

403

The MERRY MAGAZINE



2178

'Linking Letters'

Rs. 400 FREE

Joyful
E. L. Shipman
Chattopadhyaya

July
20

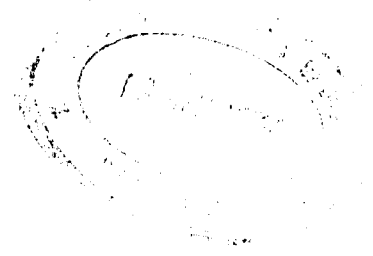
Jagannathan
Embusque
Scott - O'Connor

ATTITUDES FROM



HIGH ALTITUDES—'LENS'

**Readers'
attention
is drawn
to the Editor's
— Page —**



The MERRY MAGAZINE

MADRAS, JULY 20, 1935

CONTENTS

SPECIAL

Cartoon of the week	...	5
The Misfortunes of Meena—'Doisvi' Serial	...	10
Ninth Instalment—The 'Sacrificial Goat'	...	
Attitudes From High Altitudes	By 'Lens'	20

FEATURES

Sparks from our Anvil	...	3
The Editor, His Page	...	4
Star Dust	...	17
The Letters of Private Joyfull	...	18
58. A Job of Work	...	
Do you know?	...	19
Auntie Awful XXXVIII	...	36
Fun For All	...	40

POETRY

The Educated Donkey—A Poem—Part I	...	42
By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya	...	

SHORT STORIES AND SKITS

The Snake—(Concluded)	By T. P. Scott-O'Connor	...	6
The Madras Flag	By R. Jagannathan	...	22
Decorative Art	By 'Kumudini'	...	25
The Fakir's Rod	By 'Embusque'	...	26
The Witches of Killimangalam	By McNair	...	29
Readers' Forum—Auntie Replies	...	...	31
Episodes Elysian—Or the Experiences of a Released Soul—(Concluded)	By E. L. Shipman	...	32
The Stockings	By John A. Henry	...	38
On Children	By R. K. Narayan Swami	...	44
Julius Caesar	By 'Elmer Delville'	...	46

COMPETITIONS

Rs. 400 Free to Readers—'Linking Letters' Competition	...	49
Results of 'Form Fours' Competition	...	50



T. P. Scott-O'Connor
"De Profundis"

Success built on the ruin of less fortunate fellow-beings, on revolting cruelty, a career of crime. But the dead past is very much alive.

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA
The Educated Donkey

(Concluded)

Seven years of schooling, and the donkey becomes a Great Clerk in a Taluk Office! But how unfulfil he is!

ALBERT A. ROLAND
New Arrivals
(A Fantasy)

A theme as old as Time and as new as fresh-laid eggs. A peep at the Great beyond!

'RAM'
Locar o

A beer-thirsty politician looks at Geneva in retrospect.

'KUMUDINI'
Decorative Art
For the ladies.

SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

Speaking on the foreign situation, Sir Samuel Hoare said: 'The Government have no intention of adopting a jealous and selfish attitude against countries whose possessions are smaller or less various than ours.'



We are unable to determine whether this was said to please Italy or frighten Abyssinia.

Addressing another batch of Italian soldiers bound for Abyssinia, Sgr. Mussolini declared that Italians had always defeated black races.

We hope he will provide us with the exception which would conclusively prove the rule!

From an account of the review of the Air fleet by the King: 'Vast crowds arrived by cars, by buses, motor-cars, on cycles and on foot.'

—Madras Mail.

In fact, nothing seems to have been left out from an entertainment point of view.

Reuter reports that Lord Lloyd walked out of the House of Lords during the debate on the India Bill, saying that he felt like a toad under the harrow.

We cannot say whether it is as bad as being Lloyd of the barrage!

'Perry is a world-champion, and has improved 15 since last year.'

—Mail.

He still however has a press handicap!

A missionary speaker at a Bangalore meeting said that it was easier to be Christians in England than here.

Trust an Englishman to give sound reasons for whatever he is!

He further remarked: 'If India was to progress along material lines towards nationalism, it would spell great peril.'

Surely, not to India!

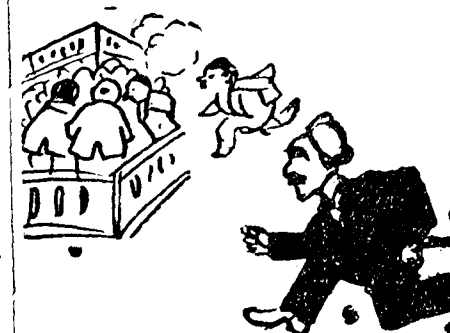
Speaking at the Madras Dinner, Sir George Stanley, a former Governor said that he had an opportunity of comparing Madras administration with that of other provinces, and it was a comparison which Madras need not fear.

It is small consolation to us if other provinces are worse administered.

A member of the Burma Council has given notice of a resolution stating that the Council has lost confidence in itself.

This raises a nice constitutional point as to whether an affirmative or negative vote is required to pass the resolution.

The Madras Mail reports the accidental discovery of gas in a plot of ground in Mylapore.



It is understood that Dewan Bahadur Ramaswamy Mudaliar is

anxious to exploit it in connection with his work as Chief organiser of the Justice Party.

Speaking at Chingleput, he declared that it was time Liberals and constitutionalists who had been silent too long unmuzzled themselves.

We doubt however if the Liberals have the same natural gift for barking!

Referring to the scheme of direct election to the Federal Upper House, Dewan Bahadur G. Narayanaswami Chetti says: 'There seems to be a misapprehension that the Council of state would be an aristocratic body. It is not quite so.'

This is the Dewan Bahadur's humorous way of saying that he is eligible for election to that house!

One of the speakers at a Self-respect conference complained that the Justice Party had not done enough.

Still, we must grant that they have tried to undo a great deal.

Speaking at the Annamalai University Union, the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Sastri, the new Vice-Chancellor began by saying: 'You have been pleased to give me praise and welcome in advance.'

Surely, the Rt. Hon'ble gentleman couldn't expect to be welcomed on his departure!

Opposing the adjournment of the Corporation as a mark of respect to the late Lord Amphill, a European member remarked that if it were possible to consult Lord Amphill himself, he would certainly wish that they should proceed with the business of the council.

The idea of making such consultation in advance hereafter does not seem to find much favour.

Next Week: Relief Work at Quetta—Joyfull



THE EDITOR HIS PAGE

UNEMPLOYMENT—II

Since last writing my notes for this page, I have been somewhat interested by the reactions of many other and perhaps more distinguished people than myself to the intricacies of the problem of the unemployed amongst us. Sir T. B. Sapru has returned from England with the materials for his much advertised report on the problem as it affects the U. P. A conference was recently held at the Senate House to tackle the same subject and it was attended by a number of distinguished professors and others. All of them seem to be more anxious to point out the difficulties of the problem than to suggest any immediate remedies. Meanwhile the unemployed themselves might not unnaturally think that they are more talked about than talked to. The more cynical among them might think, not unjustly, that all this is part of the insidious campaign of the *haves* to reconcile the *have-nots* to the drab monotony of their uneventful and futile existence.

Mr. Merry makes no apology for recurring to the subject again as he thinks he can do something over and above mere woolly talk. He is not so much interested in proving others in the wrong as in making a start which might open up a prospect, however limited, of a new era to the unemployed.

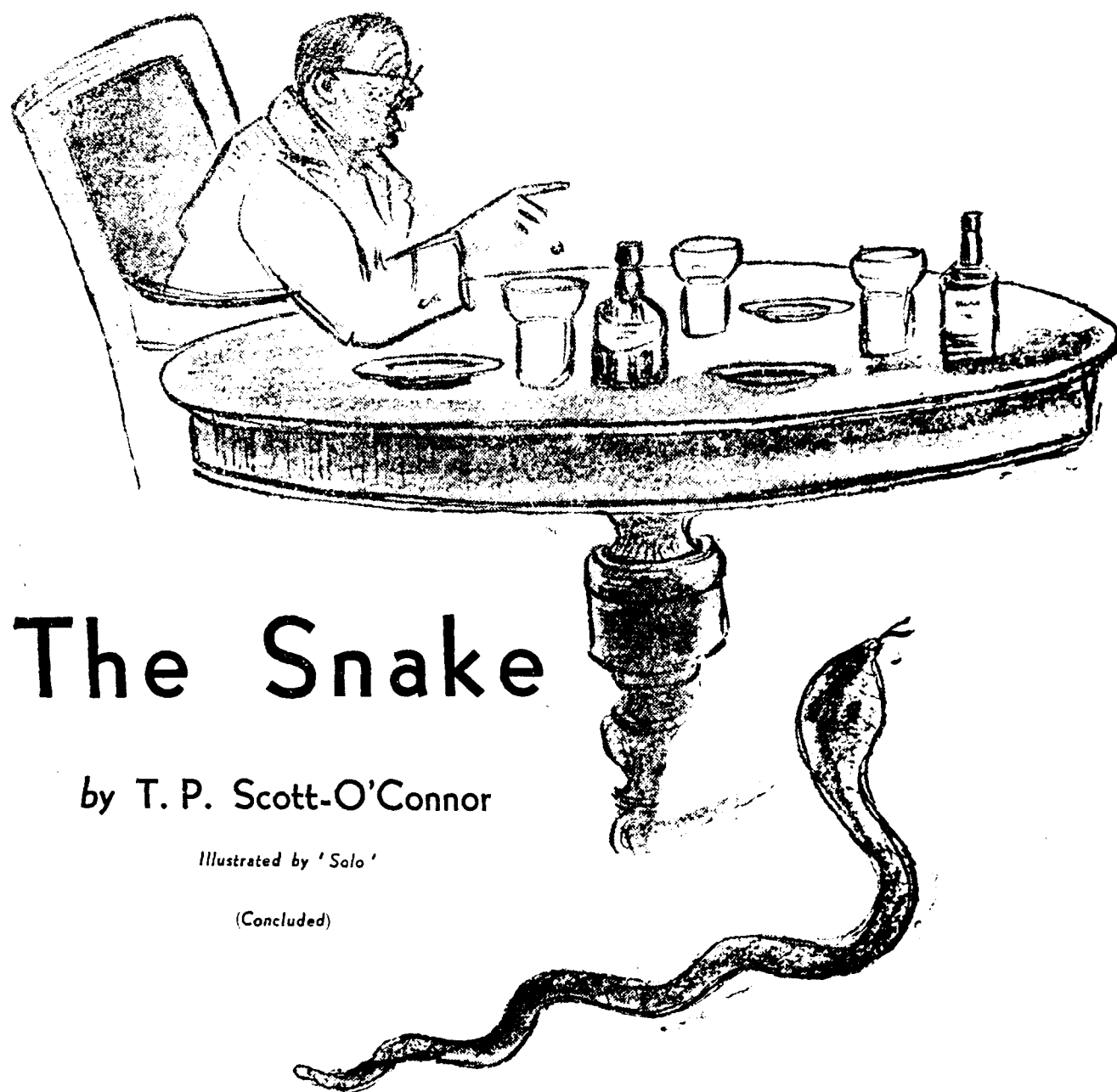
I was talking the other day with my Advertisement Manager and he told

me that it is his job to effect contact between manufacturers and consumers. The thought flashed across my mind: Can I not do something to establish a similar exchange for the benefit of employers and the unemployed? It will be remembered that the Madras University toyed for some time with the idea of starting an "Unemployment Bureau" for the benefit of its alumni, but abandoned it as *infra dig*. There is the Public Services Commission which examines with alacrity but appoints at leisure. What is needed, I think, is some efficient and trustworthy agency to take the educated unemployed under its wing and help them to find suitable openings in the ever-expanding world of business and trade. I know that my readers are all employed—at least when they peruse these pages, but I feel that the unique position which has been achieved by The Merry and its associated publications is an asset of enormous potential value. I am willing to utilise it for the benefit of the unemployed in a practical and tangible manner. A specially constituted "Brain Trust" is now engaged in drafting the details of a "New Deal" which I wish to offer to such of the unemployed young men as would care to get into touch with me. I shall revert to the subject again in a later issue when I hope to be able to publish my plan in its entirety. Meanwhile I can only tell them to wait and see.



Mr. MERRY: Am I to congratulate you or the Government of Bombay?
Mr. NARIMAN: O! The Government for once. They've got off rather cheaply!

[The prosecution of Mr. Nariman under the Motor Vehicles Act has been withdrawn as the result of a discovery of defect in drafting in the Act itself.]



The Snake

by T. P. Scott-O'Connor

Illustrated by 'Solo'

(Concluded)

Captain Lovelace, a rapid-living rake, 'falls in love' with Dorothy Lester, who receives his attentions favourably, if a bit cynically. Lester, Dorothy's husband—a Government Archaeologist, is mostly away from home, bestowing greater attention on old picturesque ruins than on his young wife. Dorothy is starved for love. She loathes her husband. She asks him suddenly one day to divorce her, and surprisingly enough Lester agrees to do so. In return he asks her to hear him read certain memoranda from his pocket note-book.

HE commenced to read aloud. "Upon the sixth of last month, at precisely seven-thirty in the morning, you met Lovelace at the Club."

She opened her eyes and sat up. "What do you mean?"

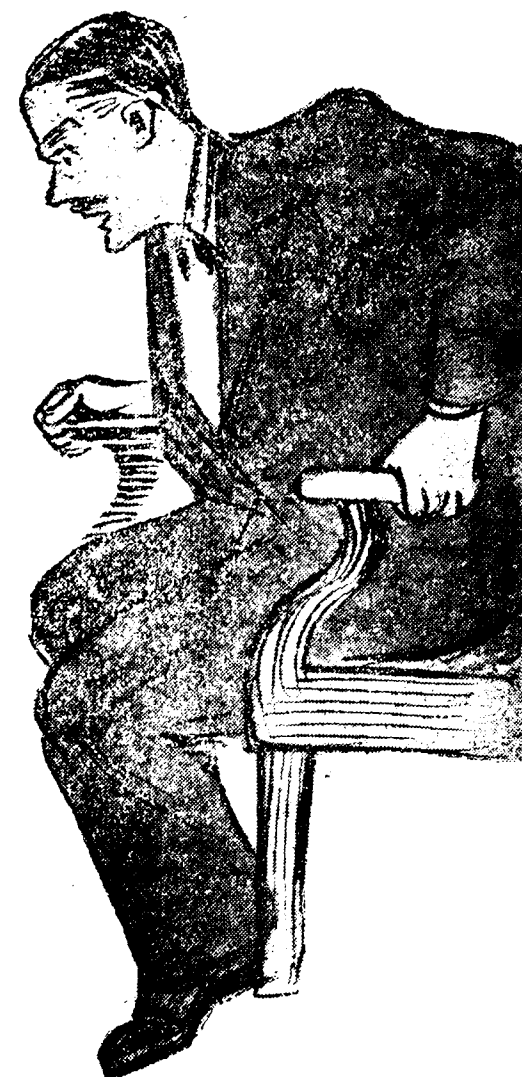
"Kindly allow me to proceed," he replied, without removing his eyes from the page. "You were there till eight-forty-five," he went on. "Upon the seventh he

called here at ten-twenty at night. I was—er—away. He left at a little after midnight. Yes,—upon the—"

She rose trembling. "You unspeakable cad!" she cried. "You have been spying."

"No. And after all, you must remember you're my wife."

"Am I likely to forget it?"



"That's just what you appear to have done," he said gently. "I have a right to know of your—er—movements. May I proceed?"

She went across and snatched the book out of his hand. Her own were shaking so that she could hardly read the damning evidence before her. Every single bit of it was there. There was nothing wanting, not even their last meeting but one, when she had, late one evening, gone over to his bungalow.

She closed the book and flung it at him. It struck the back of his chair and fell to the floor.

"I see," she said, "what loyal and obedient domestics you have! 'Thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the cunning of the master!' Faugh! You cur! You, mean, contemptible hound!"

"After you've quite done calling me names—" he began, but she flared round upon him, her eyes blazing, her figure shaking with rage.

"Names! They're too good for you. There's no word bad enough, low enough for you. Good heavens! to think that one's husband should stoop to such tricks!"

"And one's wife to such devices." His calm, cold words rang out through the darkened room. There was a silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock upon the mantle-piece and by her breathing coming in long, shuddering gasps.

"Calm yourself," said he.

She went close to him. Something in her eyes caused him to half raise an arm as if to ward off the blow, but he was too late. She swung her open palm across his face. He fell back in the chair, both hands over his eyes.

"You filthy, little brute!" she said between clenched teeth. "That's the kind of thing you understand, what I should have given you before, only I've treated you as you didn't deserve." He made as if to rise, removing his hands, but she smacked him again and he cowered back.

"Dorothy!" he whimpered.

"Oh! go to hell!"

Of a sudden she felt the room spinning round her; unsteadily, falteringly, she staggered to the open door leading to their bed-room, passed through it, and slammed it behind her. He heard the key turn.

It was nine-fifteen that night and dinner was over. The cloth had been removed and the pink shaded candles, threw a rosy glow upon the table. The liqueur bottles with their amber and green liquids were reflected in the polished surface of the oval table. At one end sat Dorothy Lester, in a wine-coloured evening frock, a string of red beads around her neck, a single ruby ring glowing upon one of the fingers of her right hand. On her right Lovelace, in a well fitting suit of grey. Facing him was her husband, as usual in white drill. He never appeared to change the colour of his suits, just as he never appeared to alter that of his opinions, such as they were.

The conversation had been mostly between the two men, except when Lovelace sought to draw her into it. Otherwise she was silent, save when she gave an order to one or the other of the waiting servants. From politics to the latest news from Home, each in turn had been discussed. Lester had actually shone. Generally, he did not even scintillate. But to-night some hidden talent for conversation seemed to have leapt up and come to light. He even made a couple of jokes at which he chuckled drily, and which had caused the man opposite him to raise his eyebrows in surprise.

Lovelace turned to his hostess. "You will play for me to-night, Mrs. Lester?" he asked. "And sing?"

She shook her head. "Not to-night," she said in a low voice, but her husband took up his guest's cause with fervour. If there was one thing which appealed to Lester, it was music of any kind. On hot nights, when

his wife had lain sleepless upon her bed listening to the distant, maddening drumming from the city, he had sat in a chair near his stringed cot, (he preferred them to the usual iron spring bed) tapping with his fingers against an arm of the chair in time with the insistent rhythm, until she had begged him either to lie down and go to sleep or take himself off to some other portion of the house. And so now, when she refused Lovelace's request, he turned to her quickly, with: "Oh! but you must. You know how he loves—music. And your voice." And to Lovelace: "Don't you?" he added.

She had reddened, had felt herself doing so, and the knowledge of her husband's eyes upon her.

"Very well, then," she said, rising. "I'm going to give some orders to the servants." To Lovelace: "I shall be in the drawing room in about ten minutes, long enough for you to finish your smoke."

He had risen also and had his back to his host. Then he answered, "In fact, I'm ready now."

"Sit down and finish your liqueur, at any rate," said Lester. "Or, will you have a port? Help yourself. There's whisky and soda on the side-board."

The other closed the door behind his hostess and reseated himself. "Nothing more, thanks," he replied.

Lester reached out and poured himself a glass of Chatreuse. "By the way," he inquired, "going up North soon, aren't you?"

Lovelace turned his chair sideways to the table and stretched out his legs. "Yes. I expect to be away sometime."

"I see." His host pushed across the box of cigars, but the other declined. "I never smoke them," he said. "Cigarettes, and nothing else. Not even a pipe. They leave one unsatisfied."

"Ah! no doubt that's the reason you prefer them, then." Lester's voice was dry but without a hint of sarcasm about it. He continued: "You know, I've often wanted to visit other parts of the country. I've been down this way now close upon fifteen years without a change, except for leave upon two occasions, and both after I married." He looked up at the man across the table. "I was ten years out here before my first leave. It's a long time."

The other nodded. "Yes. But it's not a bad kind of show when all's said and done. There's a great deal to be said for it in some ways. There's the freedom out here for one thing, the sport for another."

Lester smiled slightly. The conversation had turned on to the very topic he had wished it to.

"What do you mean by sport, exactly?" he asked. Lovelace looked at him in some surprise.

"Well, things like polo, and tennis, and shooting." His host held up a hand and he stopped, puzzled.

"Do you call shooting sport?"

"Then what would you call it?"

The other was silent for some seconds, fingering his liqueur glass absently, his eyes upon the emerald liquid within it. Then: "Why not murder?" he queried.

Lovelace stared at him, and then gave a slight shrug of his shoulders. What could this man understand of sport in its various forms—this man who never played a game of any description, and who spent the whole day and part of the night amongst dead and decaying things? As if he had read the other's thoughts, Lester raised his eyes and leaned across the table. The light from the candle caused his eyes to appear as little, flaming jets.

"Oh! I know what you must be thinking," he said. "That I am the last person to criticise such things; but somehow I have never been able to quite see how it is possible to term an act as sporting which consists of sitting twenty feet up a tree with one, or possibly two guns, and 'potting' an animal over its food—'kill', I believe is the correct word. Has it not always been considered that the essence of chivalry is never to strike a thing or person that cannot hit back? I may be wrong, of course, but still—" he shrugged his shoulders in turn and sipped his liqueur.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated Lovelace. "One does not always sit twenty feet up a tree. I have frequently sat on the ground. And there's the following up of a wounded animal to be considered. I can assure you it's no joke tackling a tiger or panther under such circumstances. I've tried it, and I know."

"Quite. Well, as I said, I suppose I'm no judge of such things. Still— Take, for instance, another case in point." He frowned and hesitated, his fingers drumming upon the table.

"Yes?"

"When I said just now about not striking a thing or person,"—he laid emphasis upon the last two words,— "that cannot hit back, surely you agree with me?"

"Yes."

"Good." He leaned still further forward. "Would you apply the same principle with regard to—er, stealing?"

"Stealing?" Lovelace inquired. "I don't quite follow you."

"Let me explain. Suppose, for instance, one person desires what some other person has, like—er—well, like his wife."

So he knew. The other turned his chair to the table and, laying his elbows upon its surface, rested his chin on his crossed fingers and returned Lester's gaze. After a little he shifted in his chair and lowered his hands. "Perhaps I don't," he said quietly. "What exactly are you getting at?"

"I should have thought it was perfectly obvious," Lester informed him. "You fool! You thought I knew nothing? I know everything."

