

"Why?" he asked.

"I'd like to borrow something from you for a little while," mournfully intoned the gloomy man. "You see, I've got some burying to do. I felt sorry for him. I always do. It's only murder, after all."

"Ah!" thought Adolphus. "There's murder in the offing." Aloud he said, "Burying?"

"Yes," grunted the other, "burying. I've got to dig a grave. You know, a hole in the ground to receive the body....."

"My God!" ejaculated Adolphus. This blatant talk about murder surprised and sickened him. "Did you shoot him or stab him in the heart?"

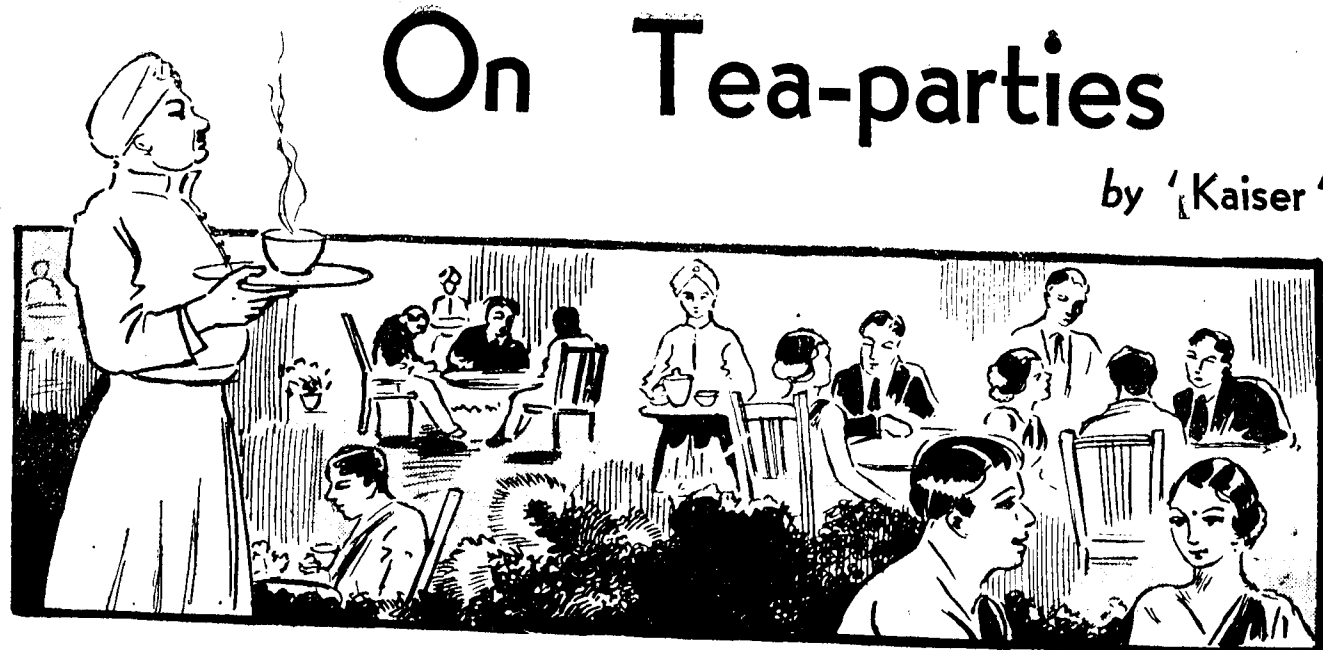
The long man looked at him keenly for a second. Then:

"I shot him," he said, and looked in an apparently suspicious manner at the magnifying glass that was sticking out of Adolphus' breast-pocket. "You've nothing to do with the Police, have you?"

"No," answered Adolphus. "Nothing at all. Oh, no. Far from it. So you shot him?"



Peering round a tree-trunk Adolphus saw.....



On Tea-parties

by 'Kaiser'

I like tea-parties.

Not that I have any fondness for tea. Good men like tea. Dr. Johnson liked tea and he was a good man. So Boswell says. I do not like tea. So I am not a good man. That is a perfect syllogism, is it not? But syllogisms are mostly humbugs, you know. They have been the favourites of Belial and Beelzebub and Co., and can make the better appear as the worse reason. I like tea parties because tea is the one commodity which makes the West dote upon the East. It is the one article of commerce by which the vanquished has taken its victor captive. China and India have but one noble kind of revenge open to them. They know and feel that some of the finest works of Western literature would have been lost to the world but for them and their gift of tea. But for it Dr. Johnson's *obiter dicta* would never have been given to the world. I do not take any pride in regard to opium. I have no objection to cut out the *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. As the West brought us drink we gave them drugs. That is fair, is it not? All is fair in love and war. But our gift of tea shows our true divineness. It is the human counterpart of ambrosia. So at least the tea-fans say. We have thus added to the gaiety of nations in a unique way—perhaps in a solitary way—by means of tea.

There are four kinds of tea-parties—ordinary, special, extra-special and super. The ordinary tea party is that wherein very ordinary people take ordinary tea in ordinary cups. It is very uninteresting. It is concerned with mere plebians in thoroughly plebian surroundings. The newspaper correspondents boycott it. The camera men do not deign to look at it. The tea at such parties is generally A 1. But what is the use? The genuine charming life is not in drinking tea but in the immortalising of that common act by the Press Photographers. The special tea-party is at the various hotels. There, all and sundry come and the camera men do not come. But there is this element of superiority. The gramophone is perpetually busy sweetening the tea. The religious people can

imbibe tea and *sahasranamam* together. The patriotic people can fill themselves with tea and *vande mataram*. The amorous people can take tea and *Javali* together. The philistines can gulp down tea and *band music*. The laughter-lovers can imbibe tea and clownish talk. But the extra special tea-party is worthy of note and of admiration. It is given to such semi-divine beings as Governors and Members and Ministers and High Court Judges. Whenever it is given, it is blazoned forth in the pages of the dailies by that ubiquitous and omniscient set of persons known as newspaper correspondents. The camera men flock whenever the elite gather to attend such parties. The great men graciously stand and pose before the cameras. A few lucky men always flank them and appear with them in every such photograph. Tea is subordinate to the main part of the function *viz.*, looking at the great men who deign to take the tea. The gramophones are not in evidence, because gramophones are plebian, and cannot live in such a rarefied patrician atmosphere. But no one misses the gramophones, because their place is taken by the human gramophones. These tell gaping and admiring audience later on, what the great men said or are supposed to have said, though it is difficult to say whether they do so to advertise themselves or those great men. As for the great men themselves they are too great to speak to the crowd on such occasions. Everybody else looks scared and speaks with bated breath. At the end of it, all the great men stand up and compliment one another. One of them tells the other how pleased and honoured all of them felt by the arrival of the second King of Brentford. The second King returns the compliment to the first King. Then all rise and go away, of course in the strict order of precedence. The band is in attendance, and discourses diabolical (the newspapers call it divine) music. The super tea-parties are too majestic even for contemplation—far too majestic for description. About them we get only such cryptic descriptions as: "So and so had tea at the Government House." Once I met a description—that was a red-letter day in my life. Please do not think that that tea was for me. I am far too plebian for all that. It said

"So and so had tea at—" I dare not even think of it. But the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling doth glance from earth to heaven and heaven to earth. He is a kind of voluntary and unpaid newspaper correspondent from Heaven to Earth. He said once. (I believe he said once only and he was the only one who said that.)

