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The MERRY MAGAZINE



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Chattopadhyaya

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Letters'**

July 27
1935

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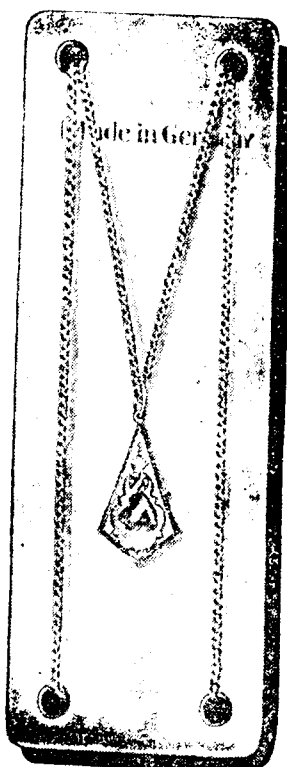
BHAKTA NANDANAR



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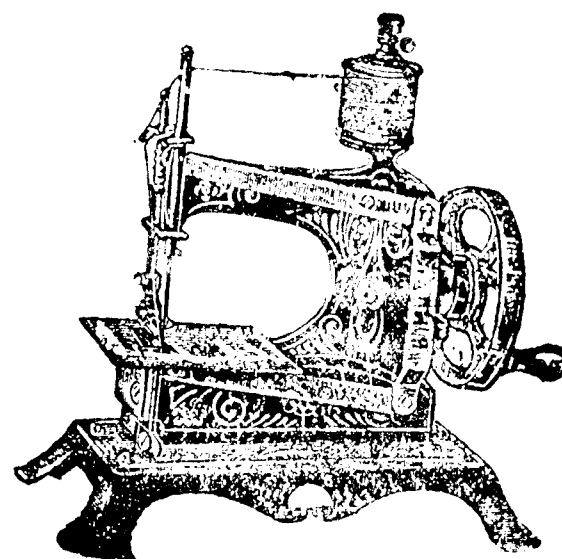
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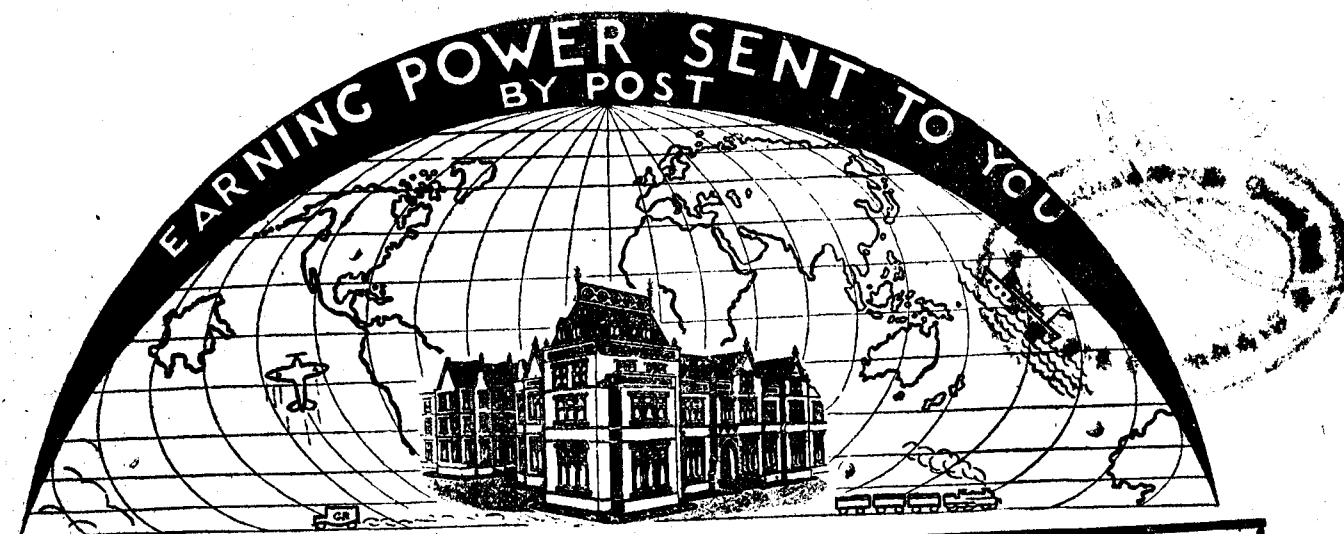