"Indeed?" sneered Lovelace.

"Yes, everything. You great numskull! You thought you had to deal with one of the usual specimens you've been used to, who were too scared of scandal and the possible effect it might have upon their jobs to tell you what they thought of you. Well, I'm not."

"Are you going to tell me what you think of me? Do. It would be immensely entertaining—for me."

"Perhaps. With some people, entertainment comes cheaply. No, I'm not going to waste my time telling you what I think of you. You can imagine that yourself, if you've any imagination beyond seducing other men's wives. No, don't get up, don't move," he went on, as Lovelace made as if to rise. "But you may turn your head, to your left. I can assure you that what you will see will not be imagination."

Lovelace obeyed and shrank back instinctively. Not two feet from his chair was a cobra, grey-black with age, its hood expanded and leaning slightly backwards as if about to strike. At that moment Mrs. Lester turned on the electric gramophone in the drawing room and the snake swayed from side to side in time to the rhythm of the music. He watched it fascinated. The calm voice of his host broke in upon the silence of the room.

"When that music stops, as it must very shortly, you know what will happen. No doubt your imagination has already come to your aid. Do you know what I did this morning? You don't? But you shall. I was pottering about an old ruin just behind the bungalow here and killed its mate—the male. What is that thing about 'the female of the species'? Something about being more dangerous than the male. Quite. I daresay you'll agree with me in that. Well, just when I'd finished despatching its mate, she turned up. It was a near thing but I managed to dodge her, and saw where she disappeared. Later, I went to the hole in the crumbling wall and piped her out of it and, to cut a long story short, in the end I caught her. You see I suddenly recollected a story I'd heard somewhere about cobras always being in couples and that if you dragged one which had been killed, the other would follow the drag to its end." He cocked his ear in the direction of the door. "Dear me!" he said. "I'm afraid the record's coming to an end. Awkward, as I wanted to say a few things more to you. It would appear I am to be cheated to the last. Ah!" he added, as the gramophone switched automatically to another record, "I forgot. A new invention. It plays up to twenty tunes and turns over of its own accord. Wonderful how some people invent these things, isn't it? Though I should dare to think that the inventor of this particular mechanism would hardly have thought it would be

responsible some day for prolonging the useless life of a useless person. Still, I suppose you would hardly cite your case as a testimonial, eh? By the way, I remember now there are three records on the turn-table. We are now half-way through the second. I see it's one of Brahm's Hungarian dances. Charming things, aren't they? I've always loved them. Can't you take your eyes off it? Fascinating, isn't it? You see—"

"You cold blooded murderer!" Lovelace whispered. Little round drops of perspiration had appeared on his forehead.

"Dear, dear. I seem to have heard that word before. Of course, I used it myself. What was it in connection with, now? Oh! yes—sitting up over a wretched animal which had outraged all sporting cannons by daring to turn up and partake of the food which it had, after immense trouble and patience, secured for itself. Well, the two situations are very similar, with the exception that whereas the tiger died over its first mouthful, you've had your food. I hope everything was all right? I should feel I had not played the proper host if you went to the next world with a complaint about your last meal in this. We are now listening to the third piece. Another of Brahm's. Perfectly magnificent, don't you think? What, you want to get up? I wouldn't; but still, you may do as you wish. Why not wait? You won't? Sit down, damn you, or—"

But it was too late. With the first movement, Lovelace had reached the door. The other rose and darted after him, only to come up against it closed. He tugged at the handle madly, but the man upon the other side held on with all his strength. The snake had glided across to him, swaying continually, and was between him and any possible passage to the pantry. He tugged again at the handle, his eyes upon the beady ones which never left his, and at that moment the music stopped.....

* * * *

It was some five years later and a woman was reclining in an easy chair, in her flat in London. It was four-thirty of a foggy November afternoon, and she was expecting some friends to tea. The small room was tastefully furnished. A few Eastern rugs upon the parquet of the floor, light chintz coverings upon the chairs and sofa, and cretonne bordered curtains. Upon the mantle-piece a large silver frame contained the photograph of a boy of about four, curly headed with large eyes, and a dimpled chin.

Further along the mantle-piece was a carved ivory reproduction of a cobra with hood expanded and leaning a little back as if about to strike.

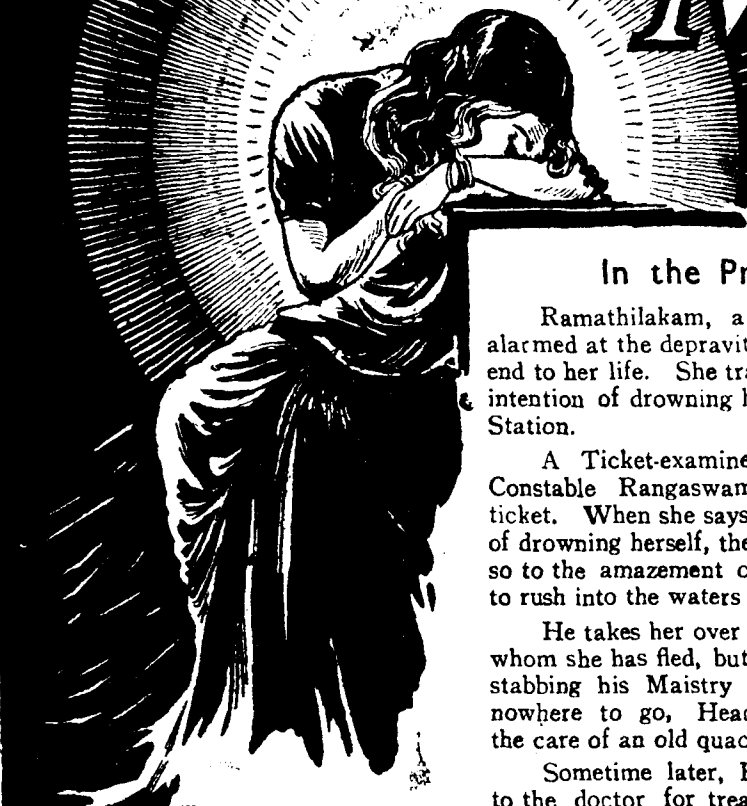
The door opened and a young girl of about nineteen entered, dressed in blue with a toque to match. She came over to the woman who had risen at her entrance, both hands outstretched in greeting.

"Dorothy darling!" she cried. "Wish me happiness. I'm engaged—at last!"

The other smiled. "Of course I do," she said. "I'm so delighted to hear it." She drew the girl towards the sofa and they both sat down. "Who is it? Anyone I know?"

(Continued on page 16)

The MISFORTUNES of Meena



STORY BY
DIELSVI
ILLUSTRATED BY
S E K A R

In the Previous Eight 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 do so. She does so to the amazement of Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, who has to rush into the waters and rescue her.

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 under the care of an old quack-doctor at Saidapet.

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.

Meena grows up in the Brahmin household but when she is ten years old the Dikshidar family learns the truth about her parentage. Rangaswamy had perforce to take away his daughter from the Brahmin family. He takes Meena with him to Chingleput where she is trained by an old Brahmin widow to cook and learn other household duties. She is also a great favourite with the Railway staff at the junction. She takes a wager with the cook at the Railway Refreshment Room that she would cook a better dish of *Uppumav* than the cook. The wager is accepted and a stranger—a railway passenger—is called in to adjudge and make the award. He decides that Meena's dish is the better of the two and—to marry her.

His offer of marriage is rejected at first. But Rangaswamy Iyer finds that people have somehow become aware of Meena's parentage and are unwilling to entertain any proposals for her marriage. He finally agrees to the original proposer, Mr. Somayajulu, a Telugu Brahmin of a Native State. On the evening of the marriage, Mr. Somayajulu threatens to take Meena with him and insults Rangaswamy. Hot words are exchanged and to Rangaswamy's mortification Somayajulu says that he knows Meena to be the daughter of Ramathilakam whose husband is serving a term in the Penitentiary. Meena overhears this and Rangaswamy hastens to put her at ease.

Ninth Instalment

The 'Sacrificial Goat'

RANGASWAMY rushed into the adjoining room crying, "It isn't true, Meena! It isn't true!"

"But, father!" asked Meena, sobbing, "was she a night-watchman's wife?"

"She was: but I swear I am your father!"

"Knowing all these, why did he marry me?" asked Meena and Meena's husband himself entered the room to answer her question.

"Now that you are my wife," said he, "I want you to understand certain things very clearly: your mother was a *Sudra* woman. Her husband still lives inside the Penitentiary. This man, whom you address as your father, had your mother under his protection for some time before your birth. After I met you for the first time at the Railway Refreshment Room, I have made exhaustive enquiries into this affair and it would be very difficult to prove who your father was. That day, when I saw you at the refreshment room, I knew I wanted you. And I wanted you so badly that I was willing to overlook all questions of caste and community to get you. I admit that this man has brought you up under the delusion that he was your father. May be, he loved your mother. Now that you are married to me, he has no right over you. If you listen to my words and act as I desire, I assure you, there will be no cause for regret or sorrow."

Rangaswamy Iyer could see that Meena's faith in him was being rudely shaken. Perhaps, if he had told her early enough the full details, her attitude would have been different.

Meena laughed—a bitter laugh!

"My mother is dead! She deserted her husband and lived with another man! What a mother! And no one knows who my father was! What a fate! I suppose I should be thankful that some-one was willing to marry me! Very well, sir!" said she, addressing her husband, "I follow you to-night to your village! As for you, father, you were uncle to me at first; later, you became father, and now, if what my husband says is true, you were just a paramour to my mother. All the same, you must have loved her very much indeed judged by the trouble you have taken over me, her child. I am deeply grateful to you. Very few men in this world would have

done, under similar circumstances, what you have done for me. It doesn't matter where I go or what happens to me!"

"Meena, my dear! Don't talk like that!" expostulated Rangaswamy, "I am your father! I shall prove it to the hilt!"

"Even granting that, father, why shouldn't I go away with him?" asked Meena.

"But do you want to, just now?"

"I suppose I must; if not to-day, some other day!"

"You are a sensible girl, Meena!" complimented her husband and left the room.

Rangaswamy caught hold of Meena's hand and asked her piteously, "Are you angry with me, Meena?"

"No; not at all! Why should I be? You have done all that you can do."

"Meena! My heart is breaking! I see trouble ahead! Something tells me that you wouldn't be happy with your husband. All these years I have lived only for you. And now, I am losing you and I see only stark darkness ahead!"

"You ought not to have quarrelled with him, father," rebuked Meena. "We ought to be grateful to him for stooping so low as to marry one like me. I shall endeavour my very best to be a good wife to him. I wish you would go and tell him how sorry you are for having lost your temper."

"If you wish it, I shall do so, my dear!"

Bewildered at the sudden change that had come over Meena and admiring, at the same time, her brave attempts to adjust herself to a pathetic and poignant situation, Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer sought his son-in-law and ate the humble pie. After expressing his regrets and entreating his son-in-law to look after Meena kindly, Rangaswamy went on to convince him that he was Meena's father. "Do you think that if she was not my daughter I would have cared to bring her up as a Brahmin? I saw Ramathilakam's husband in the lock-up. Meena was born a year later. Isn't that proof enough?" he asked.

2178



"I wanted you so badly....."

"It doesn't matter," said his son-in-law, "who her father was! Nor for that matter, to what caste her mother belonged. I wanted her and I have got her. That is enough!"

"There is another matter which I should like to mention to you," timidly began Rangaswamy Iyer and hesitated.

"Go on!" urged Somayajulu.

"Believe it or not, I love Meena very much. I had planned to retire and live near or with her if it were possible, so that she may not feel lonely in this world. Would you have any objection....."

"None at all. You are welcome. You may find my village very lonely. We are the only Brahmin family thereabouts. Write to me before you start."

"Thank you: thank you! I shall take good care to see that I do not become a nuisance."

When the time for the final parting came, Meena broke down completely. She was weeping most of the time on the Railway platform and her father soothed her with kind words and promises to be at her side as soon as he could obtain leave. "Write to me daily Meena," he pleaded, "and if you don't, I would be miserable. Be brave! Be good to him!"

To his son-in-law, Rangaswamy Iyer made a final request. "Treat her kindly. She is still a child. Forgive my faults! You are her father and mother too. May God bless you both!"

And as the train steamed out of the platform, Rangaswamy Iyer was running alongside the train, shouting, "Don't forget to write, Meena, daily!"

And Meena wrote to him as often as she could find the time. Here are some of the letters which she wrote to her father, set down in their chronological order:—

27th June.

Salutations to thy feet, dear father!

We arrived here after a very tiresome journey, father. After getting down at a station whose outlandish name I couldn't remember even if I wanted to, we had to travel 24 miles by bullock-cart. I should think that these parts are very backward, for, there is no sign of a bus or motor-car anywhere. The roads are terrible and so are the people to look at. The Telugu they speak is so hard that you can break stones with it and I am dreading to think how I can ever hope to get on in this wilderness.

If you had imagined that your daughter would be having a round of festivities here, on her arrival, you would be mistaken. This house is the only Brahmin house in the village and the only one built of brick and mortar. There is an old lady in the house, a distant relation of my husband and her greeting to me was in Greek. At least, that is how it struck me. I could see she wasn't pleased at my arrival. I must somehow earn her good-will, as she is likely to have the ear of my husband. I am sure you would like to know what I think of him. I haven't formed any opinion of him as yet and I do not want to, until I have had enough time to study him and his moods. During the long journey from Nellore to this place, he wasn't very communi-

cative: in fact, I didn't like the way he looked at me more than once when he thought I wasn't watching him. He had something evidently on his mind, as he was preoccupied most of the time. It may be that I am imagining most of these things, but I am setting down what I think, knowing that you would be interested. More to-morrow.

30th June.

Manifold Salutations, father!

I am sorry I didn't write to you again as I had such a lot of work to do. Now, don't get alarmed thinking that your precious Meena is slaving here. I have been busy unpacking and arranging things and looking around.

The old lady here goes by the name of Gujji and it is now quite clear to me that I can expect her to give me a lot of trouble. Outwardly she shows great respect and regard for me, but I could see behind it all, a vein of sneering contempt for me. "The prosperity of this house depends on you!" is a sentence which she very often uses when addressing me and goodness only knows why she puts so much venom into it. Her cooking is atrocious and when I offered to cook, she firmly yet politely dissuaded me from doing so. She wouldn't even allow me into the kitchen and that reminded me of a girl-friend named Gowri and of Kamu Amma. Have you written to Kamu Amma about my arrival here? I wish she was here and then, I wish she was not. I have seen Vembu's marriage and I was, as you know, at Subbu's nuptials. If Kamu Amma had been present either at my marriage or at my nuptials (the latter event took place yesterday) she would stand aghast at the mockery of it all. There is a lot which a girl can confide to a mother and to-day, of all days in my life, I need a mother very much indeed.

The feasts and festivities that usually follow on the wake of a marriage are prominent by their absence here. I struck-up an acquaintance with a woman who lives in a hut about two-hundred yards away from this house. She came to see me and the Telugu she spoke was absolutely incomprehensible. I gathered that she had called to pay her respects: her son, a boy aged eighteen or so, brought some plantain fruits and betel-nut as offerings of their goodwill. They have funny names here. The woman was called Etchi and she calls her son Ella. We have a servant here in the house called Gunda, though the poor man is lean and lanky. He reminds me very much of a dog which the Assistant Station Master at Chinglepet had with him. There is a pitiful look in his eyes which seems to reproach one for being unkind to so faithful a servant. The dog had the same kind of eyes too. My mind is greatly worried over the new life I have to live as a wife. But apparently these thoughts couldn't be put on paper, more so to one's father. I wish I had a mother and I wish I had her here with me just now.

5th July.

A thousand Salutations!

I am not happy, father. I know it would hurt you to read this, but I must unburden my soul to some one. It is so soothing and such a relief to set down one's feelings on paper. I am sure that were you here, I wouldn't be as outspoken as I am on this paper.

Gujji is a problem and a stiff one at that. Sometimes she treats me like a queen and sometimes like a slave. But throughout there is a contempt that sears my soul. I begin to wonder if even in this benighted place she had come to know of my low origin and if that knowledge is the cause of her conduct. I have been permitted to cook in the verandah such dishes as I may like, but neither Gujji nor my husband have evinced any interest in these dishes or partaken of them.

I told you about Etchi and Ella. Gujji doesn't like them and treats them like Pariah dogs. Ella is a smart lad and he has promised to teach me the brogue used here. From what I have been able to gather from him and his mother, it appears that your son-in-law is quite a terror in these parts. Ella tells me that everybody hates your son-in-law and that they are all full of sympathy towards me. When I pressed him to explain why they should be full of sympathy, the boy shut his mouth with a snap and called on all the Gods to protect me. I was amused and pressed him further, but he wasn't very communicative. I took up the matter with his mother and she was angry with the boy for frightening me. She asked me if I knew I was the fourth wife to your son-in-law and when I expressed surprise, she told me that people in the village believed that there was a curse on your son-in-law and that every one of his wives would die an early death. Cheerful piece of news, isn't it?

I am not afraid of death, father, and just now I would prefer death to being a wife. I am thoroughly sick of the experience, but what I want to know is, are you aware that your daughter is the fourth wife of a man who isn't even forty?

I am told that his first wife was a Telugu girl of these parts and died of small-pox. His second was a Valamanadu girl and died of poison, self-administered. His third was from the west-coast and was drowned. Numbers two and three, I am told, were beautiful girls and the compliment was graciously extended even to me, (No. IV in the list) by Etchi and Ella. I casually asked your son-in-law about his previous wives and he got mad at the mere mention of them. "It is a rule in this house not to refer to them," he thundered and I quaked with fear at his rage over so trivial a matter.

There is no bazaar here and no shop. Things have to come from an adjacent village, which they say is a two days' journey by cart from here. I have kept aside all the money you gave me, for, money cannot buy anything here as there is nothing here to sell. I should like to have some Tamil novels, a few cakes of soap, and a bottle of hair-oil, if a parcel could be made to reach this God-forsaken place.

27th July.

To thy feet, obeisances!

I am prohibited from writing to you. I think it is Gujji's work. A fortnight back, when I was writing, my husband asked me what I was doing. I told him that I was writing to you. He asked me how he wasn't to be sure that I was writing to some one else—a boy friend, he insinuated. I got angry and tore the letter to pieces. He flew into a rage, asked me who I thought I was to show resentment at his remarks and warned me that any further exhibition of temper on my part would be met with severe chastisement. Gujji intervened and suggest-

ed that if there is any letter-writing to be done, the men-folk ought to do it and that any woman should write letters was unheard of.

I am writing this letter inside a closed room and Ella has promised to smuggle it through to the post-office which is in the next village.

I was miserable for a couple of days after which your son-in-law came to express his regrets for his rudeness. He explained that he was by nature very short-tempered and jealous and pleaded with me to make allowances for his moods. He suggested that if ever I wanted to write to you he would do the writing in Telugu and you could get it translated there. The suggestion was adding insult to injury, but I didn't show my resentment. I must stop. Gujji is shouting outside the room, asking me what I am doing with doors closed. More later.

29th August.

Salutations dear father!

Ella tells me that he was able to smuggle my previous letter to you to the post-office. I am sure it must have reached you and caused you a great deal of anxiety. I have not been able to find the necessary privacy to sit down and write a long letter to you. I have such a lot to tell you and so little time to do it in.

Your son-in-law is Satan incarnate. That is the opinion of the whole village and also of all those outside the village who know him. I share this opinion, but like others, I keep my opinions to myself. They are afraid of him because he is the uncrowned king of this place and has a tremendous pull with the higher Government officers. I, as a wife, and a low caste one at that, committed to his custody and care, naturally, have to keep my opinions to myself.

From various conversations I had with Etchi and Ella and sundry others of this place, I have been able to gather certain facts which have led me to form such an opinion about your son-in-law, my lord and master. Personal contact with him for these two months as his wife has, if anything, made me hate the man. Ugh!

About a decade back, when his first wife was living, a Revenue Officer camped at this village. Your son-in-law was suspected of tampering with the village revenue accounts and of concocting several criminal complaints against his enemies. The Officer concerned, who was deputed to investigate into these irregularities while staying here, was struck with the rustic charm of a young woman hereabouts and expressed a desire to your son-in-law that arrangements should be made for bringing the woman to his tent, so that she may share his bed for the night. Your son-in-law had the audacity to suggest to the husband of the woman this atrocious proposal and the infuriated husband very properly assaulted your son-in-law. I have already told you what a temper your son-in-law has. Gathering together a number of men, he forcibly removed the young woman to the officer's tent. Etchi who told me this story (and which is corroborated by a number of people) mercifully and out of consideration to my feelings, draws a curtain over the happenings inside the tent that night.

Before the day dawned, the outraged woman was at the bottom of a well, dead. The entire village split into two

factions, one sympathising with the husband of the deceased woman and the other supporting the village head-man, to wit, your son-in-law and all that he stood for, in the name of the mighty Government. Riots, arson, free-fights were the order of the day and as your son-in-law has Magisterial powers also, the other side was ruthlessly punished. The husband of the deceased woman was falsely implicated in a case of murder and sent up to the sessions.

Wires were pulled, evidence fabricated and palms greased. The poor man was hung, though the entire village knew he was innocent. He had an old mother who was something of a doctor and a magician and this old dame, when she heard of the execution of her son, is reported to have uttered a potent curse on your son-in-law and his family. That his wives would die early and that they wouldn't be chaste was, in short, the curse.

Starting with such an infamous incident in his career, your son-in-law has piled monstrosity over monstrosity and to-day he stands as the devil incarnate. I am not exaggerating a bit. I am not giving you an one-sided version. That his first wife should have died of small-pox exactly on the same day and hour on which the old woman who laid the curse died, has instilled belief in the people here in the potency of the curse. His second wife, I understand, was chosen after elaborate search, on account of her personal charms. The way in which she was reared here described to me by people who had known her, reminds me of the treatment accorded to a sacrificial goat which I saw in a *Yagam* near Mayavaram. If I can make a shrewd guess, the idea behind these promiscuous marriages of your son-in-law seems to be this: his administration, civil and magisterial, of the village is such that he could be sent to jail on every one of the 365 days in the year. He stoops at nothing to placate his immediate superiors, who, I am told, are a corrupt lot of beasts. When an officer visits a village it is usual to furnish him with 'supplies'. In our parts these supplies contemplate provisions, creature comforts and cash in certain cases. Here, apparently, they go the whole hog and pander to all the appetites. It is sickening to set down on paper all these sordid details. But as there is the possibility that it may be my turn next to be coerced into playing the sacrificial goat, I have to convey to you my worst fears.