"Here thou great Anna! Whom three realms obey. Dost sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea."

I know nothing about the tea. But I know what is the kind of counsel taken and how it is taken by kings. It is taken in mineral dozes. It is unpleasant to take. It is generally emptied into the waste-paper basket. I hope that the tea has a better flavour and a better fate.

A few days ago I attended an extra special tea-party. I see that you are becoming jealous of me. I am in fact jealous of myself. I get such chances but seldom. I generally take part only in ordinary tea-parties. But on that day I had greatness thrust upon me. I rather think that my good genius, taking pity on the unrelieved dullness of my life, possessed the D. T. P. I. (Distributor of Tea-Party Invitations) and made him send to me an invitation which should have gone to my next-door neighbour. When I received the cover, I felt elated. I rewarded the postman suitably and rushed into my house, pursued by his grin and his thanks. I read the invitation letter but felt puzzled by the mystical letters R. S. V. P. Did they form any degree conferred on me? Did they form a new title? Or did they represent any mystical formula? I had no option but to go to my neighbour and ask for illumination. He turned green on seeing the invitation letter, because I got it, rather than because he did not get it. He turned blue and then turned green again. All the same I saw him at the tea-party. He had somehow managed to get an invitation. I hope that some day, before I quit the world, I shall be able to know the supreme secret—the secret of angling for and landing invitations for all such unique occasions. When I went to that party, my neighbour had arrived. The great men arrived punctually late as usual. I stood within the camera focus, but at the last moment, and just before the click, my neighbour shoved himself into the focus and shot me out of it. So I lost my only chance of immortality. My walking stick (which *Mali* has made immortal) was more lucky than myself. It got into the focus and came out; but I went out altogether.

I found at that extra special tea-party that music and magic always accompany the tea. The poet says that things seen are mightier than things heard. But as a matter of fact things tasted are mightier than things seen and things heard. It may be that the pen is mightier than the sword but the tongue is mightier than the pen. The invitees flock only to look at the great man and to note one another's garments and to chatter. Hence in all the extra special tea-parties, music and magic take a back seat. The musician and the magician were, of course, outside the *elite* and had only the pleasure of hearing the music and of other people's tongues and seeing the magic of other peoples looks. When the diners trooped in following the great man, they longed for the music when they saw the magic, and longed for the magic when they heard the music. The musician had the opportunity of his life, because such a great man and such a set of men (called *elite* and *intelligentsia*, whatever these mystical words might mean) might not hear him again.

"Never the time and the place.
And the great ones all together."

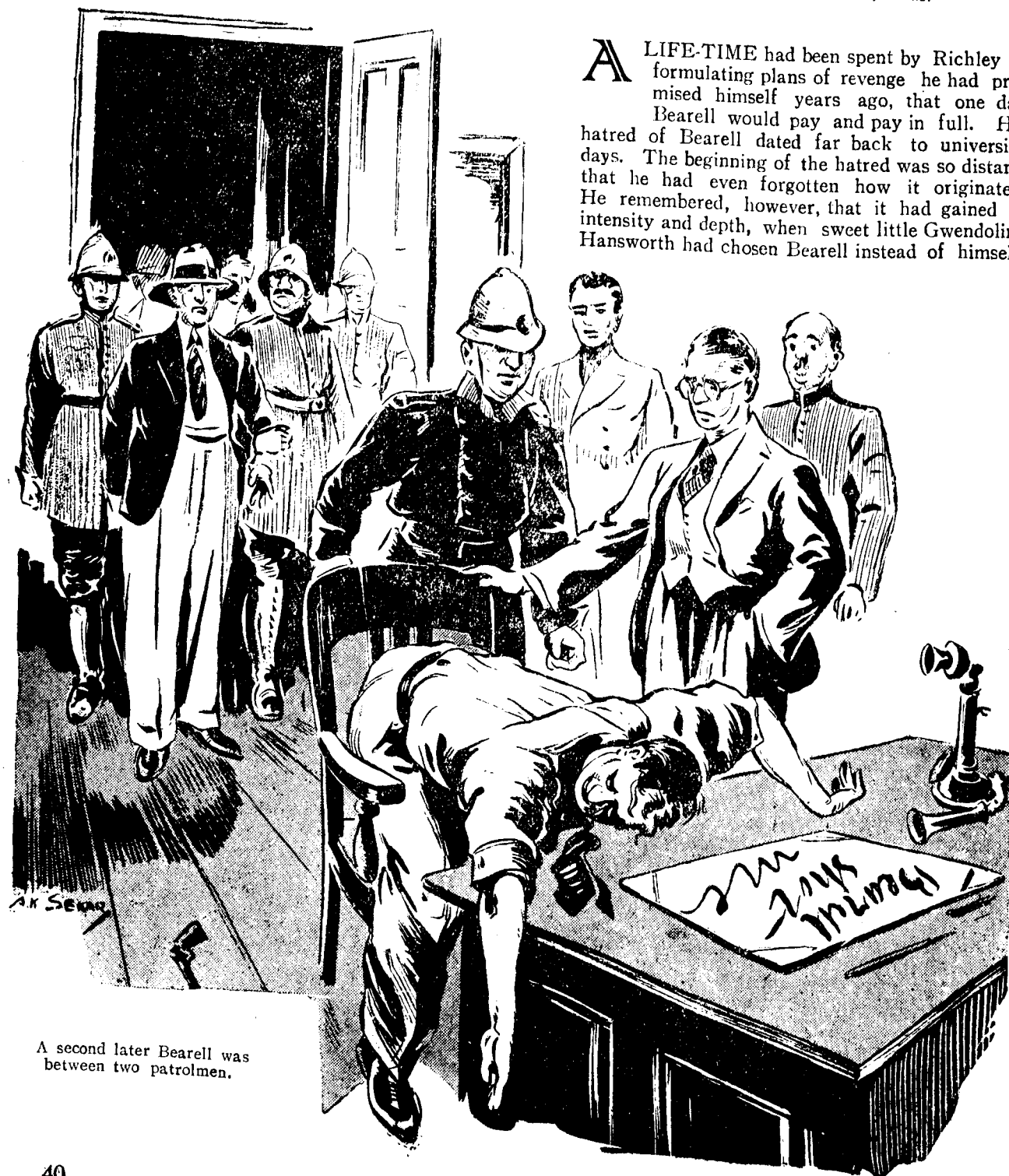
He galloped on as if he was taking the news to Ghent. He compressed seven of Tyagayya's songs into seven minutes. He began anywhere, went on everywhere, ended nowhere. Suddenly the necromantic genius superseded the romantic genius. By the bye, why do magicians call themselves the Necromantic Fraternity? Is it because they are romantics, or because of their antics? The magician came in the garb of the Elizabethan age. The Indian necromancers of a former age used to do wonderful tricks, but they are now dead as the Dodo. The Western necromancer has now, like the Western textiles and books, driven out the Indian necromancer. I shall tell you about that another day. On that great day the magician desired to show off much. He had brought the material needed for many wonderful tricks. But he made a speech when the essence of necromancy is action. The result was that the great man was about to rise. Then the necromancer stopped being a romancer. 'Nec Romancer' really means 'No Romance', is it? He had time for only two tricks. He converted bits of paper into tea and converted necromancy into a supplementary tea-party. He then converted further bits of paper into a gold-thread garland. The great man was duly garlanded. After he departed, we went home and I noted that day in my diary in red letters.