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OPEN LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Sir or Madam,—When your children first arrived they brought with them a wonderful lot of sunshine. Later, you became proud of the intelligence they displayed, but, still later, you became anxious as to what would become of them in the future. Perhaps you were anxious when you visualised them as grown men and women. Even with plenty of money it is not always easy to select the right career, and a parent is sometimes inclined to ask advice of some relative, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred that relative knows nothing at all about the possibilities of employment.

Why not let me relieve you of some of your anxieties? In fact, why not let me be their Father? We do not profess to act as an employment agency, but the nature of our business compels us to keep an eye upon the class of men and women that are wanted and who wants them.

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If you have any anxieties at all as to what your sons or daughters should be, write to me, or better still, let them write to me personally—Fatherly Advice Department—and tell me their likes and dislikes, and I will give sound practical advice as to the possibilities of a vocation and how to succeed in it.

Yours sincerely,

J. Bennett

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The MERRY MAGAZINE

MADRAS,

JULY 27, 1935



Cover Design By Padma

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Next Week: Three Dealers in Infamy—By 'Embusque'



HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

The Farmer and The Feasters

Rustic wisdom set off against the smash and grab methods of the jungle beasts.

'RAM'

The Mystery of the Missing Blonde

The author wrote this novel originally in 75000 words; but at our special request condensed it into 1500 words, preserving the unities. The whole novel is there!

'CHAPPIE'

Silence in Court

The diverting history of a jail-bird, his parentage, his predilections, his—everything.

'KUMUDINI'

Decorative Art III

(Concluded)

For the ladies.

SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

The third test match between England and South Africa was left drawn.

This has revived hopes concerning the future of English cricket.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Lansbury complained that Lord Sankey, the previous Lord Chancellor was 'sacked like any ordinary workman'.

Ordinary workman might, no doubt, be sacked; but Lord Sankey was 'Woolsacked'!

Mr. Baldwin stated that both Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden were equal in the Cabinet.

And in his first speech as Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel proved that he was equal to anything!

Referring to conditions in Abyssinia, he is reported to have charged the Abyssinians with practising domestic slavery still.

Italy's complaint seems to be that there is no foreign slavery yet!

CAUSE AND EFFECT?

The Bengal Government have served a restraint order on Mr. Mohanlal Saxena prohibiting him

from entering certain districts in connection with the proposed Congress enquiry into the working of the repressive laws.

The A. P. I. reports that a large number of detenus have been released, some on parole, some unconditionally.

We are unable to determine whether to thank the Bengal Government or Mr. Saxena for this result.

A news-item says that one kind of fish walks.

Anglers need not be perturbed so long as they don't talk!

Referring to Quetta, a communique says that while contributions in money will be received, voluntary help is not required.

Then why not pay for it, and thus relieve unemployment in the country.

The Lord Bishop of Madras says that he can get three Bengali B. A.'s for the price of his chauffeur.

We gather however that no transactions in Bishops have so far been reported!

The Government of India has ruled that a High Court Judge while travelling is entitled to four berths.

It is understood that on the bench however he will continue to have only one!

News comes from an American university that a journalist who claimed to have personal experience of depression has been appointed professor of Depression.

It is so like America to create a boom out of everything!

Says Mr. Rajan: 'The climbing down of the Congress is itself a sufficient testimony to the futility of obstructive tactics.'



On the other hand, we should like to know what has been proved by the climbing up of Mr. Rajan!

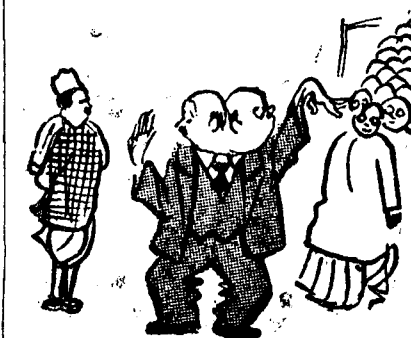
'If the Justice Party came to power once again, their first duty would be to solve the Land revenue problem.