Wife No. II, as I told you, was a girl of excellent personal charms. It seems she was found dead on the night on which an officer had pitched his tent in the village. A villager confessed that he had, at her request, given her *Dhatara* poison. Etchi and others say that she was deliberately chosen, married and brought to this village, so that she may, if required, be offered to the Inspecting officer and that when she was faced with the situation, she killed herself.

The end of wife No. III who came from Malabar confirms this theory. She too was a beauty, absolutely ignorant of Telugu. She wasn't a Brahmin. I wonder, how she fell into the clutches of this monster. In her case, she had no idea of the purpose for which she had been brought to this place. The village folk couldn't convey a warning to her. And I am afraid that she must have been taken unawares when her husband escorted her to the officer's tent one night. Her body

was found in a lake, three miles away. A shepherd had seen a demented figure running towards the lake in the early hours of the morning. He had mistaken it for an apparition.

And so, thus we arrive at wife No. IV. Curiously enough, there is no fear in my heart. Perhaps, the monstrous enormity of these deeds hasn't soaked into my being deep enough to instil fear. I have had no indication so far from either my husband or Gujji that I am a prospective sacrificial Goat. The villagers, kind folk, all of them, feel that it is their duty to warn me so that I may escape from the unspeakable outrage. I wonder at myself, for, knowing as I do all these preposterous details, I still move about the house unruffled—quite my own usual normal self. I want you to think over all that I have written calmly and devise a course of action to take me away from here. I have had enough of married life.

Your own,

Meena.

P. S. Please don't do anything hasty or rash. You can, if necessary, write to Ella in Telugu, delineating your plans.

Infinite *Namaskarams*, father, 10th September.

Gujji has laid a complaint with my husband. The frequent conversations I hold with the villagers out of her hearing and my habit of locking up myself inside a room (to write to you) are my offences. An unfinished letter to you fell into my husband's hands and he sharply cross-examined me. I lied. I said it was a piece of music which I had set down on paper for future reference. He threatened to send it to someone in Secunderabad whom he knows and who would get it translated. If he should be successful in getting a translation, it would be the very end. For, the letter contains enough evidence to prove that you and I, and Etchi and Ella, and all the rest of us suspect his diabolical plans.

Do something to take me out of this place as quickly as you can.

Your distracted,

Meena.

* * *
Head-constable Rangaswamy Iyer had planned to retire from service and live the rest of his life with Meena. His pension-application was pending with the authorities and he had also applied for leave, preparatory to retirement. Meena's letters, as they arrived one by one, drove him to the frenzy of rage and despair and on receipt of the last letter, he completely broke down. Handing over charge of the station to Police constable No. 526 and informing by telegraph to the higher authorities the imperative necessity of his absence from the station and without waiting for their sanction, he left for Madras. On the way to the bus-stand he called at the post-office and drew a sum of Rs. 100/- from his Savings Bank account.

He knew that Meena was in a village called Warkal in the Nizam's state. Apart from this, he had no idea as to how to get there and at what station he should alight. At the Madras Central Station he was told that the Grand Trunk Express was the most con-

venient train, if he wanted to get there quickly. After elaborate enquiries at the post-office and at the Railway station, he was advised to alight at Dornakal and pursue his enquiries there. He had to spend a sleepless night at Ramaswamy Mudaliar's choultry and at 8-55 next morning he was on board the Grand Trunk Express bound for Dornakal.

That night at 8 P. M. the express steamed into Dornakal junction. Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer, alighted and made further enquiries. He was relieved to hear that Warkal was a village 24 miles away from Gundrati Margoo, a railway station only a few miles up the line. There were no trains however for the night and Rangaswamy Iyer had perforce to sleep at the junction.

Next morning, a passenger train dropped him at Gundrati Margoo. He was the only passenger alighting there and the station-master asked him, "How far do you go? You seem a stranger to these parts."

"I am bound for the village of Warkal," replied Rangaswamy Iyer and asked, "how far is it from here and how do I get there?"

"Warkal? It is twenty-four miles from here and you have to foot it. Whom do you know there?"

"One Mr. Somayajulu: he is my son-in-law."

The station-master whistled. "Why, he is my good friend!" exclaimed the station-master. "Of course, I saw your daughter when she arrived here after the marriage. Stay with me and I shall arrange to get you a bullock-cart. It may take some time."

The station-master scribbled a note and sent it through a porter. Rangaswamy Iyer thought that the station-master wasn't quite so chummy as one would expect under the circumstances while the porter took quite a lot of time to bring a cart.

At 11-30 a double bullock-cart was brought to the station-compound and Rangaswamy Iyer, after thanking the Station-master, got into the cart. The journey was tedious, the roads bad, and the driver of the cart unsociable. At dusk, Rangaswamy Iyer computed that he would have covered about twenty miles. The cart

(What happens to Rangaswamy? Read the next instalment.)

THE SNAKE—(Continued from page 9)

"Oh! no," replied the girl. "I'm sure you don't. Of course he's much older than me, and my people are making a fuss about it, but that doesn't matter at all. And he's so very handsome—distinguished looking, I should say. He's in the Army. He's due to go back in February and we're to be married in January, early, and spend a month in Switzerland. The winter sports, you know."

"Due to go back? And where to?"

"Oh! didn't I tell you? He's from India. I do love people from India. Not that I've ever met any except him, but his descriptions of people and places are really wonderfully vivid. His name is—"

"Lovellace—Captain Lovellace," said the older woman quietly. "Or is it Major now?"

came to a halt and four men surrounded the cart. "Get down!" they cried in Telugu.

Rangaswamy Iyer got down and asked them: "What is the matter?"

"Follow us!" they beckoned. Rangaswamy Iyer noted that the driver of the cart had joined them and was chuckling gleefully. It was a hold-up, evidently. In a flash, he had tripped up the nearest of the lot and his hands shot out and caught another on the jaw and floored him. The remaining two closed in on Rangaswamy and with sticks belaboured him. He fell down and they trussed him up with ropes and gagged him. They made him stand up and marched him into an adjoining grove.

More persons were assembled there. Rangaswamy noted that, in all, there were a dozen people. They were waiting for someone.

Behind his back a voice greeted Rangaswamy Iyer.

"Dandamulu Mamagaru!"

Rangaswamy Iyer wheeled round to face his son-in-law, Somayajulu.

"It is too bad you didn't write to me announcing your visit," said his son-in-law with biting sarcasm. "I hope that the hasty arrangements I have had to make for your reception in the absence of a letter from you are quite comfortable. I am sorry I have no suitable accommodation to lodge so dear a relation and so distinguished and gallant a member of his Majesty's Police Force! The best that I can offer is this! Uncover that pit!"

Two men removed a thatched covering and revealed a pit which looked uncommonly like a grave. "If it pleases you, dear father-in-law, we will put you in there! To-night it is likely to be cold and so we will cover you with earth. I know you love your daughter. When her time comes, we will lay her by your side. Why don't you speak? Remove that gag, somebody, please! He is my father-in-law, come to take back his daughter home!"

*Salutations father-in-law.

Low Star Salaries

FOR every star whose weekly salary runs into four figures, there are at least 200 stars who don't get even two digit cheques; some have to be pining for their livelihood. I am not talking, mind you, about the twenty thousand odd extras who are waiting for months on end for a chance to make 7 dollars a day, sometimes in vain. I refer to the stars who are responsible for the big box-office receipts—those who really make film-fans.

Any film-fan will remember Jack Mulhall, the sparkling hero of the silent *Brass Bullet*, Charlie Ray, Alice Lake and a host of those heart-throbs who are now never heard of. They are now desperately searching for work and secure hardly occasional chances at four dollars a day!

If those in the highest paid ranks (Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd) draw salary cheques in thousands, the others in the lower rungs ought to be earning at least a comparable salary. But the facts are heartless. In *Society Doctor*, every moment seemed as if Robert Taylor would with one swoop run away with the hero's place but there came some check at the psychological moment. He was so grand, so powerful, yet so suppressed. It must be admitted that he easily outshone Chester Morris. His salary is 35 dollars a week. Dick Arlen was paid 75 dollars a week in *Wings*. Buddy Rogers and Gary Cooper began as stars with 75 a week!

Hell's Angels was a sensational break to Jean Harlow as the sex appeal queen. While the others on the set were paid 2500, 1500 and 1000 dollars a week, Jean, whose acting secured a permanent place for her in the hearts of film-fans, was given 250 dollars. Johnny Weissmuller was doing the 'Tarzan' at 200 dollars, and his *Tarzan and His Mate* was the biggest box-office attraction of 1934!

Jean Muir's salary was just 100 dollars, until she made a big row about it. Dick Powell was a star on 350.

Joan Blondell and Jimmy Cagney made their first hit *Sinner's Holiday* to the tune of 75 dollars. Baby Le Roy, the baby-star earns 50 a week. George Raft became a star 'Valentino' at 200, Ann Dvorak at 100 and Karen Morley at 125 a week.

Dick Cromwell who does so well in *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, is taken up last because he is the holder of the longest low-salary contract. Dick made *Tol'ble David* for 75 a week and has continued to make pictures at the same salary, until recently he was promoted to 750 a week rank!

To us, these salaries seem a lot of money but it must be remembered these salaries are paid in Hollywood where the cost of living to any noted actor is terrible. The clothes, residences, entertainment, social life, all cost a lot and the stars have a devil to pay!



1934 Star-ratings

We began with Sydney Bernstein's British fans 'Likes'; went on with *Motion Picture Herald's* ballot, took in Beverly Hills' 'best performances', Universal voting in U. S. A., Box-office receipts, Motion Picture Academy's awards, Madras' rating and wound up with *Picturegoer's* readers' best actor ballot. We will consider the actors and actresses who have come in for the first three places, in all these lists and find out the final placements awarding 3 points for

No. 1, 2 for No. 2, and 1 for the third.

S. L. Bernstein's Cinema-goers 'Likes'

Male	Female
George Arliss	Norma Shearer
Clark Gable	Marie Dressler
Wallace Beery	Greta Garbo

Motion Picture Herald (U.S.A.)

Will Rogers	Janet Gaynor
Clark Gable	Mae West
Wallace Beery	Joan Crawford

Universal Ballot (U.S.A.)

Chas. Laughton	Norma Shearer
George Arliss	Claudette Colbert
Clark Gable	Grace Moore

Beverly Hills. (Best Performances.)

Wallace Beery	Anna Sten
Clark Gable	Eliz. Bergner
William Powell	Carole Lombard

Box-office Placings (U.S.A.)

Eddie Cantor	Greta Garbo
George Arliss	Marlene Dietrich
Paul Muni	Norma Shearer

Motion Picture Academy's Awards.

Clark Gable	Claudette Colbert
-------------	-------------------

Madras Film League.

George Arliss	Greta Garbo
Clark Gable	Norma Shearer
Chas. Laughton	Joan Crawford

Picturegoer's Readers.

Clark Gable	Greta Garbo
William Powell	Norma Shearer
Chas. Laughton	Nova Pilbeam

Males

Clark Gable gets 15 points, George Arliss 10 points and Wallace Beery and Charles Laughton 5 points each.

Females

Norma Shearer wins 11 points, Greta Garbo 10 and Claudette Colbert 5 points.

The Letters of

58. A Job

Madras, 20th July, 1935.

DEAR MOTHER,

It was a coincidence to get your letter, in which you hoped I would be able to obtain a few days' holiday, away from the heat of Madras. Some time ago I applied for a fortnight's leave, and set off for one of the hill-stations in the north of India. I wanted to see more of the country I had visited during my Transport Course. As it turned out, I reached quite a different locality.

On the morning of the third day, I arrived at one of the northern junctions. The train for the hills left this junction in the evening, so I had a whole day to spare. In India, soldiers are not allowed to roam about at will, even when they are on leave. They must report themselves wherever they go. I took a *tonga* and went to the headquarters in Cantonments.

There was a terrific bustle at headquarters. The Sergeant on duty hardly had time to speak to me. "Passing through on leave?" he said. "Right. Your leave is cancelled. Report to the Attached Section in the barracks."

I felt very downcast at losing my holiday, but a soldier has to obey orders without argument. "Very good, Sergeant," I said. "Is there any trouble?"

"There was a very bad earthquake early this morning," he said. "A whole town wiped out. We have taken charge of the trouble. For God's sake go away. I shan't get any sleep or rest for days."

There is an old story to the effect that once upon a time the Government ordered a free issue of beer to the whole population. The soldiers were employed in carrying the beer to the public parks, where the leading notables distributed it. At last, one thirsty soldier asked if he could have some beer.

"Certainly not," was the reply. "The beer is for the civil population."

"Then why was I ordered to wait here?" enquired the soldier.

"Oh," he was told, "you've got to take the can back."

Of course, this is only a legend; but it is a fact that whenever there is an important occasion, either of joy or sorrow, it is always the soldiers who take the can back. These good services to the community are appreciated in England, but in India they are generally misunderstood. Considering the hardships and deprivations out here, it is

wonderful how the troops are always prompt, willing, and well-behaved, no matter how many cans there are to be carried back.

As I made my way to the Attached Section, there were soldiers everywhere, slaving like coolies in the intolerable heat of the sun. They were loading medical stores into aeroplanes, bringing cases of food from the emergency reserves, sorting and assembling engineering supplies, and in general doing work that would cause a trade-union leader to burst with indignation. Long lines of lorries were being loaded like clockwork, and streaming off to the station in convoys, each lorry guarded by a soldier.

I reported to the Quartermaster-Sergeant in charge of the Attached Section, and he entered my name in his pay-and-mess-book. "Go to the mobilisation-stores," he said, "and draw arms and full equipment. Then report to Sergeant O'Brien in the next bungalow. By the way, will you subscribe a day's pay to the relief fund?"

"Right, Sir," I said. "You are certainly getting a move on, to be collecting already."

"In these cases, the money is needed promptly," he replied. "Everyone is giving a day's pay, and we are sending two thousand rupees by telegraph this afternoon."

He debited me with one rupee eight annas, which is a full day's pay, and gave me three rupees eight annas, which was the cash balance due to me for the week.

By mid-day there were thirty of us assembled in the next bungalow, in full kit and war-paint. We were an ill-assorted lot of strays, all belonging to different regiments.

"Well, boys," said the Sergeant, who was a merry-eyed old veteran with a walrus-moustache, "we are for special relief duty, leaving by train at 3 p.m. The regiment here cannot spare anyone: they could do with ten times as many. Go to the cookhouse and get your dinners, and then parade at the issue-room, where you will draw emergency-rations for two days. And, mind, the emergency-rations must not be touched, even in the last extremity, unless you get the permission of a Field Officer."

One of the most pathetic sights in the Army is to see hundreds of men groaning with thirst and hunger, although each one has food and water for two days strapped on his back. The emergency-rations is so sacred that no one ever dares to eat it. Only with difficulty can you imagine a crisis so dreadful that recourse must be had to this last desperate reserve. Most fellows carry the same hermetically-sealed package of emergency-rations throughout their service, and when they retire,

Private Joyfull

of Work

they place the package in a little shrine at home, and say their prayers to it. him out. Over this he started a furious quarrel, and said he was going to prosecute them.

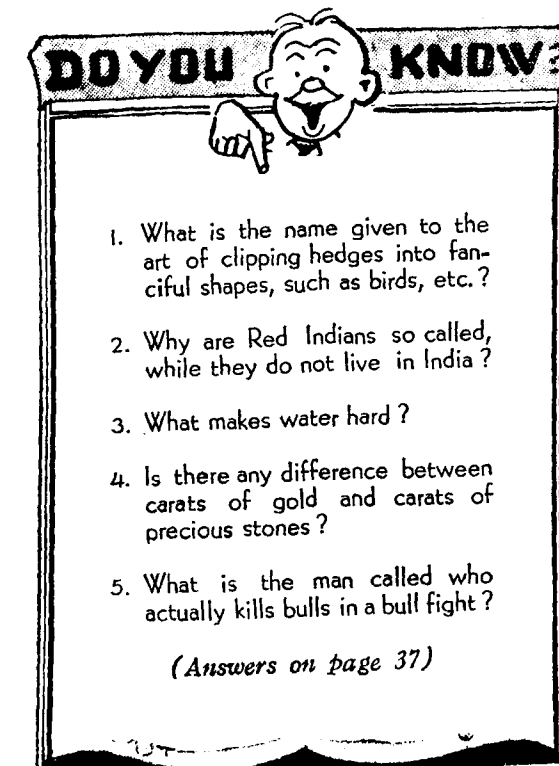
Within the hour, we were tramping to the station

There were people who tried to bluff their way through.

through the fearful heat, loaded like mules. There were few passers-by in the streets, but the neighbourhood of the station was crowded by an agitated mob. Many of the inhabitants of the city had relatives at the scene of the earthquake, and their anxiety was dreadful. There was no news as yet, except that the calamity was a terrible one. Six men with fixed bayonets were hardly sufficient to prevent frenzied relatives from storming the telegraph-office; and the other administrative offices and the special sidings had to be strongly guarded. It was imperative to keep things clear for the herculean task of assembling the relief-trains, and the one frail wire to the stricken area must be reserved for the official messages that hopelessly overloaded it.

There was an old gentleman, a veritable patriarch, who had sent his entire family of twenty persons for a holiday in the destroyed town. With tears streaming down his face, he held out a fortune in currency-notes to the corporal guarding the telegraph-office; but the corporal could only shake his head, and tell two of the guards to lead the poor old man away. There were men and women who bowed to the ground and held the soldiers' feet, begging to be allowed to send a message. "Sorry, ma," said the soldiers, "it's no good. We've got to keep you out. Go on, ma; your husband will be all right." And the soldiers coughed and looked fierce so as not to betray their pity.

The mere busybodies were much more trouble. There was a man offering five thousand rupees for an aeroplane, or a thousand rupees for a seat in a relief-train. He said there was a fortune for the first man who could get photographs of the tragedy. He was so persistent in trying to push past the soldiers, to get at someone in authority, that the soldiers lost their patience and kicked



1. What is the name given to the art of clipping hedges into fanciful shapes, such as birds, etc.?
2. Why are Red Indians so called, while they do not live in India?
3. What makes water hard?
4. Is there any difference between carats of gold and carats of precious stones?
5. What is the man called who actually kills bulls in a bull fight?

(Answers on page 37)

They said they were important persons, and must get to the earthquake-area on big business. "The crows can smell the carrion," said the corporal, disgustedly. His legs were shaking with fatigue, but he had no hope of relief for many hours. There was a heat-stroke station on the platform, to deal with the soldiers who collapsed under the strain.

Away on the sidings, the relief-trains were being loaded by gangs of Tommies. Our party got its stuff aboard, and was allotted a third-class coach along with a group of Indian medical students who were going as hospital-attendants. In a little while the long train drew out, through the main station, taking precedence of the Mail, whose passengers were all hanging out of the windows gazing in astonishment at the turmoil.

As soon as I could find a seat on a pile of bundles, I began to sort the dozens of scraps of paper that filled one of my pockets. They bore the addresses of people in the destroyed town, and I had promised to send news to their relatives if possible. The addresses were in all kinds of scripts and languages, and my promises seemed pretty hopeless, but we all felt we had to do what we could for the frantic people. It might be possible to discover what had happened to a well-known person who occupied a large, easily-identified house in the Civil Lines, but it was thousands to one against getting news of an obscure person who had been a temporary visitor in a crowded house in a narrow lane in the heart of the City.

The train went faster than any on which I have travelled in India. It hooted its way through the stations and did not make a regular halt anywhere until the evening. The platforms at the larger places were crowded with anxious throngs. If we passed slowly

(Continued on page 24)

Attitudes From High

It is now abundantly clear that the leaders of the Justice Party are *almost* united on the question of the need for propaganda. The close of the Ooty 'season' has been signalled by a spate of oratory featuring two ministers, one ex-minister and a host of would-be ministers in the star-role.

All the big guns of the party have begun to boom simultaneously, and in somewhat erratic directions. This seems mainly due to the fact that some of the 'leaders' are in the distressing position of Rip Van Winkle, and are finding it difficult to piece together the confused threads of their hitherto comatose existence. There is just now more consternation within the ranks than confusion among the enemy. It is, however, hoped that, with a little more practice, they would learn to avoid the more blatant *gaucheries* of their platform manner. That, at least, is the impression I have gathered as the result of my conversations with some of the shining lights of the party.

I began with Mr. P. T. Rajan as he is easily the most accessible and agreeable of the ministers. As everybody knows, his hospitality is far more expansive than his politics. His only distraction during the course of our conversation was his pipe, which he lighted and put out with mechanical assiduity. By the way, he told me, very complacently I thought, that his addiction to it dated back from before the rise of Mr. Baldwin to fame, and that it was not due to a slavish imitation of that innocuous politician's secondary title to distinction. I then started the ball rolling by congratulating him on the elegance and facility of his polemic style, and quoted his memorable remark about the Burman's right to kick out the Indian as compensation for the British being kicked out of India. He smiled deprecatingly, but added that though public speaking was not his *forte*, he could manage it once in a while.

I then enquired about the Chief Minister's health, realising with some uneasiness that I should have done so at the beginning. I hoped he was progressing favourably.

"Thanks, yes," he replied, and added: "But you know, he wants to be, and to do too many things at once. Now-a-days, each one of the hobbies to which he is devoted is a life-time job. If only he would stick to one thing...but that's impossible. He's like Alexander, I believe,—always in search of new worlds to conquer!"

"It must be a rare privilege to have such a chief," I replied. "I suppose he will also do some propaganda as soon as he's well enough?"

"Not necessarily. He will contribute his share in his own way, as we in ours. We have speakers enough. There's Mr. A. R. Mudaliar who's a host in himself. As for propaganda, I think it is to be in the hands of paid-workers."



"Don't you think it would do more harm than good?"

"Why should it? The labourer is worthy of his hire, isn't he? And then, what about the Congress? Does it not also pay its workers?"

"Not in money, I think."

"In flattery, then, in lies and extravagant promises drawn on the future."

"If you put it that way, there's nothing to be said; but the public may think otherwise."