The Blotter

by 'Swithin'

Illustrated by Sekar



A second later Bearell was between two patrolmen.

A LIFE-TIME had been spent by Richley in formulating plans of revenge he had promised himself years ago, that one day Bearell would pay and pay in full. His hatred of Bearell dated far back to university days. The beginning of the hatred was so distant, that he had even forgotten how it originated. He remembered, however, that it had gained in intensity and depth, when sweet little Gwendoline Hansworth had chosen Bearell instead of himself,

and he had been so confident that he would win Gwendoline, and score over his rival. With her choosing of Bearell, the hate had mounted until it filled his horizon, and he just lived for the day of revenge. In the intervening years he had nursed his hatred, and kept it burning at a white heat, an all-consuming fire that ate into his vitals with vitriolic fingers.

In the three decades that had vanished into the maw of the past, he had brooded and planned, discarding scheme after scheme as too impracticable, too dangerous. He had wanted a way in which to have revenge and gloat over it at the same time. Anything with a spice of danger for himself would not do.

For hours he would sit in his study with his thoughts, planning and planning for the great revenge, seeing in imagination the agonies Bearell would suffer. Under the stress of emotions, conjured up by the malignant visions in his deformed brain, his fingers would curl into talons, like some bird of prey, and his face would twist with fiendish glee.

In the beginning, through secret channels, he had tried to break Bearell in business, but his speculations to that end among the bulls and bears had only left him the poorer, with victory after victory for Bearell. With each set-back, his hatred had mounted, until it became an uncontrollable obsession. Unable to hit Bearell through the Stock Exchange, he let his thoughts stray to other and more effective means. These defeats only acted as a spur, an added incentive to his urge for revenge.

With a cunning born of the hatred in his warped brain, he had gone out of his way to cultivate the friendship of Bearell and his wife. He had reasoned that this seeming friendship would give him opportunities, and pave the way to the fulfilment of his desire, and would be the prime factor to turn aside the finger of possible suspicion from his vicinity.

He had never married. In those far off days when he had paid court to Gwendoline Hansworth, it was just to get his own back on Bearell, to take what the other man wanted. When he had failed, frustrated desire developed into a longing for the thing he could not have. Then gradually with the passing of the years, this yearning for Gwendoline had merged with his hatred for Bearell, until his hate encompassed and drew her within its clutching tentacles.

This hate which had two beings for its focus, had no room for other feelings. It stunted and eliminated any other love that might have entered his life, so he had not married. Just calculated and bided his time and waited for the chance he felt sure would come some day.

Now at the sunset of his life, he thought he saw a way to even matters with Bearell. It was a way he would not have chosen, if he could have helped it, but it was the only way. If he let it go, it would mean that all these long years had all been wasted. Fate had placed a way of retaliation in his hands, though a way that was not to his liking, as it eliminated the gloating that was to be the aftermath of his revenge.

But he was at life's end, he thought, and it would be worth the loss of a month or so, to know that his death would bring all that he wanted. World-famous specialists had given him a bare six months to live, out of which

four had sped before the great idea had dawned. In two months he would die, in two months he would pass without revenge—a despicable failure. Or if he chose death now, he would have revenge at the cost of a few short weeks of life. His hatred was too intense to let a few weeks sway him from his purpose. His mind made up, he perfected his plan.

Methodically he went about his plans, fitting piece by piece, giving concentrated thought to each step, arranging the setting of each move with painstaking care. This was to be his last effort, his swan-song of revenge. A life-time of baulked malevolent hatred, and an accumulation of years of unsated desire, went into the completion and perfection of his diabolical plot.

He shook with silent laughter at the thought of what lay in store for Bearell, chuckles of glee left his twisted lips as he visioned how it would all end. His revenge would be complete. Even Gwendoline would be drawn into the vortex of his hatred. Even she would feel the stigma, after Bearell had paid. His only regret was that he would not be there to see the result of it all, to view the successful consummation of his project, to see the curtain ring down on the grand finale. But he was satisfied to die with the knowledge, that his death would spell the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

The stage set, he fixed that evening for the execution of his plan. There was no time to lose, his days were numbered. Any moment he might fall to the grim reaper, with his scheme unfulfilled: he shivered at the thought. Phoning Bearell, he requested him to call that evening on urgent business. Receiving an assurance that his victim would be at his place at the specified time, he heaved a sigh of relief and set about his preparations.

His first move was to write three letters, one to his lawyer asking him to call two days ahead. The second to his Club, remitting his subscription for another month, the third to a friend, accepting an invitation for a yacht cruise a week from that day. This settled, he drew out a small automatic that nestled in the top drawer of his desk. After making certain that it was functioning properly, he put it back, and laid the clip beside it.

Next he picked up a sharp stiletto, that served as a paper-knife. A moment of hesitation, then with grim purpose he lightly drew the blade across the index finger of his right hand. As the blood gushed out he rang for his butler and asked for a bandage. An unfortunate accident, he explained. Under his direction the finger was soon bandaged, he smiled as he surveyed his hand. A thin layer of gauze now covered the forefinger, the swathing strands of the bandage criss-crossed his palm and covered a good bit of it.