Altitudes—

by 'Lens'



"Not me! Haven't I sought this interview? Will you allow me to elucidate a few points?"

"Go ahead. I must warn you, though, that our election programme is not yet officially settled. Subject to that—"

"I quite understand. But first, may I know if Mr. F. E. James has joined your party?"

"What an absurd idea! Pray, who put it into your head?"

"Then, perhaps, your party has sought affiliation with the European Association?"

Mr. Rajan jumped up in anger.

"Look here, Mr.—"

"Lens," I said ingratiatingly.

"You may or may not be Lens, sir, but take care don't have to call you dense! If you are joking, all I can say is that it is not in good taste."

"Pardon me," I replied, "appearances are to blame, not I. I see Mr. James supports you at your meetings, and you support him in your views. In fact, you and your party-spokesmen, seem to agree with him on every political issue. Hence the doubt which, let me assure you, is shared by many others besides myself."

"O, I see! You mean our attitude about the safeguards, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"It's quite simple."

"Still, it requires clearing up, I think."

"But for the Congress, there would be no safeguards."

"That is, you think them bad, but would still support them?"

"We don't say that we *support* them."

"Then would you oppose them?"

"There will be no need to do either, if our party is in power."

"Don't you see, Mr. Rajan, that you can't have it both ways. Either they are just and necessary, or unnecessary and vicious; your logic seems to lead to the conclusion that they are just and vicious."

"O, if you come to that, what about the attitude of Congress towards the Communal Award?"

"That's the familiar *tu toque* argument. But two follies cannot save a country better than one. As for the Congress attitude to the Communal Award, at worst it is a clumsy attempt to placate our own distrustful countrymen. What we lose in logic, we gain in."

(Continued on page 28)

The Madras Flag—

by R. Jagannathan

Caricatures by Mali

THE annual General Body meeting of the South Indian Club, Simla, was notified to be held at 3 P.M. on Sunday, the 5th May. But, at 3 P. M. on that day the number of members assembled, including the President, the Secretary and the Treasury Benches, seemed to be less than the quorum. The President thereupon asked the Secretary to take a count of those present and it was found that they wanted a dozen more members. The Secretary directed a member of the Managing Committee to look out for some more members and bring them in quickly. The said Managing Committee member ordered the Club *chaprassi* to go to the houses of the nearer members and bring them at once whether they were in the middle of a rubber or Sunday seista. The combined efforts of the executive produced the quorum at 3.30 P.M.

The following is an unconfirmed report of the proceedings.

Mr. President:—"Order, order. Gentlemen, now that we have secured the quorum, I direct that we proceed with to-day's business. Before doing so, I have a pleasant duty....."

"May I rise on point of order, Mr. President?"

"Please do not interrupt me. Let me finish my observations and then you can raise your point."

"With due respect to you, sir, I submit that a point of order should have precedence over everything else."

"No, sir. Since we have not yet taken up any particular item on the agenda, I submit that no point of

order can arise at this stage. It can be raised only when the relevant item comes up."

"May I just explain, sir? My point of order is not with reference to any particular item on the agenda but the whole agenda itself. I am of opinion, sir, that this meeting is not duly constituted and is therefore unconstitutional....."

"We don't want your opinions. What's the point of order?" (This from another member.)

"I should be grateful if members do not carry on mutual altercations. They should address the Chair."

"I bow to your ruling, sir. When I was interrupted, I was saying that this meeting was unconstitutional. My reason is this. In the agenda paper you will find that the meeting was announced to be held at 3 P.M. I was here at 3 P.M. and so were you and some other members, but no meeting was held at that hour for want of quorum. This meeting, as everyone present here is aware, commenced at 3.30 P.M., and my submission is that this meeting is not the meeting of which due notice was given. On the other hand, the meeting of which due notice was given could not be held and was not held. I, therefore, hold that a fresh notice, as per rules, is necessary, in the absence of which no other meeting can be held to be valid or properly constituted."

"I desire to submit, sir, that there is absolutely no force in the point of order raised by the speaker who has just sat down. I maintain that it is the function of the President to declare the meeting open. If, in conformity

with the rules, he was unable to do so at 3 P. M. he was satisfied that the rules were complied with at 3.30 p.m., and therefore he did the right thing in opening the proceedings at that hour. It is a matter entirely within the discretion of the Chair and I move that we do proceed with the business of the day."

"I have no desire to seem unduly obstructive, but I have a feeling that there is some force in the point of order that has been raised. I, personally, hold an open mind on the question. All I desire is that we should not be convicted at a later date of having perpetrated constitutional irregularities, especially if they could be avoided. Otherwise, the prestige of the Club might be impaired."

Another member was on his legs.

"May I speak a few words, sir, that may not, at first sight, be strictly to the point. I propose to examine how far the Chair is competent to decide a matter of this nature. If my recollection is right, Justice Chitty, as reported in Blackwell's (or Blackney's, I forget the exact name at the moment) Law of Meetings, declared that the President of a meeting has his functions solely with respect to the specific items on the agenda. He has no jurisdiction whatever beyond the agenda. Now, sir, according to the agenda, the meeting should have been held at 3 p.m. I am not concerned with the reason why it was not held then. I confine myself strictly to the legal and constitutional issue. If the meeting was held, as it has been held, at 3.30 p.m., it was ostensibly an act done beyond the terms of the agenda. Therefore, I hold that in a matter where something has to be done apart from the terms of the agenda, the only competent authority to decide is the General Body of members. The paramountcy of the General Body is paramount and no power which it has vested in or delegated to the President can override its own."

"I remain unconvinced by the legal jugglery of my learned predecessor. Rules are rules and you cannot get away from them. Otherwise, why do you have them at all? Even the General Body cannot assemble whenever it chooses. What we must have is fresh notice. Let us, therefore, adjourn and come back after due notice has been given."

"Order, order. I have heard all sections of the House and am very grateful for the suggestions made.

Two questions have arisen, namely, the power of the President and the power of the General Body. I should like to observe that in all cases of points of order the Chair is the deciding authority and its decision is final. As regards the validity of the meeting, I agree that it should be placed beyond question, though personally I have no doubts at all. I now invite the General Body to affirm my action. May I put it in the form of a motion—"

"Resolved that this is a duly constituted meeting of the General Body."

The motion was carried.

"We shall now proceed to the items. The Secretary will read the Annual Report."

"I am sorry to interrupt, sir. I have to report a grave omission on the part of the Secretary. I find that I am the only unfortunate member of the Club who has not been supplied with a copy of the Report. It is a personal insult, sir, and I hereby enter my emphatic protest....."

"Will the member kindly hold on a minute? I am making enquiries."

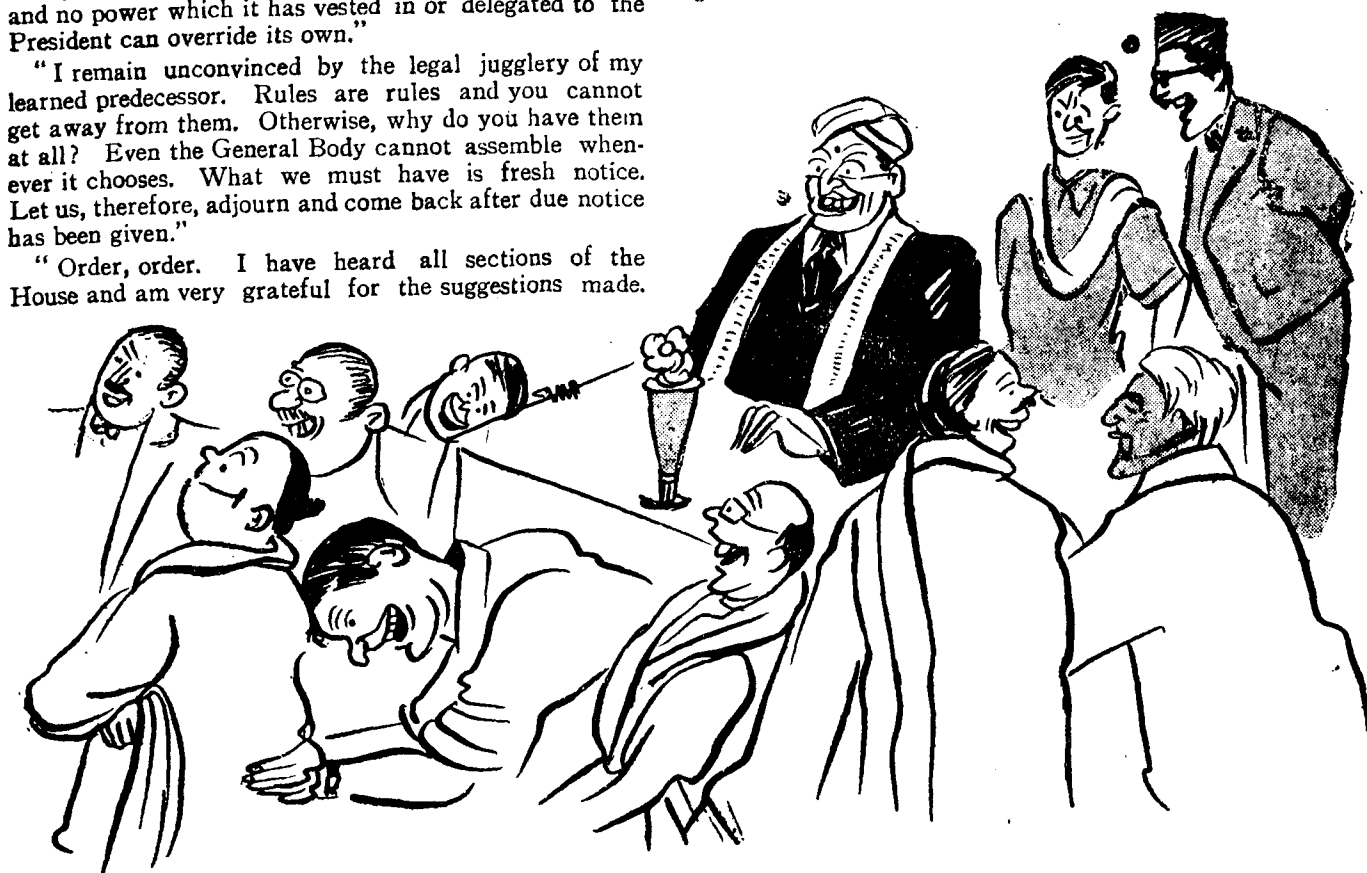
(To the Secretary)—How is it that a copy has not been supplied to him?"

"Just a minute, sir. I shall look up my papers..... (beaming with satisfaction) I have to point out that the honourable member has made a grave mis-statement. He has been supplied with a copy and here is his signature in token of receipt." (Laughter).

"Impossible, sir! I strongly resent the Secretary's remarks. It is an insulting insinuation. Let me see the signature."



"Item number six is



light refreshments, sir,"

"Here it is. I make a present of it to the member."
 "I am extremely sorry, sir. I find that my wife has signed and received the copy for me." (Loud laughter).

A voice:—"Will the insulted gentleman now proceed to enter his emphatic protest in another place?" (Renewed laughter).

"Gentlemen, let us be serious. I take it you have no objection to the adoption of the Annual Report. Shall we proceed to the next item,—accounts of the Club?"

"May I speak for a moment, sir?"

"Is it a point of order?"

"No, sir, but..."

"I cannot allow you to speak now. Wait till the Secretary has made his speech."

"I don't want to make any speech, sir. I have only a suggestion to make as regards the procedure."

"Well, go on, but be brief."

"My suggestion is, that before passing the accounts of the Club, we do proceed to the consideration of a matter which is of more urgent importance, but which unfortunately comes later in the agenda."

"Sir, I am against skipping over items to suit individual idiosyncrasies. I hold that all items are equally urgent and equally important."

"Why don't you hear his reasons? How can you come to a decision before hearing what he has to say?"

"I am afraid all this discussion is futile. Neither the member who brought forward the suggestion nor the President has any authority to vary the order of discussion. The General Body alone..."

A voice:—"Are you the General Body?"

Another voice:—"Are you?"

"Order, order. Members should address the Chair. Now, let me ask the gentleman to state his reasons for desiring a change in the order of business. What is the item you wish to take up now?"

"Item number 6, sir."

"I seem to have mislaid my copy. What is item number 6?"

"Item number 6 is light refreshments, sir." (loud and continued laughter).

"Does any member here object to light refreshments prior to passing the accounts?" (Voices in chorus—No, No, No.)

(Light refreshments were served and there was general liveliness and cheer among the members.)

"Order, order. Shall we proceed with the rest of the agenda?"

"Sir, I move that the rest of the items be taken as duly passed."

"That is irregular. We must take them up one by one."

(The agenda was finished without much ado.)

"We are now on the last item, any other matter that may be brought forward with the consent of the General Body."

"Sir, I propose a voty heart of thanks to the President and the outgoing Committee." (Laughter).

"Sir, I second it."

"Gentlemen, I have very little to say at this stage. A cynic once remarked that we Madrassis have no sense of unity. He put the thing rather epigrammatically. "One Madrassi, one Club. Two Madrassis, two Clubs. Three Madrassis, heaven knows how many Clubs!" We here in Simla have given the lie to that statement. Our capacity

for co-operation and joint action, as we have proved it during the past few years, is inexhaustible. My last word is therefore, an appeal to you to keep the Madras Flag flying on the heights of the Himalayas. (Cheers). Gentlemen, I now conclude the proceedings of the day." (Loud and prolonged cheers).

THE END

The Letters of Private Joyfull (Continued from page 19)

enough for the crowd to identify us, they cried "Jai!" and prayed for us.

Towards evening, the train drew up at a big siding. While the engine was being replenished, we discovered that the one frail telegraph-line had been at its work of organisation. A small detachment of soldiers was waiting with thousands of doses of anti-tetanus serum, which had been unobtainable at the starting-point. The soldiers had also prepared some tea for us, doubly grateful to parched throats; and they put aboard a supply of mineral-waters for the onward journey. There were cases of preserved food for the Hindu students, and for the Mohammedans, and the next day's rations for us, soldiers.

Until now the medical students were inclined to be shy of us, and the ones who were not shy were inclined to be stand-offish. However, a conversation cropped up about the anti-tetanus serum, and we gave our Army experience of the wholesale treatment of casualties. In the Army, every man with an open wound automatically gets an anti-tetanus injection, and whoever gives him it, marks a large 'T' on his forehead with indelible pencil, so that he will not get a second dose, which would be dangerous. The medical students thought this an ingenious and sensible system. Several old soldiers joined in, and gave other illustrations of routine and organisation, which seemed to impress the young men a good deal. They said they had no idea there was so much forethought and individual training in the Army.

"We imagined you fellows were rough and ignorant," remarked one of the students.

"Where did you get the idea?" I asked, curiously.

The young man blushed, and said that previously he had not come into close contact with us; but now he was glad to have the pleasure. One of us replied that we hoped they would all become famous specialists, whereat the young men blushed with pleasure.

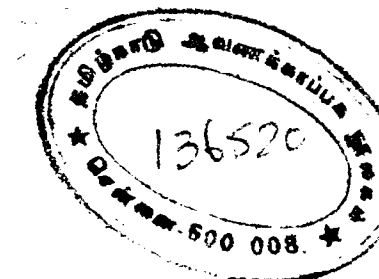
From then onwards, we enjoyed a lot of pleasant conversation on general topics, and I reflected on the difficulty there had been in coming to an understanding with these good and earnest young men. I wondered if it would be possible to start a Society for Better International Understandings. There would only have to be one rule. The members must promise to offer compliments to persons of all other nationalities, on sight. Persons who exchange compliments are soon at ease with each other. It would save any amount of awkwardness and distrust.

Meanwhile, the train was rushing on through the gathering darkness, and presently we tried to snatch some sleep, wondering what the morning would have in store for us.

Your Loving Son,
 OBEAH JOYFULL.

The Decorative Art

by 'Kumudini'



I read in one of Mr. Milne's plays about a husband and wife who meet after five years separation. The wife has passed thirty in the meanwhile, and she is naturally much worried about her weight and figure. The following conversation takes place between them.

Wife: Do you think I.....?

Husband: Not a day.

Wife: I was not thinking so much about days as...

Husband: Not an inch.

It is nice to have such an understanding husband who guesses without telling what one is worried about and assures one that all is well. But it is nicer not to have any such worries.

I am glad to say that the average Indian woman is free, quite free from worry of that sort. It is not because that she is so unusually gifted by nature that she is incapable of getting fat. It is not because that she does not want to appear attractive. It is simply because she has her own ideas of beauty, ideas of beauty which transcend the appeal of mere physical grace.

She also begins to lose her figure after a certain age, just like her sisters of the West. But whoever heard of her worrying over mere physical grace or trying to cultivate it! It is true she wants to look attractive, but are there not jewels! Her sparkling diamonds and pearls, her emeralds and rubies! Are there not clever goldsmiths who can make bangles and *addigais* for her! She gets them made, and she puts them on. Then she buys richgold-brocaded *sarees* and decks herself, and then she buys a cheap printed muslin bodice and puts it on as a finishing touch. There you are, or rather there she is. Is she not a most attractive

person? What matters a few pounds of extra flesh here and there?

Sometimes I have wondered why she puts on thousands and thousands of rupees worth of jewels, and hundreds of rupees worth of *saree*, and then only a cheap muslin print for *ravikkai**. Surely the reason is not that the climate makes it impossible for her to wear any but light clothes. The silk *saree* she wears usually weighs pounds and is about as comfortable as a quilt. It is not because the muslin agrees in any particular, in texture, design or colour, with her *saree* or jewels. It does not. Still, muslin and voile have come into fashion and that is all there is to it, I suppose.

It is only in keeping that along with the loss of her physical grace, her *saree* also should in time lose its graceful folds. Let it; it is costly and its colour arresting enough, so she just drapes it round her figure anyhow.

The pumpkin, I think, if it is draped in a pillow-cover, will try most successfully to imitate her gracefulness.

There is an old proverb in Tamil, which says: "You must begin to decorate only when you have the wall ready." But we have forgotten the wall, *i.e.*, the background, at all. We just pile on the decorations, without caring in the least whether the wall is suitable or not.

There is no exact word to denote physical grace in current use in Tamil. It has gone out of use, along with the appreciation of physical grace. If I want to write about it, I will have to borrow the word from old Tamil or Sanskrit, and the chances are that nobody will understand what I mean.

THE END

* Bodice

The Fakir's Rod

by 'Embusque'

Illustrated by Mali

66 **W**ELL, what are you going to show me?" cried the *sahib* in patience.

"Give me a rupee, your honour," begged the fakir.

"First let me see your magic."

"Only four annas, your honour——"

"Bah! Nonsense!" shouted the *sahib*. "You are a wretched imposter. Get out of the compound!"

"Sir, you must give me something. Already I have said some spells. I must complete the ceremony." The fakir indicated where his rod stood in the ground, with a circle drawn about it in the dust. It was an ordinary

fakir's iron rod, two cubits in length, with a spiked hook at one end.

"If that's all that's troubling you—" muttered the *sahib*. He strode forward, and kicked the rod out of the ground.

"Do not touch, *sahib*!" screamed the fakir.

"Bah!" cried the *sahib*. He picked up the rod, and bent it across his knee. It was badly-hammered wrought iron, and snapped into two pieces. The *sahib* threw the pieces to the ground. "Get out!" he shouted.

"A curse!" howled the fakir. "A curse on the broken rod! From this moment, misfortune to him who touches it, and to all who come in contact with it, until the hour of my death!"

"Pah, religious mania," muttered the *sahib*. "A psychopathic case. Get out!"

The fakir departed, still shrieking curses.

The gardener clucked over the disturbance to the neat gravel of the pathway. He obliterated the scratched



".....a Rupee, your honour"

circle, and patted the gravel to smoothness. Then he picked up the broken rod, and went to throw it out of the compound.

As he reached the low boundary-wall, there was an angry hiss. It was the old cobra that lived in the melon-bed. A sharp fang buried itself in the man's unshod ankle. With a scream of fear, he ran to his hut. The *memsahib* came with ligatures, permanganate-of-potash, and cauterisers. But nothing was of any avail. Before evening, the gardener was dead.

The broken rod lay where it had fallen, just outside the compound-wall.

Hari and Jaya were playing in the long grass outside the *sahib's* compound. Suddenly Hari gave a shout of excitement. "Look what I have found!" he cried.

He held up a piece of iron rod, about a foot in length. One end was curved and spiked, the other end broken and jagged.

"Let us play!" cried Hari. "I am a soldier, and this is my sword."

They played for a while, and their adventures led them back to the bazaar. Jaya became a terrible ten-headed demon, and Hari a noble warrior. At last the demon was cornered in a recess against an unoccupied shop. With a shout of triumph, the warrior leapt towards his vanquished opponent, brandishing his victorious sword.

Jaya gave a terrible shriek. The jagged iron, swinging too far, tore her cheek and gouged her pretty eyes. In a moment, all was horror and pity. The ambulance came clanging through the crowd, and the poor sobbing little mortal was borne compassionately away.

Hari had fled in terror. The broken rod lay disregarded at the threshold of the booth.

Behind the closed shutters of the booth, two burning-eyed youths sat in semi-darkness, whispering over a small, heavy, strongly-corded box.

"We must hurry, brother," said one. "The Enemy passes through to-morrow."

"The cords are tied so tightly," complained the other, wrenching at them. At last the cords were unbound, but the box was still strongly fastened.

"We must have something to break open the box," said the first conspirator. He peered cautiously through the shutters, and opened the door. At his feet was a short piece of hooked iron. "The Mother has sent it!" he whispered, his eyes gleaming fanatically.



".....let me see your magic!"

The Witches of Killimangalam

by McNair

"Have a care, brother," said his companion, when they were once more sitting over the box. "Our comrade who is learned in Chemistry, warned us of this fulminate of mercury."

"It is a powerful explosive indeed, O brother!" exulted the other. "There is enough in this box to blow the place to atoms. It is an extremely unstable substance. It must not be submitted to shocks while we fill the bombs."

"Then open the box gingerly," admonished his companion.

The other inserted the spike of the fakir's rod into the crack of the lid. He pressed firmly, and worked the spike to and fro. The lid did not budge. With an impatient word, he picked up a billet of wood, and struck the rod a sharp blow, to drive the spike into the box.