When his butler left the room, he again took out the automatic and held it in his right hand. A smile of satisfaction spread over his face, as he found that the little weapon nestled easily in the palm of his hand in a firing position, just held in place by the pressure of the lower part of his palm, the last joints of his three unbandaged fingers, and his forefinger on the trigger. In this position, though the weapon could be used, his thumb and exposed fingers were clear of the gun. Pleased at this demonstration, though he had satisfied himself of its possibility many times before, he laid the automatic away.

(Continued on page 48)

The Post-master of Kanjirapally

by J. Narini

Illustrated by Varma

ONE fine morning, some ten years ago, I was standing on the heights of Kanjirapally, waiting to meet the girl who was destined to become my wife. The morning sun, as it poured forth its wealth of golden rays through the thick foliage of the mountain trees, seemed to have wakened up a gentle breeze drifting sweetness from thousands of flowers from the valley below. Though wonderful was nature around me that day, there was something finer still within me, which made me feel as young and as pure as that glorious morning on the mountain-top. I was in love with the sweetest girl in the world. She lived just a mile away from where I was standing, in a fine wooden house, with her father who owned a small tea-estate of fifty or sixty acres. A very hard-working man from his boyhood, he had not had the advantages of higher education or enjoyed the amenities of civilization; but he was careful to give a decent education to his only daughter. It was as though he wanted her to compensate all that he had missed in life.

I met her one day in Trivandrum going to school in company with several girls. It was not an easy job to trace her home to this mountain village, but she was worth all the trouble I took. Was she beautiful? Tall and full-figured, with a complexion which would put the colour and softness of a rose petal to shame, she could stand the most exacting test of any beauty hunter. But what attracted me most to her was the beauty of simplicity and innocence in her. My Leela did not care to have the artificial charms of the modern powdered sirens. She responded to my love!

I did not carry on a secret romance with her. I went to her house and told her father that I was the eldest son of well-to-do parents, that I was then at College in Trivandrum, that I had fallen in love with his daughter and had come there to his house to ask his permission to continue loving her and, if she returned my love, to marry her. Being a plain and straightforward man he viewed my proposal with sympathy. He had no objections at all.

It was one day noon that I arrived in Leela's house. I stayed there till evening when I wanted to leave. I had to walk a distance of seven miles to get to the nearest town, from where I could take a bus to Trivandrum. It was very difficult to get any conveyance except perhaps a bullock-cart. Kanjirapally was in those days only a small village and had none of the comforts and conveniences that she boasts of to-day. It was only a month before I went there that they had got even their first post-office.

I met the post-master of this tiny post office in Leela's house. He was introduced to me in the evening by her father who did not mind doing all that he could for the fellow who was quite a stranger to the place. But somehow I did not quite like him. He was a middle-aged man with a short, bulging frame and incredibly small eyes, which had a trick of winking at you all the time he talked to you as though they were telling you that you were not to believe a single word that came out of his mouth. He told me during our conversation that he was a widower, that he had an only son, whom he called 'sonny', reading in some school in Trivandrum, and asked me if by any chance I knew him. He bored me with the praise of his 'sonny' till he got a promise from me that as soon as I returned to Trivandrum I would get acquainted with that enviable young mortal. When he left, I too got up to go. But Leela's father wouldn't allow me as, he said, I could cover hardly three miles before it grew dark. So I stayed there the night, but next day before dawn I departed. I walked for a mile, and then waited at the top of the hill, not so much to enjoy the sun-rise, but really to meet my Leela once again before I left the village. The previous night we had made a little arrangement that she should come there early in the morning and that we should spend together at least half an hour. She did not fail to meet me. We sat and talked till the sun rose pretty high. We heard the sound of a man's cough near us. We turned round, and there stood that post-master hardly five yards from us.

"Good morning," he said, "I thought you had left last night."

"Good morning," I said, "I was allowed to go only in the morning—but where are you.....?"

"Oh! just for a stroll. The air here is so very bracing—don't you find it so?" So saying he walked away. Leela did not like the fellow to have seen us together. Neither did I, especially after I had taken leave of her father and departed. But he was a human being and would understand that a lover was after all a lover! Oh how very hard we found it to take leave of each other! But Leela brightened up and was greatly consoled when I promised her that I would write to her every other day.

I received the reply to my first letter all right. It was an innocent love-letter written in that big child-like hand that has come to mean so much to me. But I found there was no reply to my second letter. However, I wrote a few more letters to her expecting every day to get a reply from her. But when two weeks passed and

I did not get any, I decided that there was something seriously wrong; perhaps her father changed his mind and forbade her writing to me. However I waited one more week, and then, unable to bear the suspense any more, I set out to Kanjirapally. When I reached Leela's house it was evening, but her father was away. Leela came running to me. "Ha, you are come! I thought you..." There were tears in her eyes.

"Why did you not reply my letters?" I asked.

"That is what I should ask you," was her simple retort.

"Do you mean to say that you wrote to me, but did not get my letters?"

"No, after your first one I had no letters from you. So you really wrote again?"

"Yes, I wrote six letters in all. You seem to have got only the first one; what could have happened to the rest! And how many did you write?"

"Three."

I began to think. "Is it possible," I asked her, "that your father got the letters and did not give them to you?"

"Oh no, father is not like that, he even asked me whether I got any more letters from you."

"I see. Well, are you sure that the post-man is not giving our letters to someone else? You know, these post-men can be easily made to do it."

We turned round and
there stood the post-
master.



"Who could be interested in our letters?" asked Leela. "Besides, once I made enquiries at the post office myself."

"And then?"

"The post-master said that if any letter came I was sure to get it; and he smilingly asked me from where I expected the letter."

"Did he ask that?" A disturbing thought flashed through my mind. So that's the game!

"Do you know Leela," I said, "it is this fellow who has been stealing our letters?"

"The post-master! He steals the letters, you say? But why should he?"

"Why should he! Can't you understand that he is in—" Why tell that pure girl all the ugly passions of man; why disturb that innocent mind with the knowledge of all the dark corners of the human soul. But I was certain about the fellow having done it, and I was already thinking out the most effective method of revenge.

When Leela's father came, we talked over the matter, and I told him my suspicions. At first he would not believe, and thought that the post-master, for whom he had done so much, would not do such a mean thing. Then slowly he began to understand—he recalled how the fellow had been paying some attention to his daughter before I went there, how he had so often mentioned the desirability of his getting re-married, and also how he had suggested so very cunningly one or two things against me. Yes, the fellow was jealous. Why did he not understand it all before! And when once he understood, he got so enraged that he was quite prepared to go and knock the fellow down. "Ugly devil! Ungrateful wretch!" he cried. But I told him that we had as yet no positive proof against the man, and that even if we had it, the punishment the man deserved was a little different from what he intended.

"Do you then want the rascal to go free?" he cried with some anger.