There was a deafening explosion. The booth disappeared in instantaneous, ghastly annihilation. Every window within a quarter of a mile was shattered. The neighbouring houses began to burn. It was three hours before the fire-fighters had the blaze under control. Then, where the booth had been, could be seen a gaping black hole, surrounded on all sides by smoking ruins.

The fakir's rod, carried high into the air by the explosion, now lay in the middle of the Grand Trunk Road, a furlong away. It was seared and twisted, but the spike was still sharp.

The fakir sat under a tree beside the Grand Trunk Road. In the early-morning light, he saw a party of police marching towards him. At intervals, one of the constables was detached from the party, and posted beside the road.

The posse halted close by. "This will be your place, Ram Lall," said the Sub-Inspector. "Be sure the way is clear when you hear the whistle. And send that fakir away."

Constable Ram Lall knew the fakir, and was afraid of him. He contented himself with ordering the fakir to depart, in loud officious tones. "The *Burra Sahib* passes this way," cried Ram Lall, "and his sight should not be offended by such as you."

The fakir ignored the constable, and the latter solaced himself with a surreptitious *bidi*.

After many minutes, shrill whistles echoed along the road. Ram Lall repeated the signal, glanced hastily around, and drew himself stiffly to attention.

The great dark-coloured saloon-car came rushing along the highway. When it was but a few paces from the constable, there was a sudden loud report. The car skidded, swerved, nearly overturned, and at last with squealing brakes lurched to a standstill on the soft border of the road, missing the tree by a handbreadth.

Ram Lall rushed towards the wrecked car. The *Burra Sahib* stepped out. The constable came to a trembling salute.

"Is no one injured?" asked the *Burra Sahib*.

"No one, Your Excellency," said the chauffeur, signalling the following car. His Excellency was swiftly transferred to the other vehicle and the chauffeur and the constable were left standing beside the wreck.

"Don't look so terrified, constable," said the chauffeur. "It is only a tyre-burst. Though how I got a burst with

these tyres—Good God!" With a shaking finger he indicated the body of the fakir underneath the car.

"I didn't see him!" cried the chauffeur. "How did he get there?" Carefully they lifted out the body. The fakir was quite dead.

"He was sitting before this tree, and the car crushed him," quavered the constable.

"Heavens, what a ghastly affair!" muttered the chauffeur. "And here is the cause of it all." From the torn tyre he took a twisted piece of iron that had once been part of a fakir's rod.

"It is a strange piece of metal," said the constable. "It is not part of any ordinary implement. What could it have been?"

"Whatever it was, it will do no more harm," said the chauffeur. "Nor will that poor fellow."

And, prompted by some obscure instinct, he placed the twisted rod in the hand of the dead fakir.

THE END

Attitudes From High Altitudes—(Contd. from page 21)

internal peace and national strength. What do you hope to gain by placating the European community, without any countervailing advantage to the national cause?"

"That sounds mighty fine, but you know perfectly well that the safeguards are due to the wild talk of repudiation of debts."

"A demand for the examination of the debt position is not repudiation."

"But it may lead to it."

"Ay, that's the rub: and the implication of that is understood by everybody concerned. After all, what's there wrong in asking for accounts of a creditor?—specially when he's so touchy on the subject?"

"It is not such a simple affair, as you think. What about the incalculable services rendered by Britain to this country?"

"We are prepared to pay for them too."

"That's exactly what our party stands for."

"Then why didn't the British Government take you at your word? They are apparently more afraid of the Congress threat than reassured by your premature complaisance. Don't you see that you are being used as a handy stick to beat the Congress dog with? Is that flattering to your self-esteem?"

"That doesn't worry us in the least. Here we are, and here we would like to stay."

"That has always been understood. But you don't seem to be very happy even within the family."

"Who told you that?"

"Sir A. P. Patro, for instance. The other day, he characterised your party in the council as a set of mugs."

"O, Patro, he's impossible, I tell you. He seems anxious to play the part of the *enfant terrible* of the party, though he's old enough to know better. I don't know what to do with him. I must speak to the chief about him."

"I wish to speak to him too," I said, and added by way of a friendly, parting suggestion: "The immediate need of your party seems to me to be saved from its—friends!"

MANY stories are current about the witches of Killimangalam in Malabar. Even the scoffers, if they see the place after nightfall will be inclined to believe the stories which they would have pooh-poohed a few hours earlier. Not that the place has anything peculiar about it. It is very like any other, excepting for the existence of a heath about 3 miles from end to end. This heath is the scene of most of the stories; it is the 'haunted' region.

Once two travellers reached Killimangalam village about dusk. One was called Narayana Bhattathiri and the other Manthottam Vasudevan Nambudiri. They were proceeding to Thirumanur temple, famous for its magnificent architecture, and the yearly festival. These two Brahmits were in fact, in a haste to reach Thirumanur before the 7 days' festival began. They were determined not to miss any of the fun if they could help it.

They were neighbours, and had started early in the morning to cover the 45 miles that lay between their homes and the temple. Tireless 'trekers' that they were, they had been at it for many hours, only having stopped twice for their meals.

Now when dusk fell, they reached Killimangalam village. The notorious heath lay beyond it after which came another village and then Thirumanur. Roughly twelve miles more. They decided to continue on their journey.

They bathed, went to the small temple in the village and had their evening prayers. In the temple itself dinner had been arranged for them. They dined, took out their *pansupari* case and mildly flirted with the temple flower-girl.

It was nearly 9 o'clock when they at last started. There was a moon. The fine dinner they had, had put them in very good humour. They were not feeling nervous as they approached the heath. Of course they knew its reputation. Even in their distant homes they had heard about the things that were supposed to happen to late travellers on the heath. Moreover in the village which they had just left, the temple priest, an old man and the flower girl had tried to persuade them to stay in the village for the night. They had recounted the stories with minute and hair-raising details and any ordinary man would have hesitated to walk on the heath with these stories in his mind. But our heroes were not these ordinary men. They were intrepid and cool. It did occur to them to stay the night in the village but it was not fear that made them think about it but the flower girl. Especially the younger man, Vasudevan Nambudiri, had cast many a longing glance at the girl. The older man however had put his foot down and they had started. Not that the older man was

proof against the girl's charms. He had already made plans of the return journey and a night's stay in the village, giving his companion the slip. He was a sly one, was Bhattathiri.

As they neared the heath the stories which they had heard recently were present before their mind's eyes, the stories garnished with the fruit of the teller's imagination. They emerged out of a wood on to the heath. It was exactly 10 o'clock by the stars. An owl tooted behind them in the wood. Crickets chirruped. Glow worms flew about. In the distance jackals howled.

Both of them had been looking at each other and over their shoulders for the last half an hour. An uneasiness had crept in their manner. Their flow of small talk had ceased.

"Have you got your copy of *Narayaniya** with you?" suddenly asked Bhattathiri of the other.

"No, why did you ask?"

"Oh, nothing."

For five minutes they were silent. "I don't like this," said Bhattathiri.

"Which?" asked the younger man.

"Why, all this. This heath and—and—"

"Now, now don't be fanciful, Bhattathiri. You mean to tell me that you believed all those old wives' tales?" Nambudiri laughed.

But there was a note of anxiety in his laugh and words. He was bluffing it, Bhattathiri could see, and he liked the youngster for it. Well, after all they were nearly half way through the heath.

The moon went behind a bank of clouds. This new darkness coming at this time increased their uneasiness. Both felt they would have done better to have stayed in the temple. That flower girl too.

All on a sudden Bhattathiri stopped. "Look! Isn't that a house? Looks pretty decent too! I think, Manthottam, we had better go in."

"But weren't we told the heath was 3 miles long and that there weren't any houses on the way?"

"Yes, but I think we have lost our way. We have been walking for an hour—I should think," said Bhattathiri.

"Well, what are you thinking about? Let us decide something. You are not asleep by any chance, are you?" continued Bhattathiri.

"No, I was thinking of that flower-girl," replied Vasudevan Nambudiri. "But let us go up to the house by all means. And if I am not mistaken, there is someone, or rather there are someones at the gate."

Our friends made a bee line for the building. As they neared it, they were amazed to perceive that it was a luxurious mansion, and that the people standing at the

* Prayer book

gate were two young women. It was strange that women wandered outside their gates at such a late hour. Were they women of ill repute? Whatever they were it could not be denied that they were beautiful.

Nambudiri quickened his pace and the other followed. When they came quite close to the women they could see that they were wrong in this estimate. These were ladies, gently bred and presumably of a noble house. They had not evidently known about the approach of strangers. When they realised it they made a movement as if to bolt inside. Nambudiri, however, was not the man to allow it.

"Pardon. Could you tell us how far it is to Thirumanur?"

The girls hesitated and at last the younger one spoke shyly, haltingly.

"About twelve miles."

"Twelve miles! Good gracious! I am afraid we have lost our way then. What do you say, Bhattathiri, don't you think we had better complete our journey to-morrow?"

Turning to the girls again he asked, "Can you direct us to a place where we can stay the night?"

Again came the timid reply.

"There isn't any house in the neighbourhood. This is the only one. Uncle's whim," she finished in explanation.

Oh, there was an uncle in the case, then. Uncles were bad people especially when you thought the nieces were pretty, mused Vasudevan.

"Perhaps we could see your uncle," he ventured.

The younger one was the better looking, he decided. She was more lively for one thing.

"Uncle has gone to Thirumanur," she said.

"Good," said Nambudiri and Bhattathiri to themselves.

"Dear, dear, what shall we do now?" said Nambudiri. "Is there an out-house where we can sleep?" he asked boldly. "You see the heath seems to be haunted or something. We are not afraid, of course, but you know—"

The sisters, (they seemed such) were whispering together. The younger one again spoke, "We shouldn't advise you to cross the heath at this time of the night. If you will deign to honour our humble abode—"

Well mannered too, in addition to being beautiful. Better and better.

The girls walked on showing the way. They went in. The household seemed to be already asleep. The elder girl made a faint motion to Bhattathiri to follow her and went up a flight of stairs. Vasudevan went behind the younger girl.

Bhattathiri entered a room, sumptuously furnished with a luxurious bed which started him yawning the moment he saw it. He looked at the girl. He put his *pansupari* case and his *Narayaniya* under the pillow and laid himself on the bed.

The girl lingered, then slowly, dreamily approached his bed.

"You seem to be interested in books, your holiness. What is the book underneath your pillow?"

"Oh, that isn't literature."

"Any naughty book? I would love to see it."

"Oh no, it is only *Narayaniya*.

"I think it will slant the pillow. Hadn't you better place it on that shelf?"

"Oh, I don't mind. I generally sleep with it under my pillow." The girl seemed to be meditating.

Out of the next room suddenly a curious sound issued—like that of wood striking against wood. A non-metallic rattling. Bhattathiri pricked his ears.

"What is that?" he asked of the girl.

"That must be my sister and your friend playing at dice."

"What a time for a game of dice! And among such—such—surroundings! I never knew Manthottam was so very interested in dice."

"Probably my sister's influence," said the girl. "But let us have *pansupari*. I am afraid I haven't any. If you can spare me some—"

"Oh yes. I feel like one myself," agreed Bhattathiri. He took out his bundle containing *pansupari* and *Narayaniya* and undid it.

"You can place that book on that shelf," suggested the girl again.

"Don't worry. If you are not convinced it is *Narayaniya* and think it is a naughty book, I shall read out—"

"No!" almost shouted the girl.

"Is it possible you haven't read it yourself? You sound as if you think you will be bored. Oh, it is great stuff," and without opening the book Bhattathiri started reciting aloud the first verse of the sacred text.

The girl at his side shrieked. He felt as if something hit him on his head and he lost consciousness.

With a groan Bhattathiri opened his eyes. His vision fell on palmyra leaves. He tried to remember where he was and what he was doing there. Like a wave, the events of the night passed in his mind. What had happened? He remembered having begun reciting *Narayaniya* and then he had lost consciousness; but not before he had heard that awful cry, that howl which the girl let out. A witch! That was what the girl was. Both of them.

But hang it, why was he on top of a palmyra tree? So the mansion was a palm tree! Cutting and bruising himself all over and very nearly killing himself, Bhattathiri climbed down.

What about Vasudevan? Ah, there was the other palm tree—Vasudevan's 'room'. And these two palms were the only vegetation on the heath. But where was Vasudevan? He couldn't be seen anywhere. Had he run away leaving him? Then Bhattathiri looked at the foot of the palm and with a feeling of horror, a sense of nausea, he found the hairy, blood-stained skull and the pale bones of a human being.

He remembered the rattling sound he had heard—bones being crunched.

God! His friend! Was that Vasudevan? But why was he himself spared. Why did the witch who was with him leave him alive? Then he remembered. Vasudevan had told him he hadn't the *Narayaniya* with him. And he had. The witch had tried to make him put it away!

If he had done it!

THE END

READERS' FORUM

Auntie
Replies

DEAR MR. "LIVING CREATURE",

I have pleasure in sending an advance copy of my reply to your letter, as it will appear in the magazine.

As is often the case with the serious letters I receive, yours is a problem that time alone will cure. I do hope you will keep pegging away. Sooner or later you will find a niche in life where your integrity will be valued. It is very hard to face the world with a burden of debt; but you must regard this as part of the early struggle which all of us experience in our younger days. In your middle years, when you have won a modest but secure place for yourself, you will look back on your present difficulties with far more complacency than you can feel at present.

Don't lose heart, dear chap. A good man is never kept down for long. You carry the seeds of success in your character; cultivate them, and make up your mind that you are going to win through. You have enterprise, which is a precious gift that will carry you far.

I have taken this view of your case, because I'm sure that you will fulfil yourself far better by taking an active part in life, than by withdrawing from it.

With sincere good wishes,
AUNTIE AWFUL.

Here is Auntie's advice to a young man in trouble, earnestly sought, as earnestly given. Behind that veneer of frivolous mirth, Auntie has a large, noble heart which throbs with sympathy for the lowly and unfortunate. Write to her if you are in trouble and get the benefit of her experience.

(Concluded)

AFTER a year or two, morning dawned. With the first beams of light I arose. All was silent: no one stirred. Stealthily I crept through the house to the front door. Cautiously I opened it and stayed for a moment, listening. Still no sound of movement from the other inmates of the house. Leaving the door open, I fled into the town. Through the main street I ran without slackening pace, although my breath soon began to get short. Fortunately the street was empty of people, otherwise the spectacle of a soul, in a state of nudity, tearing along at its utmost speed, might have brought immediate disaster to the soul in question.

Beyond the town, field after field stretched before me. One after the other I left behind me. Other fields came into view and yet others, extending in an apparently unbroken line to the far horizon. A hedge rose in front of me. Despairingly, I gathered together all my remaining forces and leaped over it. A deep pit lay on the other side. As I fell, light and life went out of me.

When my senses returned I found myself lying on a rough cot in the main street of the town I had hoped to leave far behind me. A number of people were gathered round, engaged in throwing buckets of water over me. The buckets were being passed hand to hand along a line from a nearby pond. The odour of the liquid and its viscosity were far from pleasant. I sat up and begged for a respite. On this, the crowd ceased their ministrations, and opened out to form a lane. Up this lane walked Grisiphetha.

"Hallo!" I groaned, "you again!"

"Of course," he acknowledged, "you show a poor sense of your obligations in trying to leave me so unceremoniously. I am still, unfortunately, to a certain extent, responsible for you. In any case, there are immigration laws in force on this planet, and the penalties for their infringement are fairly drastic. You'd better come along and have a bath, and then we'll go to the office. And don't forget the boiling-oil bath I promised you, young man. You'd better behave yourself."

I had a bath and a good rub down, and then felt slightly better, although my head and back were sore. Also, a certain amount of the aroma of the previous water-cure persisted in clinging to me. I begged to be provided with some clothes.

"Nothing doing," said Grisiphetha. "For one thing, none of these people will issue clothes for you until you are admitted as one of themselves. They are all afraid of what they call a 'surcharge'. For another thing, you are bad enough to cart along as it is, and if we have to leave this place, which heaven forbid! I'll be hanged if I'll also have your beastly rags fluttering all over me."

We went to the office in due course. We were admitted, without remark, by the care-taker of the previous night, and handed over to the care of an office-boy. The latter led us to a sumptuously furnished apartment presided over by a strict-looking elderly gentleman dressed in cloth of gold.

"Applicant for admission to Venus," explained Grisiphetha briefly, though somewhat mendaciously, since he was doing the applying, not I.

The presiding official looked me over for few minutes, then:

"You ought to know better, Grisiphetha," he said, "than to bring here people like that. How can I possibly admit him? You are surely aware of our rules. To gain admission to Venus, the form of the applicant must be symmetrical, and in full accordance with the standards laid down by the illustrious lady, after whom we have the honour and the good fortune to be named."

"And," he continued, as if that were not in itself a sufficient reason for his rejection, "it has been reported to me that this individual has been gallivanting around the neighbourhood, entirely unclothed, to the detriment of the propriety and the morals of the legitimate inhabitants. It's no good, Grisiphetha, take him away."

Dejected of mien, we walked out of the office. Outside we halted for a short time while Grisiphetha considered the matter in all its bearings. Eventually he decided to try Jupiter on the off-chance.

"It's a very poor chance, mind you," he said doubtfully. "Jupiter is reserved as a habitation wholly and solely for people of genius. No others are admitted. However, we may possibly be able to persuade them that you are a genius. We'll try it. Just wait here for half an hour while I go and get a change. I left a set of robes and a halo with the dhoby when I was last here, and I think they ought to be ready by now."

He departed, and I was left to amuse myself as best I could, or even to provide amusement for others. Seemingly the latter, for, I was soon the cynosure of a grinning crowd.

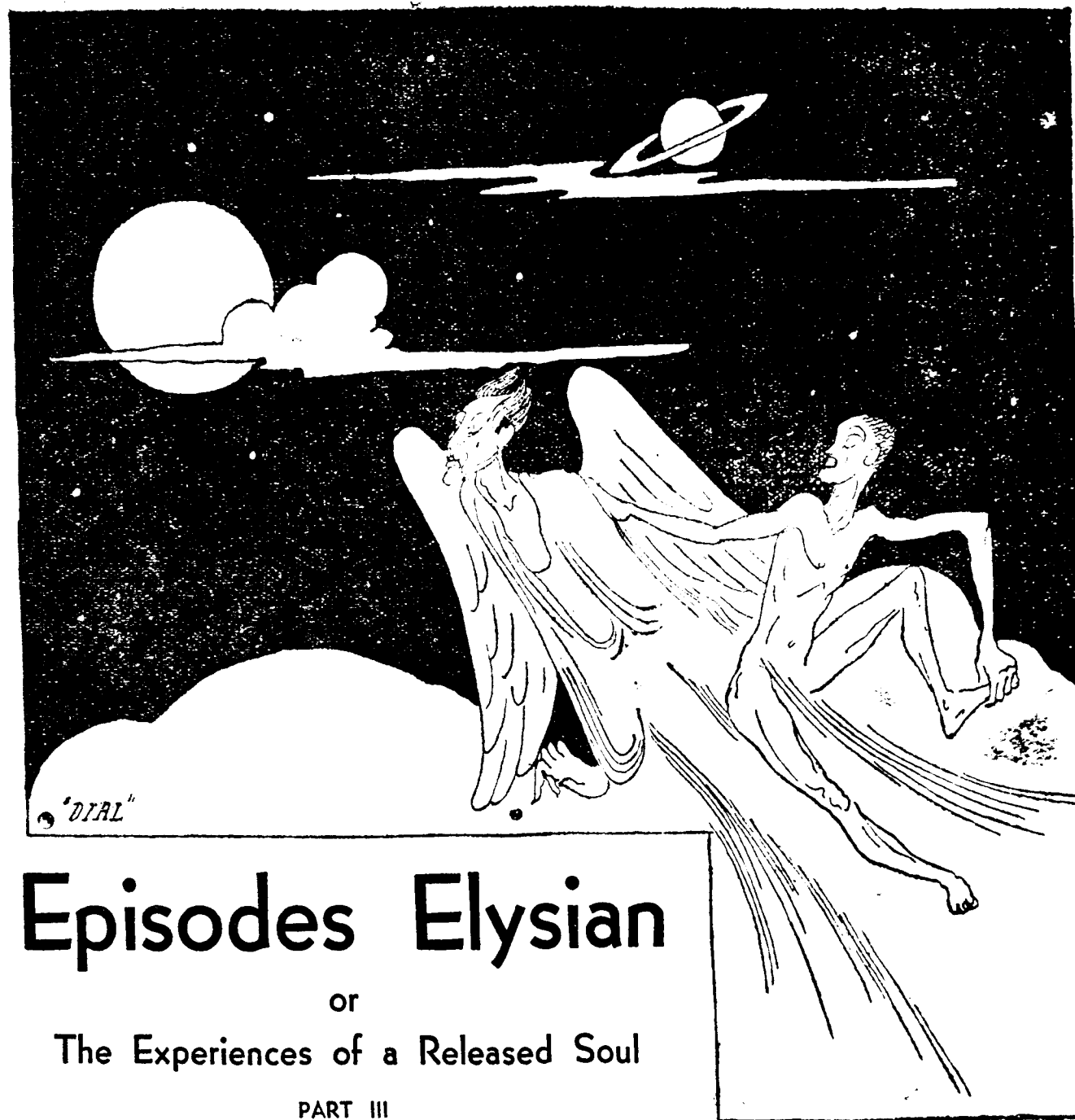
"Look at his legs," said one, "did you ever see the like of them? Cheek of the fellow coming to a place like this!"

"Pigeon-breasted, isn't he?" scoffed another.

"Why, the man's got curvature of the spine!" grossly exaggerated a third.

And thus was the ball of ribald criticism tossed to and fro between them. Dignified silence appeared to me to be the only attitude I should maintain. Despite my exasperation, I maintained it. At length Grisiphetha again made his appearance, now spruced up to beat the band. Again, I hung lovingly to his neck, and we shook the dust of Venus off our feet, and set out on our further travels.