"No, not at all," I said, "but if you give him a few kicks, it may not mean much to a man of his mentality; what he deserves is 'tit for tat', and I am going to give that to him."

I then told him my plan. He listened to me, and then congratulated me on inventing such a brilliant plan of revenge.

"But you must not let out the secret by any means; it is absolutely necessary that you should get on with him for a few days as if you had no suspicions about him." He agreed, and I immediately departed to Trivandrum.

The first thing I did after getting to my hostel in Trivandrum was to write a letter to Leela. What was the use of it? Would it ever reach her hands? Perhaps not. But it was necessary.

Two days passed. On the third night, at about nine, the servant of the post-master found that his master was bitterly weeping. The news spread, and the neighbourhood rushed to his house. Even Leela's father went. And when they all reached his house they found the post-master beating his breast and loudly crying. Poor man, his only son—his dear sonny—was run over by a car in Trivandrum! What a misfortune! How could the villagers comfort a man in that situation. Some of them began to weep in sympathy. What made

the situation more tragic was that the poor man was unable to reach Trivandrum quick enough to see his son. No conveyance could be had to cover the seven miles to the next town except perhaps, a bullock-cart. Poor man, there was his son lying bleeding to death in Trivandrum, and here was his dear father unable to reach the place. Oh, why had he come to that miserable little village!

One of the men assembled asked another in a whisper, "But is the child dead?" Ha, who knows? How to ask that question to a dear father weeping so bitterly. At last Leela's father ventured.

"But, Mr. post-master, is the child seriously injured?"

"Oh, he must be—it is a car that ran over him—I think my child is already dead—my sonny-sonny-so-n-y."

"But how did you know?" asked Leela's father, "who came to tell you?" Then all the men thought how strange it was that they all forgot that question first.

"Oh! I know—I know—" cried the post-master, "please get me a cart."

This appeared very strange to the villagers. Why would he not tell them how he came to know it all! So some of the men called his servant, and asked him how his master got the news first. The servant told them that after dinner he found the post-master reading something when suddenly he began to cry that "Sonny" was dead. One young fellow put the question to him: "Are you sure, sir, that you had not had a bad dream?"

"Dream? I never slept to have a dream—it is no dream. Oh, will I ever see my poor boy—my poor boy!"

"But how did you know?" Now all the villagers asked together.

"I know—I am certain my boy is run over by a car."

"But how did you know?" asked the men again, "did any one come from Trivandrum?"

"No, no: but I know, I know—"

This strange behaviour of the post-master and his unwillingness to disclose the source of his information robbed the villagers of much of their sympathy. However, they got him a bullock-cart and sent him as quickly as possible to see his 'sonny'. But when the man had left the place they began to discuss the matter, and their conclusion was that the man had suddenly become insane! And all of them had strange stories to tell of man who suddenly lost his reason.

In the meantime, the poor post-master was suffering terrible agonies. After reaching the next town, he hired a car and reached Trivandrum next morning. He had suffered so much mental pain that his mind really became a little unbalanced. He ran into the boarding-house where his son lived, and was so glad to find him reading at his desk, as though nothing had happened to him. He embraced and hugged his son, crying "Oh my sonny, my sonny—I thought you were dead—oh my sonny—" Tears trickled down his cheeks. But they were tears of joy, of gratitude to the mercy of Providence that spared his son to him.

But 'sonny' could not understand this strange behaviour of his father. He felt confused and ashamed. All his friends came running round him and some of them began to laugh, "Sonny's father is gone mad," they whispered among themselves. They found the man asking his son about the car that ran over him, all the

while kissing and hugging him. And the poor boy really wondered what made his father go so mad!

After enjoying all this comedy at Trivandrum, I started to Kanjirapally. Leela and her father were expecting me impatiently.

"It was a stroke of genius," "It succeeded so well," "The fellow is rightly served," were their expressions on meeting me.

"But did you get the letter?" I asked.

"Oh yes, we got it!"

Meantime his friends soon arrived, and wanted the letter read out. So Leela's father brought out the letter and read it to them:

"My dear Leela,

Why are you so very indifferent to me? I have very sad news. Your post-master's son was run over by a car—it happened only just an hour ago. Everybody says he is such a nice boy. Perhaps this letter will reach you before he gets the news, and in that case, tell your father about it. He will know the best way of breaking the news gently to the poor man. How very tragic! I am so sorry for the man—"

The whole crowd laughed outright. And all of them congratulated me on my brilliant plan.

THE END

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Back to Nature

by 'Ram'

Illustrated by Sekar

RAMAN was slim, wiry and clean-shaven. Sam was broad, hirsute and muscular. They were contrasts in practically everything, from Raman's wife who bossed him, to Sam who had no wife. Possibly because of the contrast, they were great friends, and used to meet frequently to drown their troubles in Pennants.

On Tuesday as usual they dropped into the Garrison's and grunted with simple emphasis—"Beer." Troubles having been duly sunk, Sam lit a cigarette and spoke:—

"I am tired of tears and laughter
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap."

"Have some more beer", said Raman solicitously. It had been very hot that day.

"I will *not* have some more beer", snapped Sam, "at least not in the spirit in which you want me to drink it. Swinburne was quite right. I'm sick of my environment," waving a hand vaguely and comprehensively at a slice of Madras which included the High Court, Pachayappas and the other towering buildings. "Machine-made atoms—Men that sow to reap." Give me Nature, raw and sincere... primitive simplicity—"

"And toddy instead of this," interrupted Raman, emptying his glass.

"Shut up! I've taken a forest licence for the Agency and am off to-morrow...back to Nature. Just a gun, ammunition, a blanket and myself. Unspoiled scenery, blue skies...Will you come?"

"Will I what? Hang on a sec, I'll find out the results of the second race this evening, and then I'll tell you what I think of your hair-brained schemes. I've got fifty on Son of Tin and he's a cert."

Considerably less than two minutes later Raman oozed dejectedly back into the room. "Lost," he said with remarkable feeling, "I'll come with you. That makes seventy I've dropped, and meeting my wife's an impossibility now."

A week later they were in Chintapalli, not at the Forest Bungalow where all self-respecting *shikaris* stay, but in the jungle, the "wide, open spaces", as Sam poetically put it. They may have been wide and there was certainly space, but it was not open. They rolled themselves in blankets and sought sleep after a futile attempt at obtaining dinner *via* Sam's gun. About midnight Raman woke up to hear his companion apostrophising a snake in terms more venomous than a

cobra. "Brother snake—nature's child," he said sleepily, and was cursed into wakefulness. An hour later a centipede injected half a pint of poison into his arm, and he bade farewell to slumber. At four o'clock a cloud of mosquitoes—the pure, jungle breed, a kind you can't swat, and which never say die till you're dead either from lack of blood, or malaria, came to give warning of dawn.