Now, the distance to Jupiter, far, far exceeded that of any of our previous journeys. All the time I was compelled to hang round Grisiphetha's neck. Of gravity and its effects, there seemed to be none. Nevertheless, my arms were soon in a continual state of cramp. An embrace is all very well, but, if done with a view to enjoyment, it should be indulged in only occasionally. Even then it should last but a brief moment. As it was, I can assure you that any attractions Grisiphetha and I had ever possessed for each other, had by this time entirely evaporated. But for the prospect of the fall, which might have been my share of the result, I could cheerfully have bitten him. With my face pressed against his chest, indeed, the temptation was all but



Episodes Elysian

or

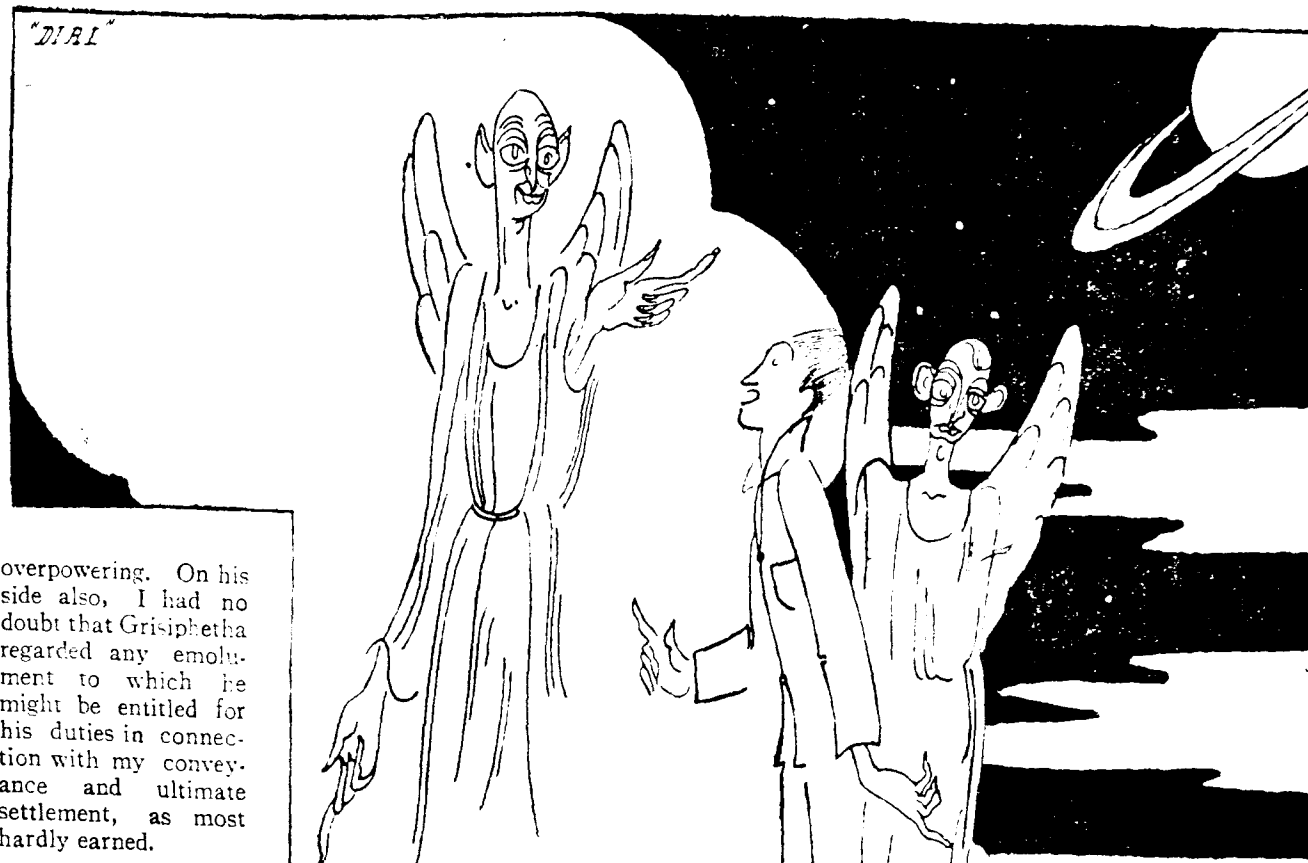
The Experiences of a Released Soul

PART III

One must jump a lot of hurdles before one can reach heaven. So said a sporting clergyman. How true that remark is, is amply borne out by this poor soul's adventures. It goes on and on and up and up like a certain contemporary politician, and at last, bitten by dogs in outer space, comes plump down to Earth.—Ed.

by E. L. Shipman

Illustrations by 'Dial'



overpowering. On his side also, I had no doubt that Grisiphetha regarded any emolument to which he might be entitled for his duties in connection with my conveyance and ultimate settlement, as most hardly earned.

Nathless—as they were wont to say in days of yore—all things, good and bad, come sometime or other to an end, and our trip proved to be no exception to the general rule.

We landed on the planet Jupiter some days after our departure from Venus—or was it some weeks, or months, or even years? Time is, after all, relative to one's environment. And the days of Jupiter are lengthy days, while outer space is timeless. It was the middle of the day or thereabouts. The heat was greater than any I had ever known before, or ever wish to know again. Save for a small group of office buildings near by, the place appeared to me to be one huge desert, with gaping cracks and ravines scarring its surface, evidently caused by the heat. Despite the protracted period of my loving embrace, I was compelled still, for a time, to cling to Grisiphetha, as every attempt to put my feet on the ground seemed but to invite the instant shrivelling of my toes.

"After all," I thought, "boiling-oil can't be a great deal worse than this. Even boiling-lead might come within the region of comparison."

My musings then took another channel.

"I thought you said they sent all the geniuses here?" I said to Grisiphetha, following the bent of my latest idea.

"It's no good Grisiphetha, take him away."

"So they do," he replied.

"Why?"

"Well, geniuses usually have such a conceited idea of their own importance, and of the tremendous value of their brains, that nobody else can live comfortably anywhere near them."

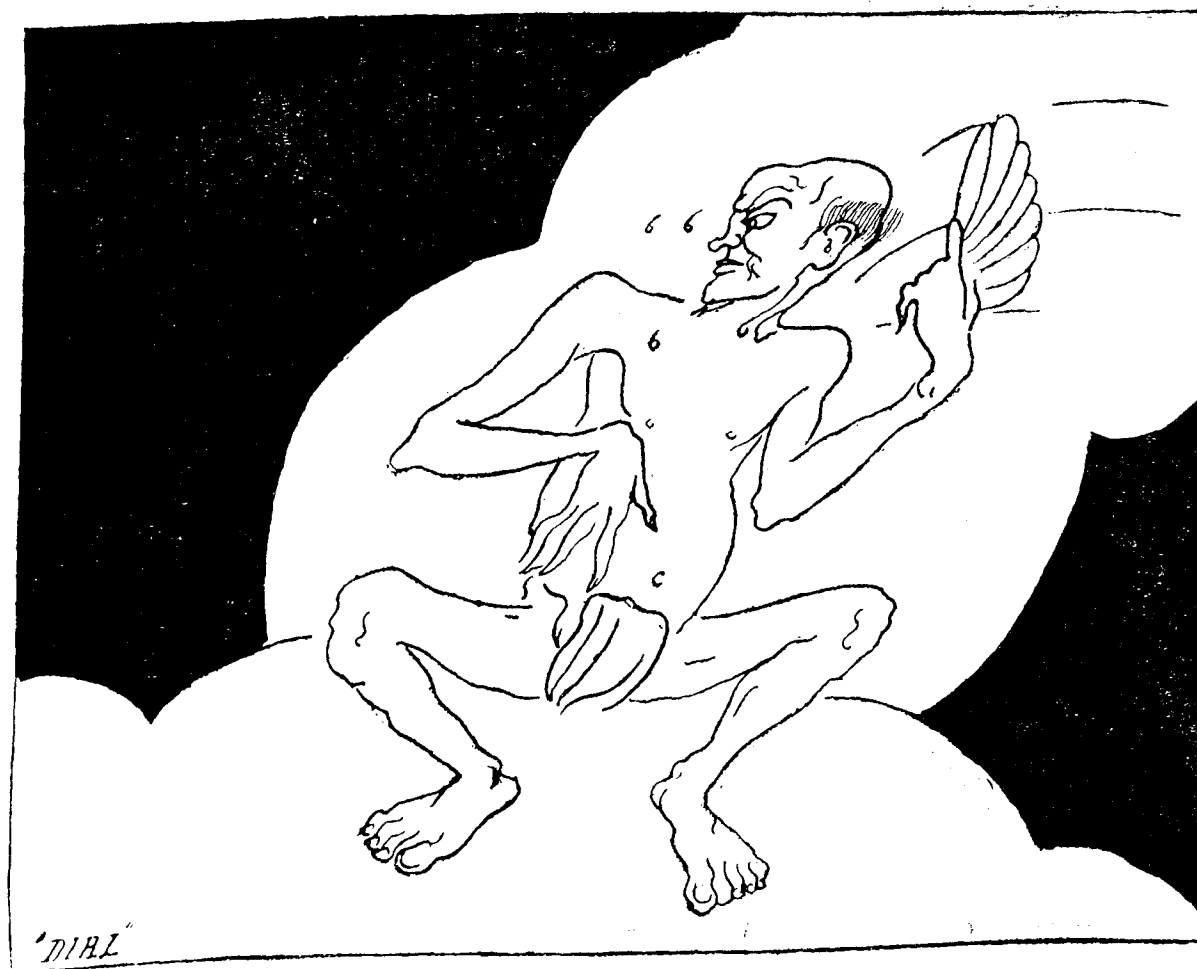
"Well?"

"They are, therefore, sent to Jupiter, where they are obliged to hop about all the time to keep their feet from burning. They get very little time to think of anything else but their material woes."

We made our way to the office. When we reached its porch, the comparative coolness of the floor enabled me very thankfully to release my grip of Grisiphetha.

The office door was already open. Probably to get the benefit of any little breezes that might be hanging around. We entered without let or hindrance. A large-headed individual, clad only in a lion-cloth, sat in the inner sanctum, fanning himself with a large oyster-shell.

"Genius?" he grunted, rather than asked.



A large headed individual, clad only in a lion cloth.....

"Supposed to be," replied Grisiphetha, "though I don't absolutely guarantee it. You'd better examine him to make sure."

"Too hot," said the swell-headed individual. "Get out. No room here, anyway."

"Well," said Grisiphetha to me, as we stood once more in the porch of the office, "I've tried about every place there is. Saturn is absolutely the last chance you get."

"What about Uranus and Pluto?"

"We haven't started colonising them yet."

"What is likely to happen after they also get filled up, as I suppose they must eventually?"

"Oh, there are plenty of other constellations, and some of them have got a greater number of planets than this one. I don't know why I should take the trouble to give you all this information. On the principle, I suppose, that the occupant of the condemned cell is entitled to every consideration before he passes out of his cell for the last time."

Saturn and the night approached together, neck and neck. The night won the race. We dropped gently to the ground. A moment or two we stood thus. Then there came the baying of a hound, followed by a second, a third, a fourth and finally a chorus of unearthly howls. A pack of gigantic hounds burst forth from the surrounding darkness and attacked us. One fastened on to

Grisiphetha's wing, another to his leg. A third tried for my throat, but I instinctively clung to Grisiphetha, again hiding my face against his chest. Grisiphetha soared rapidly into the air, frantically beating his wings until the last hound dropped to the ground with a sickening thud.

Up and up soared Grisiphetha, and still up and up. At last he seemed to become aware of the incubus still attached, limpet-like, to his neck. With a strength hardly believable, he tore loose my arms and cast me from him with all his might.

Down, down, down, down I fell.

"Drink this," said the nurse, "I suppose you are feeling a little sick. That is the result of the anaesthetic." "Anaesthetic?" I moaned, "the anaesthetic should have been given to the hounds, not to me."

"To what hounds?" she asked sympathetically. "I'm afraid you've been dreaming. Where do you think you are, anyway?"

"I'm not very sure," I said, "but the last I remember, I thought I was falling down from Saturn."

"Well," was the reassuring reply, "don't let that worry you. This is Madras, not Saturn, and you are in your own little bed, getting on nicely after your operation."

"Oh!" I remarked weakly, and turned over to sleep again.

THE END



XXXVIII

A READER has noticed Auntie's apparent proficiency in two or three European languages. "How did this come about?" enquires the observant youth. "Did you take courses of study in these languages?"

Auntie did, my dears. It all arose out of her first trip abroad, when she was quite a girl. With her old school-friend, Gabitha Gumboil, she decided to make a visit to Paris.

Frenchmen are very gallant, and at every turn there was some gentleman who came forward, bowing and raising his hat, to assist the two English *demoiselles* in the difficulties arising out of their ignorance of the language. And so Auntie and her friend made their way to Paris, surmounting all the perils of the journey with the innocence of babes in the wood. Certainly, they made their little mistakes, but they soon picked up the more elementary rules. For instance, they learned that young ladies must not enter the quaint little iron structures in the streets, labelled '*Hommes*'.

It was not until the hotel was reached, that their troubles really commenced. The first evening, the two girls went down to dinner, and were confronted with a menu enumerating over thirty dishes. Not wishing to display ignorance, dear Gabitha pointed to the first entry on the card. The waiter bowed, and brought some soup.

It was very nice soup, and there was plenty of it. Auntie and Gabitha were rather hungry, so they took large portions, and consumed the soup with much appreciation. Then Gabitha pointed to the second item on the menu.

The waiter looked surprised, and brought two large helpings of another kind of soup. Auntie and Gabitha were a bit perplexed, but they disposed of the dish. By that time, they felt rather full. "We must make sure that we do not order any more soup," said Auntie; and Gabitha agreed. Thinking to strike something solid, she pointed to the sixth item of the menu.

This time the waiter looked fairly startled, but with true Gallic politeness he bowed, and brought some more

soup. Accepting their fate with calm dignity, Auntie and Gabitha struggled through the third plateful.

"I am afraid I cannot eat any more; my corsets feel tight!" gasped Auntie. Those were the days when every young lady had a sixteen-inch waistline, and a thirty-two inch bust.

"Let us miss all the set dishes, and finish with a little pastry," agreed Gabitha. And she pointed to the very last item on the menu.

The waiter stared at her as if she were mad; but, still preserving his respectful demeanour, he departed to fulfil the order. Presently he came back, bringing two tooth-picks!

After that experience, Auntie decided to learn some foreign languages.

A.H. (Penang). Thank you, my dear; but the magazine did not quote the verse quite correctly. Auntie's definitive version is as follows,

*The rain descends upon the just,
And also on the unjust fellas.
But chiefly on the just, because,
The unjust steal their umbrellas.*

This is a versification of the well-known proverb which describes how God, in his impartiality, sends the rain equally on the just and the unjust.

Deceived (Big Conjeevaram). "The other night, I heard my husband talking in his sleep; and he muttered, 'Lakshmi, Lakshmi!' In the morning I taxed him with it, and he told me that Lakshmi was a race-horse he had backed; and he gave me five rupees as my share of the winnings. But yesterday, I found a memorandum in his pocket-book, saying that Lakshmi lived at such-and-such an address. What should I do?" Send a note to this race-horse, my dear, saying that if she doesn't drop out of the running, she will get scratched.

Manufacturer (C. Provinces). "I am thinking of putting a new soap on the market. The special attraction will be not only its purity; it will be cheap and safe, and a good antiseptic. Can you suggest a good advertising slogan?" Yes, dear boy; 'The Guardian of the Pore'.

Agricultural College (Lahore). "The ravages of the sugar-cane pest are serious. It reduces the crop by ten or fifteen per cent. We are trying to stamp out this pest by means of the wireless." That explains it, dear boy. It must have been one of your death-dealing programmes that Auntie heard the other night.

Vocation (Calicut). "I am anxious to get employment with a Harbour Authority. Can you please give me any information about becoming a deep-sea diver?" Yes, my dear; if you want to be a deep-sea diver, you must start at the top and work your way down.

Enquirer (Dharmapet). "Why is it that Bernard Shaw has a beard?" Possibly, dear boy, it is because he does not shave.

Deplorable (Hardoi). "When I look round the world I wonder what Napoleon would be doing if he were alive to-day." He would be drawing an old-age pension, dear boy.

Shikari (Bengal). "Can you suggest a good use for a large tiger-skin?" Yes, dear boy; it would be excellent for keeping a tiger warm.

Traveller (Trichy). "Imagine my embarrassment when, on re-entering the hotel room, I discovered a lady's night-dress spread out on my bed." Why were you embarrassed, dear boy? Was there a lady in the night-dress?

Invalid (Palm). "The doctor has given me some medicine, and he warns me it must only be taken in a recumbent posture. I have enquired of several shops, but no one is able to supply me with one of these things. I wonder if you could oblige?" Auntie is sorry, dear sir; she used to have one, but she gave it up some time ago.

Strephon (Perambur). "Please advise me. I go to my girl's house every evening, but her mother does not trust me, and she makes the girl's young brother stay in the room with us all the time. He never takes his eyes off us." Why not teach the young rascal the game of blind-man's-buff? You can easily arrange matters so that he will always be the one to have his eyes bandaged.

Pious (Salem). "Deism and atheism keep many a lost soul from coming to church." Yes, my dear; but in other cases it is simply rheumatism.

Inexperienced (Tiruvanaikoil). "Please, dear Auntie, tell us what it feels like to be in love." Some authorities, my dear, have described it as like having an itch that you cannot scratch. Others declare it is like being in the

centre of a lot of railway-tracks, with trains coming both ways.

Observant (Egmore). "I was travelling last week, and there were two men on the train who had come all way without paying their fare." Auntie knows the answer, dear boy. It was the driver and the guard.

Amused (Nagpur). "Please tell us some more of Uncle Ghastly's adventures while out hunting." By all means, dear boy. Let me give the narrative in his own words. 'The first bird I ever shot,' says your Uncle, 'wasn't a bird, but a rabbit. The first time I hit him, I missed him entirely. The second time, I hit him in the same place as before, and he ran up a tree. So I threw a stone at him, but missed. However, the rabbit fell out of the tree with fright, and was drowned. And that was the first bird I ever shot.'

Plurality (N. India). "There is a man here who has married six wives, one after the other. What can a man want with six wives?" Perhaps, dear boy, he doesn't want them, but is only trying to find a good one.

Smart Lad (Poona). "I met the manager of a travelling show, and asked him for a complimentary ticket. The mean fellow pretended he had no pencil or paper with which to write a pass, but I was too clever for him. I gave him an indelible pencil, and got him to write 'Admit One' on the palm of my hand, and sign it. I am going to the show to-night." Very ingenious, dear boy.

By the way, I hope they don't tear your ticket in half as you enter the hall, as required by law.

Kissed (Secunderabad). "What should a girl do when a young man steals a kiss?" She should insist on his putting it back where it belongs, dearie.

Determination (Nannilam). "There is no mistaking a man destined for success. He drives all his competitors before him." Yes, dear boy. The last time Auntie backed a horse, the jockey followed your prescription perfectly.

Pundit (Madura). "Please tell me how to illustrate the meaning of the word 'miracle' to a class of backward boys." Certainly, reverend sir. Assume a stooping posture in front of the pupils, and invite one of the biggest lads to give you a hard kick. If you do not feel anything, it is a miracle.

Rescue Worker (Bombay). "My mission in life is to save girls." And Uncle Ghastly says, will you please save one for him.

YES, I KNOW

(Answers to questions on page 19)

1. Topiary.
2. Because Columbus mistook America to be East Indies and called the inhabitants Indians.
3. The chalk it picks up while running through chalky soil. It can be made soft by boiling.
4. There is. Gold carats are divided into 24 parts; 18 ct. gold means 18 parts of pure gold and 6 parts alloy. Precious stone carat go by weight, 4 grains to a carat.
5. Matador.

THE END

The Stockings—

by John A. Henry

Illustrated by Varma

WE people who wield scratchy pens are constantly on the look-out for fresh ideas for stories. It becomes such a habit with us that we can attach a soul-searing romance to a gumboil or an attack of stomach-ache. We weave exciting narratives around a piece of spinach or a stray turnip.

It was, then, no unusual occurrence when I wondered whether the girl who had just got into the bus at Hyde Park had suffered through some terrible happening that had made her lose her memory. For, on one of her shapely legs she wore a grey silk stocking, and on the other, one that was beautifully flesh-coloured. What, I wondered, could have made her so forgetful?

Fortunately the only other vacant seat on top of the bus was next to me, and, with a little sigh of relief, the girl sank on to it.

We bowled steadily along and I strove to keep my eyes on the passing traffic and the gaily fronted shops. But, ever and anon, I found that the exquisitely shaped legs of the charming girl beside me drew my eyes to them as a magnet draws a steel hat-pin.

I wondered if she was the sort of girl who snarled at you when you said the weather was nice. And, wondering thus, I made my bold plunge.

"Excuse me," I said with a slight cough, "but what do you think of Hitler?"



Her eyes, when she turned them on me, were grey and lovely. Just the sort of eyes I adored. She smiled, displaying pearly teeth.

"It's very hot to-day, isn't it?" she asked, and I gaped. "I mean," she went on smilingly, "that's what you *should* have said, isn't it? It's rather a new form of self introduction, asking a girl about Hitler."

I stammered a bit but saw that she wasn't really angry. "Er—I'm sorry," I blathered. "But I was anxious to know what made you wear the stockings you have got on this morning."

"And so," she said sweetly, "you ask me about Hitler? You *are* clever. Well, I think Hitler is a very fine looking man."

"But your stockings—" I began.

"I also like the look of his moustache," she went on. "It's very much like yours, only his has a few more hairs in it."

"Your stockings—" I tried again.

"And he has a strong mind," she interrupted me. "One of those men who can sit up and tell his wife that her pies are like India-rubber at its India-rubbiest."

"Your stockings—" I said again.

"What?" she asked, her delicate eyebrows raised. "Then you're not discussing Hitler?"

"Your stockings are of two different colours," I said. "And I'm sure there's some reason for it. One is grey and the other flesh-coloured."

She sat quite still for a moment, looking at me with an expression half amused and half distressed. Then she looked down at her stockings.

"Did you receive a blow in the form of a telegram telling you one of your relatives had died?" I asked. "Such a blow would have made anyone forget to put on the right stockings."

She looked up again.

"I am indebted to you," she said softly. "I shall change them as soon as I can. Thank you."

"I'm sure there's a story behind it," I went on eagerly. "Do you think you'd mind unburdening yourself to a perfect stranger?"

"Not at all," she replied. "I'll tell you all about it. As a matter of fact, the whole thing hinges with my maid having fallen in love with a pea-nut seller."

"But how—" I began, wondering what this had to do with my question.