Sam succeeded in shooting a brace of doves for the pot and they had a meal at last. A very pitiful apology for a meal, cooked—if it could be called cooking—without salt, and deplorably insufficient. The hill-people plainly considered they were mad, but good-naturedly imparted scraps of information (wholly unreliable) about the game. Sam went tracking with high hopes; Raman with an eye to safety climbed a comfortable peepul tree and drowsed till he was awakened by the shikari's return. It appeared that Sam had fired at a bison, which later turned out to be a village buffalo, and missed at forty yards. The buffalo, being naturally irritated, did not miss at approximately two yards. That night Sam slept on his stomach—the rest of him was too sore to bear contact with anything. However, they fed full on a mess of rice supplied by the villagers near-by.

The next day Raman complained of pains in his inside, a listless feeling, fever and what-not. He suggested it might be sleeping-sickness—a suggestion which was vetoed by his partner. Despite this, he insisted on returning and secured a lift back to Waltair on a charitable estate-agent's car. He was going, he said, to recuperate from too much nature, and would do so in hospital. "A nice clean hospital, with beds and pillows, and no centipedes."

Sam on his own, hired a tracker to guide him and to look after his cuisine. This resolved itself simply into rice, more rice and yet more rice. Wistful thoughts of Melbourne bitters tormented him, but he cast them aside as unworthy, and concentrated on his shooting. So far of course he had shot nothing, a defect which he proposed to remedy that night by tying a buffalo calf up for bait and awaiting whatever might betide with a 405 Winchester and faith in Providence.

His first visitor was a hyena which departed after a little persuasion from broken twigs. The buffalo calf meanwhile, instead of registering anxiety by its *blah'ing*, went to sleep. At ten-forty, the red-ants found Sam's tree; at ten-forty-two he found another tree. Then the mosquitoes, like loyal friends came to share his vigil. And the breeze stopped entirely; he mopped his face and scratched it, where the mosquitoes had put in some good work, by turns.

A jackal loped along in a friendly manner to investigate and went back in a hurry, informing its pals that the buffalo calf was most unwholesomely alive, and also that there was a strong smell of man in the air. An inquisitive porcupine ambling to a water-hole stopped to have a chat with the bait, but the bait rejected his advances with scorn. The interview terminated abruptly when the visitor continued his trek, leaving two quills in the calf's side as a souvenir of their meeting. After that he was loquacious enough. Every panther, tiger, or other member of the greater carnivora must have become aware of the presence of free food in the jungle, but they all generously left it for someone else to find.

At one o'clock, Sam fell asleep; at 1-10 the calf broke loose and departed; at two o'clock a panther came to rub itself against the stake, carelessly, and Sam awoke. He jerked his rifle up and by an unaccountable fluke drilled the panther neatly behind its left shoulder and through the heart. Then he came down and, a trifle prematurely, lifted his heart in thanksgiving, as the

Bible has it. The female of the species (which Kipling rightly tells us is deadlier than the male) struck hard. The goddess of Fortune, however, kept on smiling. Half-dazed by a glancing blow on the head, Sam managed to get his rifle muzzle into the brute's mouth and pull the trigger; after which he fainted.

They brought him back to Waltair in the lorry which had been chartered for the trip, rather more dead than alive, accompanied by two magnificent panther skins.

He expected to find Raman in hospital, but he was not there. The next day he came—as a visitor, looking sleek and happy.

"What happened to you?" asked Sam.

"Oh, the pains passed off, so I thought I'd wait for you here. There's a comfortable hotel near the beach, and heaps of beer. Nature's present in an unobtrusive manner—that's the way I like it served up."

A pregnant silence.....the invalid's thoughts were not expressible in front of nurses.

Sam's recovery took a month, during which Raman visited him daily, and talked almost like a poet, not of flora and fauna, but of airy bedrooms, convenient baths with water, h. c., and e. l. They returned together to Madras.

If you go to Sam's flat and look interrogatively at the skins on the wall, he will allude off hand to "a most enjoyable little trip of mine into the wilds. Back to Nature, as it were. A splendid holiday, my dear fellow. It happened like this...." And there are two artistic scars across his face to bear him out.

THE END



THE BLOTTER—(Continued from page 41)

It now wanted a good four hours before Bearell was due. He had a late lunch, then sat down to while away the hours, by conjuring up all that was scheduled to happen, all that should occur according to his calculations.

He came out of his mental soliloquy of hatred, when the chimes of the big clock in the room, warned him that a bare hour was left for his victim's arrival. For a moment a cold sweat stood out on his brow, as he thought of what lay before him, of the step he contemplated. Then slowly the smouldering hate of a lifetime re-asserted itself.

His momentary revulsion subdued, he sat down at his writing table and drew the big blotting pad towards him. On its wide expanse, in an almost indecipherable scrawl, he wrote six inch letters, 'Bearell Shot Me'. The last letter was just a jumble of lines, ending in a diagonal streak running across the pad, as if he had written it with a faltering hand and failing senses. This done, he covered the pad with a sheet of paper and rang for the butler.

His butler glided into the room in answer to his summons. He stared at the butler for a moment, giving the impression that he was undecided whether to tell him something. Then he curtly informed him that Bearell would be there soon, and to be within call in case he was required.

A little later, Bearell was ushered in. As the door closed behind the retreating form of the butler, Richley went forward and greeted his visitor effusively. Bearell had barely settled himself in a chair, when Richley plunged into business discussions. After some time he adroitly steered the conversation around to general matters, lightly touching on a variety of subjects. Gradually the conversation veered around to fire-arms.

Deep in discussion as to the merits of various kinds of fire-arms, he drew the automatic out from his table drawer and asked Bearell's opinion, on the new gun he had acquired. Bearell, something of an expert on fire-arms, all unsuspecting, took the weapon and examined it closely. Receiving it back, Richley passed a few jocular remarks, and under cover of the table slipped the clip into place, taking care not to touch the butt of the weapon.

Casualty he laid the automatic on the table and continued the conversation.

So far everything had gone according to schedule. He had Bearell's finger-prints on the gun, a necessary precaution fitting into his scheme of things. The crucial part now lay ahead. Gradually he let the conversation flag until the visit drifted to a close. At length, Bearell picked up his hat, wished him good-bye and turned to the door.

His visitor had scarcely taken two steps, when Richley acted. His left hand flew to the receiver of the telephone on his table, sweeping off on the way the sheet of paper covering his blotting pad. At the same time his right hand closed around the ready automatic, in the way he had practised.