"This man evidently gave her a free bag of pea-nuts when she had forgotten her loose change," she said. "And so Mary, my maid, fell in love with him."

"Then, no relative of yours died?" I asked disappointedly. "And you were not so worried this morning that you just put on any old stocking you could grab hold of?"

She laughed at that.

"Oh, I suppose you write?" she queried in her turn.

I nodded.

"You writers are always trying your imagination out," she said. "Now, I'll give you three guesses at the reason for my forgetfulness. If you guess right," here

she paused and laughed suddenly, delightfully, "well, I'll marry you to-morrow. If not, I get off at Landsbury Road and we each go our separate ways."

The novelty of this appealed to me.

"I'll give you one more clue," said the girl. "Having fallen in love with the pea-nut seller, my maid asked me to give her a week's holiday in which to get married. And the woman she got to deputise for her is always in the habit of leaving my stockings all over the place."

"What the—" I began, but she cut me short.

"Go on. Guess."

And then I showed how even we scribblers can overlook the obvious solution to a very intriguing point.

"Well," I said, "we've exhausted your relatives. Very well, my next guess is that you had a telegram this morning telling you had lost a lot of money in certain shares. So, in your hurry to get dressed and see your broker, you put on the wrong stockings."

The girl shook her gorgeous head.

"Wrong," she smiled.

"Well—er—your sweetheart told you to hurry up and join him at the church," I tried once more, "so that he could marry you as soon as possible, the lucky devil!"

"Wrong," she smiled. "I haven't a sweetheart."

"This is a tickler," I said, racking my brain. "Well, anyway, how's this for an answer?—Your pet Pekingese dog or somebody else's dog pinched one of your stockings so that he could have a meal off it, the lucky blighter! And so you were left with an odd pair."

She slowly shook her head.

"All wrong," she said. "But you're rather a dear for pointing out the fact about the different stockings. It shows that you're good-hearted."

"And you," I breathed, suddenly realising that love at first sight is not a rare thing, "you are the sweetest girl I've seen for a long time—in my whole life, in fact!"

She laughed, blushed, gave a little pat to her hat, and laid a slim hand on my knee.

"Well, we can get to know each other a little better," she smiled alluringly and gave me her telephone number. "Perhaps we may get married after all!"

"Such things have happened before," I said gladly. "But what about the answer to my question about the stockings?"

The bus rolled to a stop. The girl rose with a smile on her sweet lips. I saw that we had reached Landsbury Road.

"You men," she smiled, "are rather foolish dears, aren't you? You all need a woman to point out the obvious things in life to you."

"We do," I agreed. "But what about these stockings?"

"I told you," she said as she turned to go, "that my present maid mixes my stockings up and leaves them lying all over the place. And, you see, I happen to be colour-blind!"

But none of our children are! And I like a wife who is colour-blind for she can't tell when you're drinking a glass of whiskey or a tumbler of plain water!

THE END



Boss (sending boy on errand): On the way, you pass the cricket field.

Boy (hopefully): Yes, sir.

Boss: Well, pass it.

First Guest: "I'm sure I don't know why they call this hotel 'The Palms', do you? I've never seen any palm anywhere near the place."

Second Guest: "You'll see them before you go. It's a pleasant little surprise the whole staff keep for the guests on the last day of their stay."

Jones: "That man James is going round telling lies about you."

Smith: "I don't mind that, but if he tells the truth, I'll give him a good hiding."

A new lance-corporal, standing with an instructor, had the men marching away from him. The squad had gone some distance, and it appeared that the corporal did not know how to give the command, 'About Turn!'

At last, when the men were about a hundred yards away, the exasperated instructor yelled: "For 'eaven's sake say something, you idiot—even if it's only 'Good-bye!'"

Miss Sharp: "Perhaps you won't believe it, but a strange man tried to kiss me once."

Miss Snap: "Really! Well, he'd have been a stranger man if he had tried to kiss you twice."

Dogmatic Old man: "Remember this, young man, only lunatics and rattle-brained idiots are certain of anything nowadays."

Young man: "Are you sure of that?"

D. O. M.: "Absolutely certain."

Prosper: "Personal appearance is a helpful factor in business success."

Downey: "Yes, and business success is a helpful factor in personal appearance."

Two women who had been at school together met after many years.

"Are you married yet?" asked one.

"Not yet," said the other, looking sad and thoughtful. "But I had an ideal once."

Her friend looked sympathetic. "I suppose your ideal was completely shattered?"

"No, just broke."

Know Thyself!



That is an injunction familiar to every man and woman whatever his or her religion. How many know themselves? Very few!

Here is an opportunity to know yourself, **PROVIDED FREE** by the Editor. A noted Chiromant will read your character, show you your strong and weak points, indicate your susceptibilities and advise you to avoid

pitfalls. These readings will be published in every issue of the Merry Magazine from 20-7-'35. Applications for free character reading will be dealt with in strict rotation. All you have to do is to fill in the coupon printed below and mail it.

FILL IN AND MAIL NOW.

FREE CHARACTER - READING COUPON

Merry-Magus,
C/o The Merry Magazine,
Broadway, Madras.

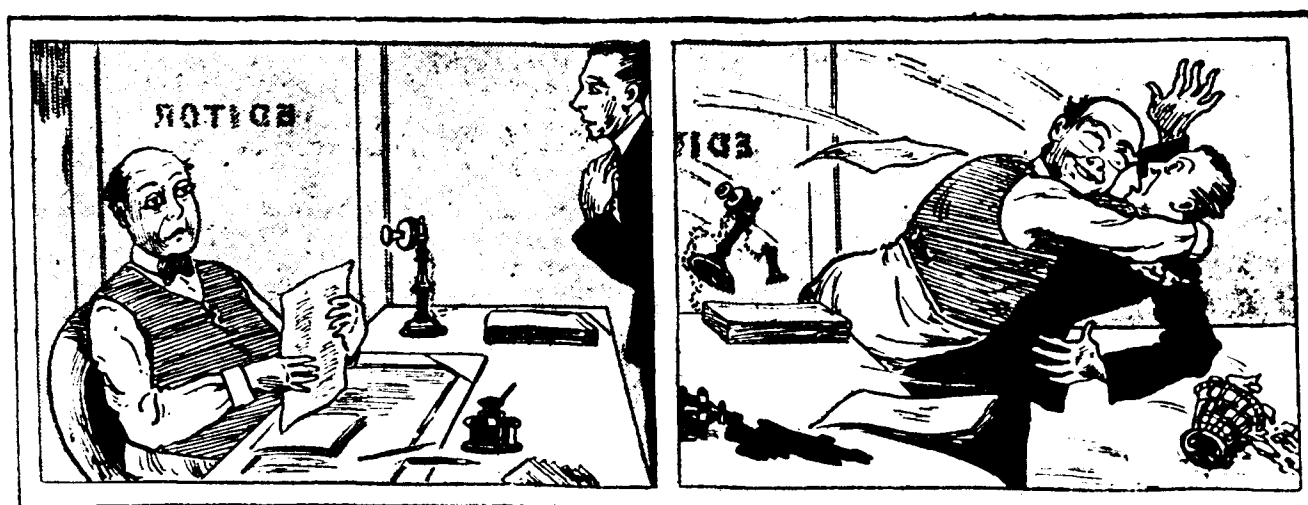
Dear Sir,

Please read my character and publish it in The Merry Magazine. It is understood that this puts me under no obligation to you.

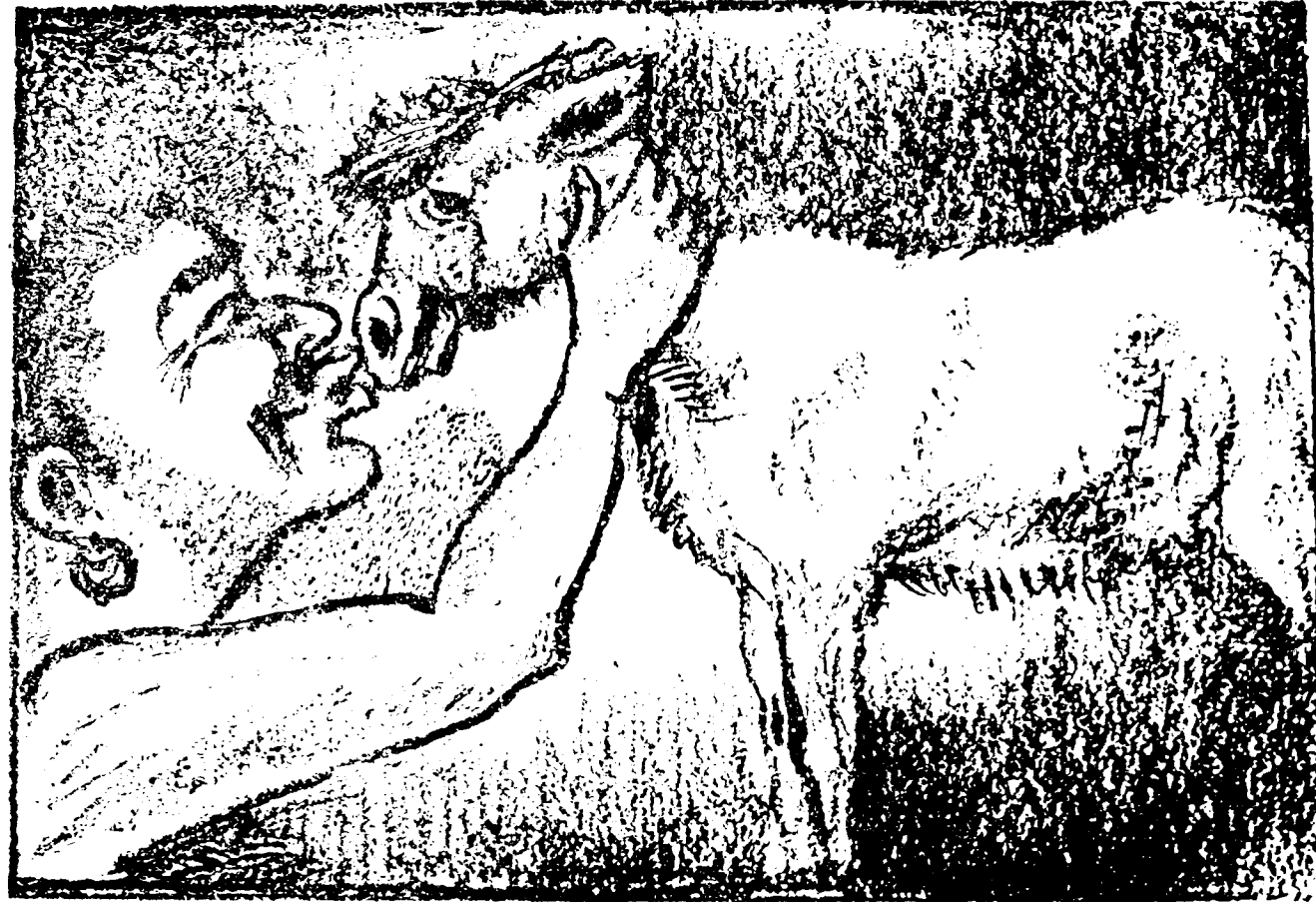
Name (or Nom-de-plume).....

Correct date of birth }
(with time of birth }
if possible)

2 (Please write legibly)



SARDONIC EDITOR: "So, you aren't dead?"
POET: "Er—no, sir."
EDITOR: "Then I am charmed to meet you, Edgar Allan Poe!"



The EDUCATED DONKEY

Once there lived an aged potter
Who was over seventy one,
And he had a charming donkey
Whom he treated as a son;
For the potter, he was childless,
And his good and loving wife
Thought the donkey was a lovely
Contribution to her life.

So they treated him with kindness,
And they treated him with care,
And in all the meals the donkey
Always had the lion's share.
Yes, they loved him and adored him,
Fondled him and felt great pride
When along the road the donkey
Went a-walking by their side.

O, they loved his ways, his movements,
And they loved his heavenly bray!
Thus the potter and his woman
Tended him from day to day.

Tended him with love untiring,
Gave him dainty things to eat,
Day by day he grew more charming,
Grew more wonderful and sweet.

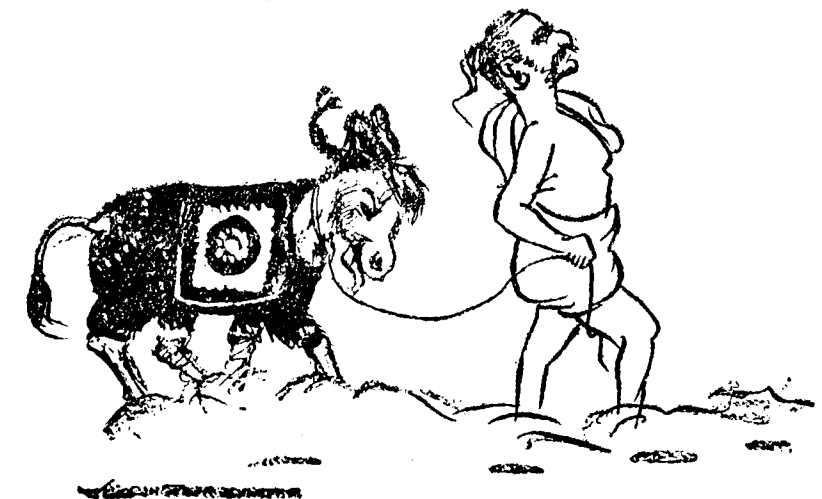
And it chanced, one day in summer,
That the potter and his pet
Walking towards the winding river,
On the way a day-school met;
For a while the potter listened
To the master's voice that cried
"You are nothing but a donkey!"
To some little chap inside:

"Let me tell you, you're a donkey!"
Still the worth school-master swore,
"Since you hardly know for certain
That twice twos are always four!"
And the potter's heart delighted
In his bosom did rejoice,
All along the roadway echoed
In his heart that master's voice.

He returned towards the nightfall,
Homeward, and his heart rang out,
"In that school they tutor donkeys,
Of this fact I have no doubt.
I will send my lovely donkey
To that self-same school, and then
Surely he will learn his lessons
And win honour among men!"
All that night his heart was restless,
And he waited for the dawn,
And his mind kept thinking, thinking
On and on and on and on.
"I will get my child admitted
Into that same very school!
Other donkeys are being tutored,
Why should mine remain a fool?"
Early streaks of dawn were painted
In the quiet ample sky,
And the potter rose in rapture
For his hopes went running high.
Wonderously the potter's woman
Clad the donkey in a gown
Of bright scarlet, gold and purple
Just to hide his greyish-brown.
Straight the potter with his donkey
Walked towards that school to see
All about the pet's admission;
In the yard there was a tree
Unto which he slowly tethered
His dear child, and then he trod
Towards the master, "Honoured master!
You are even as a god!"
"What is it you want, Grandfather?"
The school-master was a gaunt
Kindly man... "O good fine master!
Surely you know what I want?"
"No, I don't!" the master answered,
"But I'll be most glad to do
Anything that's in my power,
Anything, good friend! for you!"
Then the potter swiftly brightened
And he answered, "Master Sir!
I have brought my donkey, Birju,
Who is a philosopher,
And I fain would have him learning
In this honourable school!"
In his heart of hearts the master
Thought the potter was a fool.

"But, good friend," the master mumbled,
"It would be, indeed, in vain
If I tried to teach a donkey,
Is it possible to train
A poor creature who will never
Know a way to hold a slate
Or a pencil, for he only
Knows the way to lift a weight."
"No, my sir! you are mistaken,
If you think I do not know
That you teach a set of donkeys
In this school. One day ago
While I passed by with my donkey
Why, I heard your voice distinct
Calling some one here a donkey!"
And at this the potter winked.
"Let me tell you you're a donkey,"
That is how, good sir, you swore,
"Since you hardly know for certain
That twice twos are always four!"
The school-master saw the humour
Of the situation now,
"Sir," the potter still continued,
"You must teach my child, somehow!"
"Right," the master said, "I'll teach him
On condition that you will
Leave your donkey and will never
Look upon his face until
I have wholly educated
Him and changed him to a man!"
"Yes, agreed!" the potter nodded,
"It is a thrice glorious plan."
Calmly taking leave of Birju
The old potter turned away
With a heart extremely grateful,
For he dreamed that soon his bray
Would be changed into a human
Voice that would be able quite
Able to converse and argue,
And to lecture or recite.
When the potter's back had vanished,
The school-master told the boys
Straightaway to take the donkey
Without any stir or noise,
Right away into a distant
Place and leave him there to find
Soft green plots and pleasant pastures
Suited to a donkey's mind.

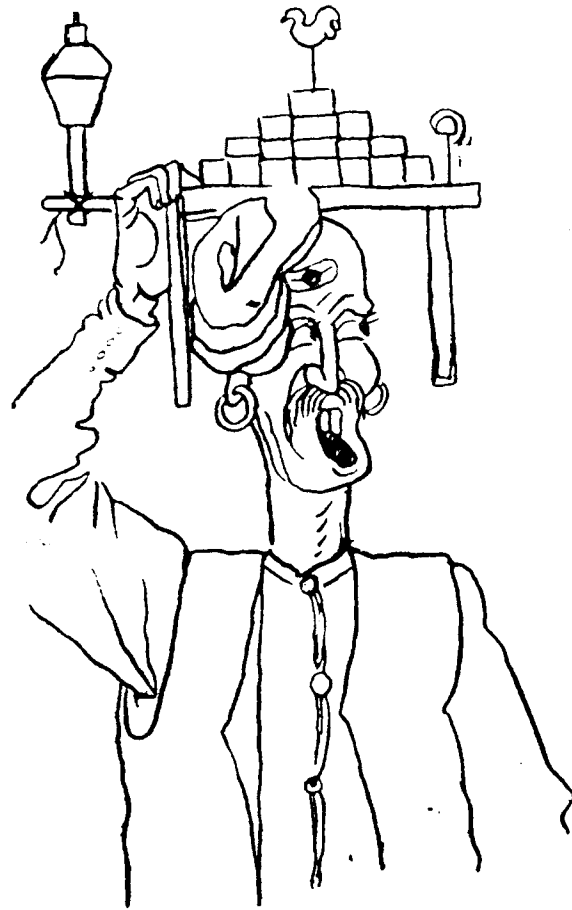
(To be concluded next week.)



On Children

by R. K. Narayan Swami

Drawings by Nadkarni



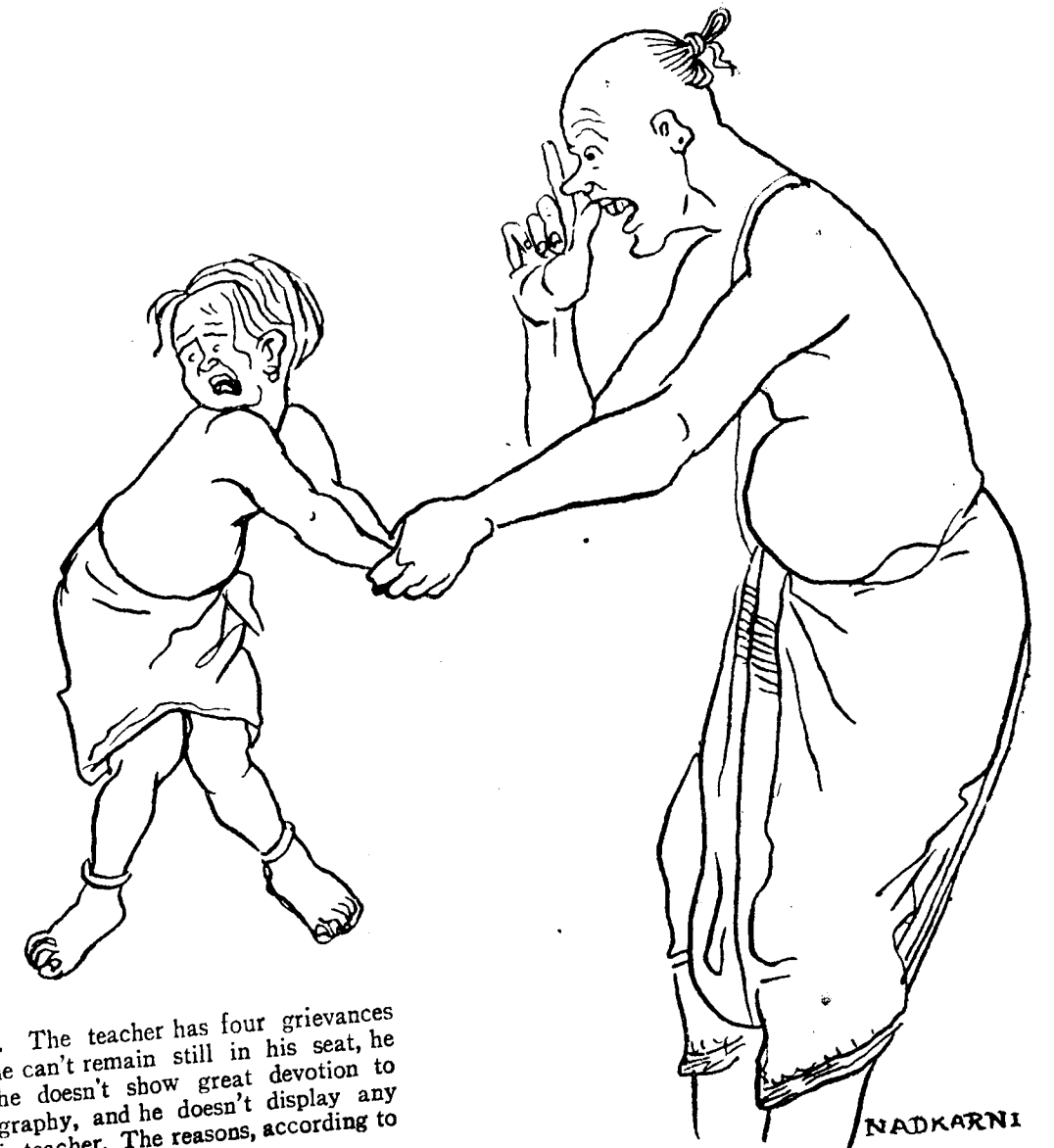
THE fashion just at present is to treat children as problems. It is so because we have completely forgotten our own childhood. If only we could brush away the dust of years from our minds and re-live our childhood, we should see at once that the real problems are the elders themselves. When I don't want any food, the big bully tries to force it down my throat; when I am angry and shout at people, they pull me up and ask me to choose my words carefully, while they themselves give their tongues free-play; when I don't care to share my marbles or sweets with the other boy, why do they come and force me to give them to him? When I hate the other boy like poison, they come and tell me that I must be friends with him.