Bearell was four strides from the door, when Richley twisted his right hand around his own back, until the muzzle of the gun was in position, to send its leaden message through his back at a calculated angle—an angle that

would bring death, a matter of seconds after the gun sang its song of violence. These few seconds of life to give credence to the scrawl on the blotting-pad now exposed before him. This achieved, he yelled "Police", into the mouth of the phone, at the same instant knocking the instrument over.

Bearell turning in surprise at the unexpected shout, in amazement heard Richley yell, "Bearell, don't shoot me." Satisfied that his words had carried over the overturned phone, Richley jabbed with his free hand at the electric button summoning his butler. Then with a leer of indescribable hatred, he leant forward over his desk, and compressed his bandaged finger on the trigger. His body sagged forward. The automatic slipped from his listless fingers, rebounded from the chair and skidded across the polished floor, until it came to rest, a gleaming omen of death.

His eyes wide open in astonishment, Bearell gaped at this amazing turn of events. As he stood rooted to the spot, the door swung open, and the butler appeared on the threshold. His questioning gaze took in the crumpled silent figure of Richley, and the automatic on the floor. He jumped back, slammed the door, and raced for the lobby phone. The next instant he was pouring out his tale, to the police two streets away. He was told that the police car was already on the way.

The screaming wail of a siren tore down the street and died to a stop outside. A clatter of feet raced over the sidewalk, and burst into the house. The lobby was filled with plain clothes detectives and uniformed patrolmen. The butler pointing towards the study, gabbled out his tale.

A second later Bearell was between two patrolmen, while a lieutenant of detectives was examining the body of Richley. He turned the body over with a look of surprise. With a perplexed frown he felt the heart and pulse. As his eyes alighted on the blue pencilled blotting pad, he shook his head in bewilderment. Putting a pencil into the mouth of the automatic, he picked it up and smelt the end of the weapon, his face set in hard lines. Picking up the phone, he put in a call for the police surgeon, then turned his attention to Bearell.

In short staccato sentences he questioned Bearell. His eyes held a glimmer of enlightenment, incredulous enlightenment at the replies he received.

The door swung open and the police surgeon stamped in. Swiftly he examined the body. After a while he stepped back and turned to the detective at his elbow. "Heart failure," he said. "Looks like he died of fright."

The detective nodded, "I guess so." They both stared at the blotter and the shining automatic. The lieutenant picked up the weapon and opened it. In the breach a shell threw back scintillating rays of light, on the camp was a deep indentation. He extracted the cartridge, the brass case still held its load.

The two stared at the body and the blue scrawl on the blotter. Even in death, the motionless body seemed to exude the hatred, that had been its obsession in life.

The surgeon stirred, a whistle of amazement left his puckered lips. "What a frame up!" he said, "but this shell misfired, just a dud."

THE END

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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 "A Rich Source". And you have to take away a letter from 'MINET' to get the right word. On removing (T) from the word, you get the solution—'MINE'. Solve similarly the other eight.

RULES AND CONDITIONS

Solutions must be written *only on the coupon*. All entries must be received by the last post on 10-7-35. 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. The first prize of Rs. 200 will be awarded to an all-correct solution and the second prize of Rs. 100 to the solution with one error. An all-correct solution is one which agrees in all respects with the Editor's Key Solution kept in safe custody with the Indian Bank Ltd., Head Office, Madras. Failing an all-correct solution, the first prize will be awarded to the nearest correct entry received. In case of ties, the prize money will be equally divided. The Editor reserves the right of pooling the first and second prize-amounts and distributing

(Continued on next page)

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Closing Date 10-7-35

"Singing-Circle" Competition

RESULTS

The Correct Solution is :

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. PLEASING | 4. ENCASING | 7. ARISING |
| 2. CEASING | 5. DECREASING | 8. INCLOSING |
| 3. HISSING | 6. ABUSING | 9. DIFFUSING |

The following 13 readers, having submitted all-correct solution, share the first prize amount of Rs. 125, each getting Rs. 9-10-0

First Prize Winners :

- (1) K Swaminathan, 1409, Varahappier Lane,
South Main Street, Tanjore.
- (2) V. Varadha Ramanathan, 57, Third Street, Mannargudi.
- (3) N. Sadasivan, Nannilam.
- (4) G. Radhakrishnan, Clerk, Construction Audit, S.I.Ry. Trichy.
- (5) S. Gopalasamy, New Road, Woriur, Trichy.
- (6) P. R. Subramanian, 274, West Masi Street, Madura.
- (7) K. S. Singari Ammal, c/o S. Padmanabhachari,
Addl. Public Prosecutor of Ramnad,
West Veli Road, Madura.
- (8) C. G. Panduranga Vittal, Police Station Road, Basavangudi.
- (9) P. Gopala Menon, Vadavanur.
- (10) A. V. Narasimha Row Naidu, Sub Inspector of Excise,
Peddapur Station.
- (11) K. Venugopala Rao, Nayudupet.
- (12) Miss K. Jeremiah, Chengalraopet.
- (13) V. Rajagopala Iyengar, Kebbahalli.

(Continued on next page)

them among the competitors according to the number of all-correct solutions received. No correspondence can be entered into nor can interviews be granted. Employees of the *Merry Magazine* and its associated journals are not allowed to compete. No entry will be considered unless it is on the Entry Form. 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 by V. P. P. COUPONS MUST BE FILLED IN LEGIBLY and sent intact. This office will not be responsible for entries lost or delayed in transit. CUT OUT THE COUPON-PORTION and post to :-

EDITOR,

'GIVE & TAKE' Competition, The Merry Magazine, 1-2/140, Broadway, Madras,

The following 89 readers, solutions with one-error, share the Second Prize of Rs. 75 each getting Rs. 0-14-0.

Second Prize Winners :