The fault with us, elders, is that we try to prescribe a very rigorous ethical code for children. They must utter truth, and they must be above jealousy, anger, and hatred. Many a parent to-day has a smattering of Child

Psychology. It seems to me that the scientific parent views his child with calm despair. I think he sits down in cold blood to devise ways and means to make a small saint of his child. Imagine the horror of encountering a tiny stoic! A five-year old person, cold as iron, with his feelings under perfect control, and with truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth falling from his lips! It is a ghastly vision.

To the expert in child psychology the child is anything but a child. It is a dumb animal incapable of asking for what it wants. Hence we have to plan out everything for it—its play, its games, and its food. The child must play not because he likes it, but because it is good for him. Even in his mischief he is encouraged in a very studied manner. He is expected to be mischievous because mischievous children grow up into healthy adults. And then, to the scientific child-trainer, the child is an extra-sensitive plate—a plate that will catch quickly all impressions and keep an indelible record. They call it this complex and that. Good things and bad alike are supposed to get into the child's system and stay there for ever. For instance, if a certain fear is stimulated when one is seven, even when one reaches seventy the same fear will be there, damaging the system. So also in the matter of virtue. If a certain good quality is instilled early, it stays and works for life. I don't suppose there is any greater superstition than this in mental science. We have all had our full dose of morals and bogeys in our childhood, administered to us chiefly by our grandmothers. If the sensitive plate that I was supposed to be had only caught and retained all the virtue and goodness that was set before me, I should be now another Jesus or Buddha. And also if I had caught and retained all the fears that my elders tried to instil in me, I should now be incapable of going about anywhere without carrying a defensive weapon in my hand. But by God's grace I am all right now. I can go out in the dark or sleep alone in a room; I know that the backyard is not infested with tigers; I know that the beggar going from door to door crying for alms at night is not a demon with three eyes and two tusks; I am also perfectly confident now that no elephant can come to my bedside at night.

So much for the experts. But children are not trained by experts alone. There are our school teachers. The school teacher's views of children are clear-cut and well-defined. He does not believe in your new-fangled notions of psychology and delicate nurturing. To an average primary school-teacher (as far as my experience goes) the child is a demon in diminutive form. He is a skinkful of cunning and wile. Keep your eyes off him for a



moment and he will stop the earth's motion and bring down the stars. It is the cane alone that stands between him and damnation. The teacher has four grievances against the boy: he can't remain still in his seat, he can't keep silent, he doesn't show great devotion to Arithmetic and Geography, and he doesn't display any great affection for his teacher. The reasons, according to the teacher, are:—

The boy won't keep still in his seat because the teacher expressly desires him to remain still;

For the same reason he won't remain silent;

He doesn't show devotion to Arithmetic and Geography because he is told that they are good for him;

And he doesn't display affection for his teacher because the devil is in him.

For all these reasons, left to himself, the boy would seek damnation. The teacher sets to himself the task of saving the boy's soul and making him a fit citizen of this world and also of the next. Let no one think for a moment that it is my purpose to say savage things about teachers. I remember my childhood well, and I think the teachers are right. But for the ceaseless efforts of my Mission School teacher, who for nearly six years clouted me on the head every day and used the ruler on me (when the cane was not available), I should not be the man that I am now. I carried on my back the marks of my early education for a long time. I really feel grateful to my early teachers.

Then there is the average ignorant parent. To him (or her) the child can do no wrong. If the child demands half a maund of sugar for immediate consumption, the situation is met by ordering half a maund of sugar immediately. If the child wants to eat every fifteen minutes, why not let the child do it? If the child kicks and bites, it is a sight for Gods! It all arises from the child's sense of humour. If the child wants to break all the tumblers and bottles in the house, every facility must be provided for him to fulfil this desire. A damaged bottle can easily be replaced, but not the damaged soul of a child. And then the boy in the next house is thoroughly dull and vile. Why should he be reluctant to serve as a target for the dear little one's kicks and abuses?

As the fruit of all this research I give the following tips to those who wish to have ideal relations with children. These tips may be called an Uncle's Code of Behaviour.

(Continued on page 48)

Julius Caesar—

by 'Elmer Delville'

Illustrated by Bahadurji

[This is what happens if people read detective stories in bed after a peg of whisky—Ed.]

GRUGLING through his bath, Julius Caesar was humming the popular song *Bharata Mata*. As a conqueror of other days, its martial rhythm appealed to him. Rubbing himself briskly with a towel, he goose-stepped to its tune and directly got into his Oxford bags to which he had become almost accustomed. His all-in-one attendant was ready as usual with his master's favourite cup of Gulia Rasam.

"A boy is awaiting you in the hall, sir," he said. "He insists it's urgent."

"These barbarians," growled Mr. Caesar, "won't let a man in peace. I hope it is not another case of a missing husband or something."

Still strutting gallantly, he steered for the adjoining room, scarcely noticing the mischievous smile of his cook-valet. During his two years' stay in Bomay, where he had set himself up as a private investigator, Mr. Caesar had had many queer cases to handle. Almost fed up with his military campaigns, he came out East for novelty, and novelty he was having with a vengeance. The local police would not let him handle cases in which there was a modicum of crime, but they did not object to his pottering about lost garters, inventing alibis for erring wives and figuring out theories in other purely innocuous matters.

From what he could gather from the scrappy version of it, the problem the small boy had brought was something different. He smelt a rat. Putting on his only tweed coat, he sped in his car with the boy to Hotel Billimoria to interview the proprietress herself.

"You say, this man, Indra—Indra," Mr. Caesar's Roman tongue could not roll out the tail-end of the name.

"Indrajitu," prompted Mrs. Damayanti with a smile.

"Never mind his name," cut in Julius. "This man, as you say, has been absent from the hotel for periods of three to four months before, paying the rent in advance and locking his own room when he went away. What has made you suspicious now? Is he in debt?"

"I'm not worried about the money," said the proprietress. "He's a Prince of Lanka, the son of King Ravana, and I know I'll get my dues."

"Then, what are you killing yourself for?"

"I've to confess to hearing tales from my chamber-maids," said Mrs. Damayanti shamefacedly. "Prince Indrajitu, among his baggage, always has a leather case

of medium size, the contents of which are considered mysterious, for he is constantly with it. In fact, on one occasion lately, he has been noticed to close it suddenly when surprised by a servant going to sweep his room. It is reported that he looked distinctly guilty and very much agitated."

"Are you suspecting him of some crime?"

"Don't put it that way," said the lady, "but the circumstances are curious. You see, he has always taken this bag with him when he left. But this time it is still in his room."

"You have not opened his room in his absence?" asked Mr. Caesar.

"Oh, no. I wouldn't dream of doing it. But an inquisitive servant-girl has been peeping through the keyhole."

"I don't understand even then why all this should worry you," said Julius seriously.

"I've read recently of trunk murder mysteries in England—"

"Oh! But surely you don't imagine anything so—"

"No. I don't. I dare not think of it—but—but—"

"Come, come," persuaded the investigator, "you are hiding something. I can't help you unless you tell me all that you—fear."

Mrs. Damayanti hesitated. She considered for a long time if she was acting wisely in consulting this man.

"Well, having called you in, may be it's best to tell you everything," she said at last. "A few months ago, a pretty young girl called to see the Prince one evening—he's a Don Juan, I tell you. We saw her come in but none of us remember seeing her go out. Of course at the time we thought nothing of it, for she might have gone out when we were all busy. But you would have noticed that the police are now in search of a missing young girl. She is still untraced."

"Putting this and that together, you suspect that what was once a girl is now reposing in that bag. Is that it?"

"Don't be so gross, please, but that is what I—believe. My chamber-maid also swears there are thick red patches all over the floor."

"You're not suggesting we should break open the door and the bag?" asked Julius Caesar. "The police would—er—you know the police."

"After all it is only my fears," urged Mrs. Damayanti. "There may be nothing in it. What I wanted really was an uninterested third party to be a witness."

Together Julius Caesar and the proprietress proceeded to the room in question. Mrs. Damayanti produced a key and the door opened easily. The room was like the rest of them in the hotel—furnished, not elaborately perhaps, but moderately and tastefully. The bed was covered neatly over with a canvas cloth and the tables and chairs were in their proper places, though now slightly dusty. There was no baggage, except for a leather case lying on the floor.

"There it is," pointed the lady from the door.

"Perhaps this is a case for the police," said Mr. Caesar, hesitant. However, curiosity getting the better of him, he took out his handkerchief and carefully covering his hand, prised open the bag with a clasp-knife.

What they both saw confirmed their worst fears. For the bag contained nothing but a set of human bones with apparently dry flesh still sticking to some of them.

"Jumping Jupiter!" exclaimed Mr. Caesar, "this is serious. Ring up the police and tell them all about it. I get out of the bus here."

"Not so," pleaded the lady. "I do not want them to meddle with it for many reasons. Firstly we're not sure if the Prince is really the guilty person, but the police will not wait to find out. Secondly, my hotel will become unpopular, and my husband, wherever he is, will not like it, and thirdly, Prince Indrajitu is well known at my father's court. I shouldn't like to harm him if I could help it."

The investigator did not seem to be listening to this. He was busy scraping up a patch of red that was found near the bag. He neatly folded this in a piece of paper and put it in his pocket. Then he bent down and put his nose to the bag as if to draw inspiration from the smell.

"I've found out all that I want to know," he said at last. "You are right. Do not inform the police. I feel I'm competent to handle this myself. Come, let us get downstairs. I am thirsty and I want to have a short chat with you."

Downstairs, in the proprietress' own office, Investigator Julius Caesar was sipping the refreshing drink that his client had provided.

"What do you call this drink?" he asked. "It's perfectly bracing."



...took out his kerchief and carefully covering his hand.....

"We call it Gulla Rasam."

"It's curious," continued Julius, "I've never found it elsewhere in Bombay, but since I had my new man—a perfect jewel of a man, I've taken nothing but Gulla Rasam when I'm thirsty."

"As a matter of fact I invented the decoction," said Mrs. Damayanti modestly, "and my husband gave it the name. Now, I suppose many people have learnt how to do it, though I doubt if anyone can surpass my husband."

"That reminds me," blurted out Mr. Caesar. "I wonder if you realise that when you were upstairs you betrayed yourself."

"How? What was there to betray?"

"You spoke of your father's court when you thought I was not listening. Then, your father is a king and you are a princess?"

"What else did I say? What else?"

"You said, 'wherever my husband is'. Where is he?"

Mrs. Damayanti put her head down, wriggled and showed evident signs of confusion. Then suddenly she realised that the man in front of her might misunderstand her entirely. He might even class her as a fallen woman. There was no immediate harm in telling him the truth, she decided.

"You may not quite appreciate the—er—well—yes, my father is a reigning king. My husband left me one night—not in anger or sorrow, mind you—but suddenly, unaccountably. I heard he was somewhere here in Bombay in disguise. I followed him. I was told he stayed in this hotel for a week. So I bought the hotel outright in the hope that one day I might meet him. I haven't seen him since."

Then with tearful eyes she described to the keenly interested detective her husband's general appearance, temperament and even his peculiarities.

"Don't worry, madam. This is more in my line than human bones in trunks," said Mr. Caesar, who had listened patiently. "I shall find out your husband for you. Julius Caesar never fails. Give me a week. I've to run up to Madras on some business."

True to his word, Julius Caesar returned before the lapse of seven days. Changing into his everlasting dark tweed coat, he called upon the proprietress of Hotel Billimoria and was at once ushered into her presence. He plunged straight into business.

"The mystery of the bones has been solved!" he declared.

"Really!"

"Beyond a doubt. Prince Indrajitu, though a friend of your family, you knew only as an art student. You did not know he was taking up another course in Madras—Medicine. During the vacation at the Medical College he returned to Bombay and practised art-lessons. He wanted to carry his medical diploma home as a surprise. Hence his secretiveness. He was so zealous about his studies that he had purchased a set of human bones to help his lessons in Anatomy. The red patches all over

the floor in his room are dry oil paints he dripped while painting pictures."

"Splendid! That explains everything. But how did you find out all these?"

"Simple," said Mr. Caesar with a shrug. "When I first saw the bones I was taken aghast, I confess. But a closer examination showed me that they have been well cured and sterilised. There was not the hint of a smell. Who else but a doctor or a medical student would want to have anything to do with human bones? Your statement that this young man was a Prince of Lanka with a funny name reminded me that a student with a similar name passed out his third year in College only three months ago. I went to Madras to verify and I've found my guess to be correct. I have also seen the Prince."

"I hope you have not told him anything of our unfounded suspicions."

"I've plenty of that rare stuff, madam—tact and discretion. I have another little business to finish before I go. I've brought with me my cook-assistant, who claims to know how to make Gulla Rasam. I want you to test him."

So saying he went up to the front floor and opened it, and a young man in simple but neat dress came forward with his hands outstretched.

"Damayanti!" he cried.

"My King Nala!" cooed Damayanti.

"Her description of him fits to a tee except for the colour," muttered Mr. Caesar to himself going out of the room and closing the door behind him. "Without the coincidence of the Gulla Rasam I could not have spotted him."

THE END

On Children—(Continued from page 45)

(1) Shout at the child and slap him when you feel like doing it and when he deserves it. It will relieve you as well as improve the child.

(2) Leave the boy alone except when he attempts to fall over the parapet, set fire to himself, or jump into the well.

(3) If you can't do without coffee in the morning, don't expect the child to be satisfied with tomato juice and oat-porridge. What is good enough for you is good enough for the child also.

(4) If the little one prefers the company of gossiping elders to his books, don't drive him to his desk. Only by being present at the gathering of elders when they sit around and gossip among themselves can the child have a true estimate of the elders and this world.

(5) If he doesn't like to go to school on Monday morning, don't force him to declare a stomach-ache or head-ache, but tell him that he needn't go to the beastly place if he doesn't like it. It will make a very pleasant-minded, truth-seeking man of him.

(6) If he hates his teachers and a few select classmates, don't preach to him universal love. Stand by him and detest his teachers. He will feel he is really living in a sympathetic world.

LINKING LETTERS

Rs. 400

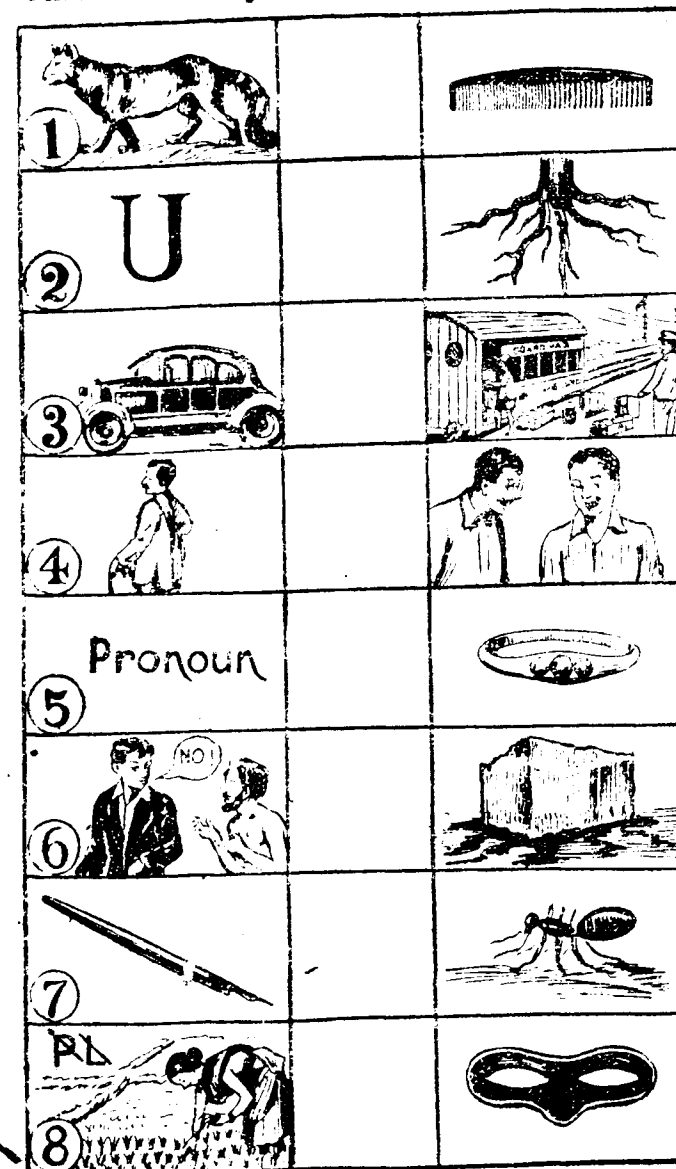
FREE!

1st PRIZE Rs. 250

2nd PRIZE Rs. 150

This Set Only. Closing Date 7-8-35

'Linking Letters' Competition



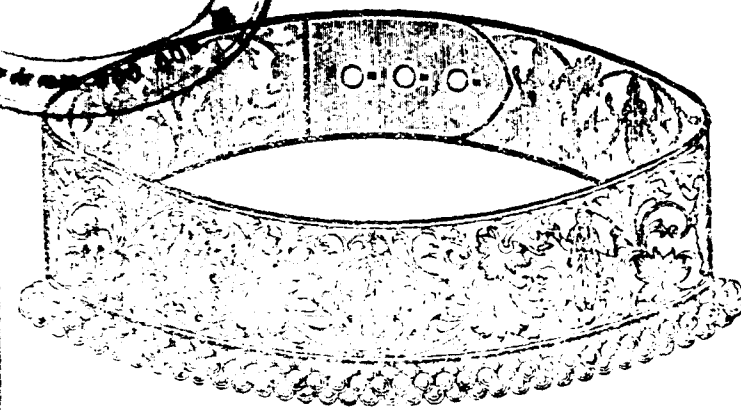
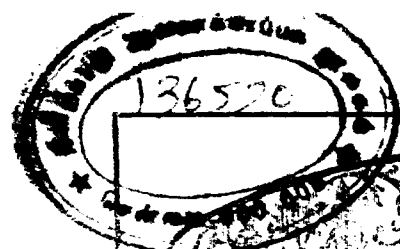
Eight words are represented by the objects indicated in the illustrations. Each word is found by combining the names of the two objects and joining them by ONE LETTER which must be supplied as a LINK. For Example, in No. 1, there are two pictures: A CAT and a COMB. Connect these two words with letter A and you get the word CATACOMB. This is the correct solution. In the same manner, find the other seven words.

You can send in any number of entries. Only they must be on the Coupons provided in another page.

RULES AND CONDITIONS

Solutions must be written *only on the coupon*. All entries must be received by the last post on 7-8-35. 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. 250 will be awarded to an all-correct solution and the second prize of Rs. 150 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 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. Important:—No Entry will be considered unless it contains the NAME & ADDRESS of the competitor in BLOCK CAPITALS in Full. Address Entries to:

THE EDITOR, 'LINKING LETTERS' Competition, The Merry Magazine, 1.2/140, Broadway, Madras.



SCIENTIFIC GOLD JEWELLERY

(Substitute for real gold)

Highly appreciated by High Court Judges, Ministers to Government and other Eminent Public Men.

NEW CATALOGUE FREE
THE SCIENTIFIC GOLD BANGLES
Company Limited.

Head Office:— 43, Byramatam Street,
Post Box No. 273, MADRAS.

EVERY SPORTSMAN SHOULD GET A COPY OF THE FIELD-MADRAS

(AN ALL-SPORTS JOURNAL)

PATRON:

His Excellency
LORD ERSKINE, G.C.I.E.

EDITOR:

C. V. NAGARAJA SASTRI, B.A.,
(Oxon), M.A., (EDIN),
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

Proprietor:

Mr. S. KANNAN,

Office:

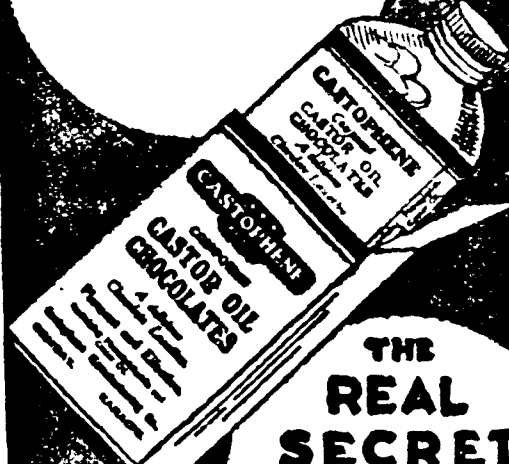
190, Mount Road, Madras.

Indian Rs. 5

Subscription:

Foreign 10s.

**IT WILL
KEEP
YOU
WELL**

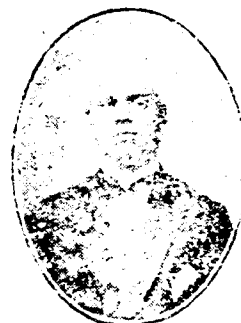


**THE
REAL
SECRET
OF
GOOD
HEALTH**

CASTOPHENE
SWEET
CHOCOLATE
LAXATIVE

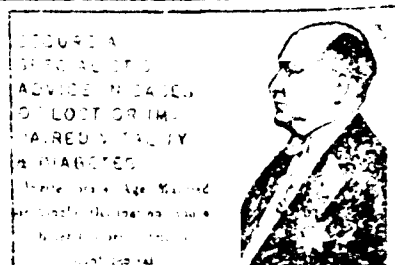
Agents: Shivram & Sawmy, Broadway, Madras.

THE ROYAL ASTROLOGER 1,000,000



& more clients have had
our remarkable foretelling.
Family fame of 25 genera-
tions in Astrology. Medals
and Certificates from Maha-
rajahs and Zamindars.
Annual life reading weekly
details Rs. 2. Aroodam for
5 questions Rs. 1. State
birth details or writing time.
V. P. extra.

Pandit N. AMIRTANANDA
M. 2.29, North Mada St., Mylapore, MADRAS



Dr. JEAN F. STRANDGAARD

(Late of Berlin & Vienna)
CORNER ULSOOR & HALDIN ROAD,
BANGALORE, S. I.