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1-2. Qamaruddin Khawaja, Lahore. | 37. M. S. Row, Salyamangalam. |
| 3. S. D. Shenwai, Basine. | 38. A. Arthanari Chetty, Anthiyur. |
| 4. K. Muthukrishniah Naidu, Itkial. | 39-46. K. S. Singari Ammal, Madura. |
| 5. L. A. Rao, Matunga. | 47. E. R. Kuppanna Rao, Karur. |
| 6-7. K. A. Ramiah, Bombay. | 48-54. S. Gopalasamy, Woriur. |
| 8. V. Venkataram, Jamshedpur. | 55-59. G. Radhakrishnan, Trichy. |
| 9-15. A. V. Narasimha Row Naidu, Peddapur. | 60-61. P. R. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, Orattanad. |
| 16. S. V. Raghava Iyengar, Bezwada. | 62. V. Mahammadali Maricair, Tiruvarur. |
| 17. C. Janardhan Rao, Vizag. | 63-69. N. Sadasivan, Nannilam. |
| 18. J. M. Alfred, Chengalraopet. | 70-76. V. Varadharamanathan, Mannargudi. |
| 19-24. Miss K. Jeremiah, Chengalraopet. | 77. V. D. Rajabooshna, Kumbakonam. |
| 25. R. Krishnamoorthy, Cocanada. | 78-79. P. Rajagopal Pillai, Velappadi. |
| 26. M. D. Ameenuddin, Nellore. | 80. S. Ramanathan, Tirupattur. |
| 27. A. V. Jayaraman, Chandanahalli. | 81-82. A. D. Sundaramoorthy, West Mambalam. |
| 28. M. S. S. Mani, Kurnool. | 83. M. V. Muthulakshmi, Mylapore. |
| 29. M. N. Husain, Mandi Mohalla, Mysore. | 84. V. Mahalinga Aiyer, Mylapore. |
| 30. U. S. Seetharama Rao, Bangalore City. | 85. V. C. V. Chari, Madras. |
| 31. B. A. Ramaswamy Setty, Bangalore City. | 86. C. G. Baldevdas, Madras. |
| 32. N. Sankaran, Calicut. | 87. P. S. Rajagopalan, Madras. |
| 33-34. S. Subbaraya Naidu, Salem. | 88. K. S. Rajan, Madras. |
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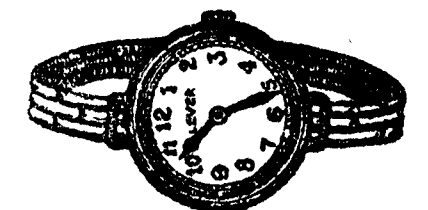
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Substitute one letter for each dash to get the given meanings.

No.	WORDS.	MEANINGS.	No.	WORDS.	MEANINGS.
1	S P R — N G	Come into existence	6	G R A — —	Place...(1st 5 letters only)
2	C E — S E	Put an end to	7	P R I V — — Y	Secrecy
3	D E S — R T	Barren place	8	G A — —	Series of...(1st 3 letters only)
4	F E — — —	One of the.....	9	T R — — —	Beam
5	B — F F	Buffet	10	Q U — I N T	Unusual

N.B.—Ref. Chambers XX Century Dictionary and all forms are treated as direct. A, An, Any, The, To, are omitted in the beginning of the clues. Bracketted words are not used. Words No. 6 and 8 are of more than 5 and 3 letters, but only the first 5 in word No. 6 and the first 3 in word No. 8 are to be given. Entries on plain paper. Fees by M. O. or Crossed Indian Postal Orders. Results will be published in THE RAINBOW of the 9th July, which will be sent to those sending 2 As. stamps with entries. Manager's decision is final. Prizes will not be reduced. Address all your entries and fees to:

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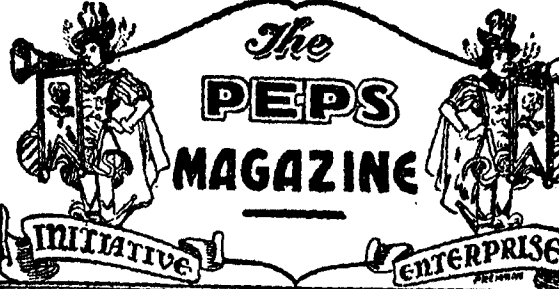
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Closing Date 15-7-35. Result 22-7-35

Entrance fee As. 8 (eight annas) per entry or Rs. 10 for any number of entries by M.O. or postal order.

Rs. 25 (minimum) guaranteed for each correct solution.

What you have to do is to complete the words by substituting letters in blank places to fit with the given clues.

No.	Words.	Clues.
1	S-IRTS	A dress usually worn.
2	-AY	When everything seems bright and fine.
3	SHO-S	You cannot do without them.
4	-ARK	It means take care.
5	-ICE	Insect (Plural)

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Substitute one letter for each dash.

No.	WORDS.	MEANINGS.
1	MONE—	Coin
2	BAB—	Infant
3	CLE—	Pure
4	SN—B	Check
5	CHA—	Fellow
6	CLO—	Covering

RULES:— Ref. Chambers XXth Century Dictionary. A, An, Any, The, To are omitted in the beginning of the meanings. Bracketted words not used. M. O. receipt should accompany with the entries. Prize will be divided in case of ties. Plain paper entries accepted. Manager's decision is final and legally binding. The correct solution will be published in the same Magazine of 27th July issue. Results sent to those enclosing 1 anna stamp, within a week. The Prizes will not be reduced.

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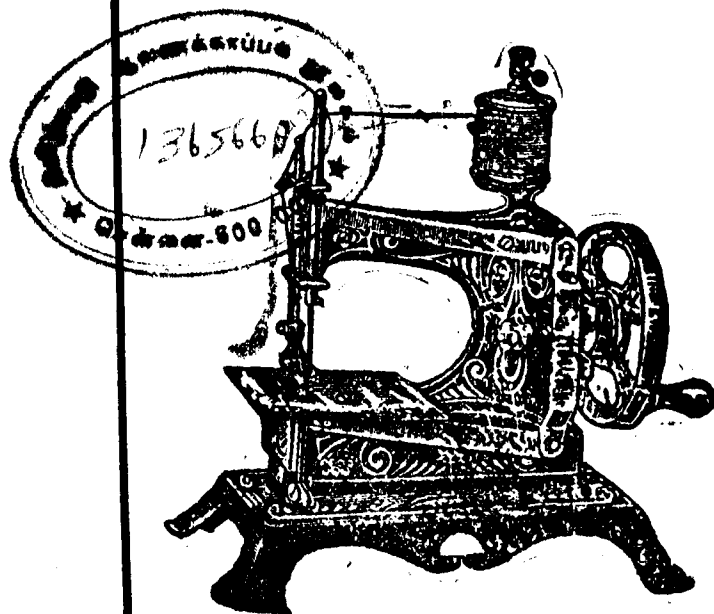
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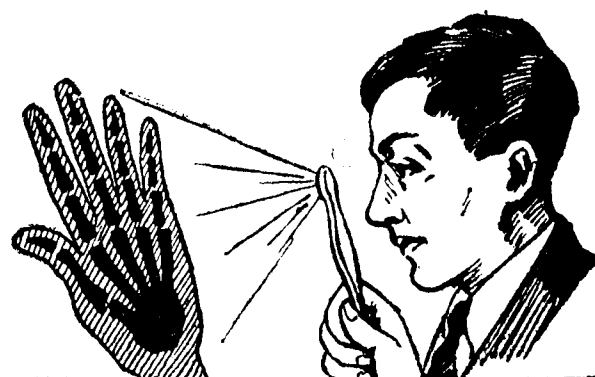
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