—Mr. Rajan.

We never believed much in death-bed repentances!

Mr. Ramaswamy Mudaliar claims that it was the Indian soldiers who fought in the Great War that helped to place India on the international map.

The main thing is that it was *not* the Justice Party.



The Editor, His Page

The Wolf and the Lamb

THE latest version of this ancient legend comes from the House of Commons—the world's premier talkie; and the role of the wolf was vicariously assumed by Sir Samuel Hoare. There was a naive simplicity in his exposition of the Italo-Abyssinian quarrel that must leave the legendary wolf gasping. It appears that the Abyssinians are guilty of many superstitious and some barbarous practices; and of course Italy wants room for expansion. These are excellent reasons for swallowing the Abyssinian lamb, and came with peculiar appositeness from the mouth of the man who has made India safe for England for all time. The technique of Imperialism is the same all the world over!

The position of Abyssinia seems hopeless. Japan has blessed the Italian adventure. It is true she could not have hindered it much. But hers was a significant gesture—of contempt aimed at the League! America repeats her good intentions, but won't lift her little finger. France has adopted a *non-possumus* attitude, on the score that the corpse of the League of Nations must be preserved at all costs. And Mussolini awaits the end of the rainy season to launch his campaign.

The only hope for Abyssinia lies in the 'collective insecurity' of Europe. Mussolini's apple-cart may be upset even by the threat of a move by Hitler in central Europe. If that fails, a last forlorn hope lies in the changes and chances of the battle-field. The Abyssinians, we are told, are tough fighters. Mussolini may yet find that Adowa was not a stray exception. In any case, Abyssinia has the sympathies of the down-trodden peoples of the world.

Military Training for Indians

Mr. Satyamurti's appetite for oratory grows on what it feeds. During the last few weeks, he has covered an amazing lot of ground, literally as well as figuratively. Age cannot wither, nor custom stale the infinite variety of his pronouncements. It must be gratifying to him to find himself so much in his true element. Recently he spoke on the need for compulsory military training for the young men of our colleges, to begin with. The idea is so obvious, the urgency of it so patent that it is a matter for surprise that it has never yet been treated as a live issue. The reasons are not far to seek. Under the Gandhian dispensation, the idea was taboo for its incompatibility with that of Ahimsa, or Non-violence. That a prominent congressman should thus have challenged the prevailing idea is, I think, portentous of a definite, albeit still imperceptible, change in the ideology of Congress itself. I shall not go so far as to say that it marks the end of the Gandhian phase of thought. The failure of it in its immediate political objective has been

a source of ill-concealed satisfaction to our enemies—indigenous and foreign. Its positive contribution to the building up of our nationhood is far more likely to be recognised in retrospect than now. I believe a generation is rising which, while atavistic in regard to the cult of non-violence, will be formed altogether of finer grain, with political courage, social conscience and public zeal of a definitely higher order. The claim of the Congress to represent the nation as a whole will thus be proved again, in as much as the reactions of Congress policy and programme are more potent on non or anti-congressmen than on the faithful. Saul kicked against pricks, and became—St. Paul!

Mr. Satyamurti's reference to the subject is therefore very seasonable. But it is commonly said that there is no response to the call for recruits. The reason is quite simple. When Indians clamour for military training they mean one thing; and when the Government say there is no response they mean another. Take the case of England for instance. The Officers Training Corps is a recognised, and in many cases, a compulsory feature of education in schools and colleges. From these are drawn the officers, as a second line reserve, in times of national emergency. H. R. H. the Prince of Wales characterised those who objected to this system of training students as *cranks*. If training is given to educated young men there is scope for their absorption in a national army for purely defensive and policing duties. No attempt has been made in this country to provide a career for young men in the army. The reason is we are suspect in our own land. And then there is the vicious system of encouraging the so-called martial classes to the exclusion of the great bulk of the people of the country. The economies that might be effected would be sensational; and the spectre of growing unemployment will cease to stalk through the land. There are a certain number of U. T. C's vegetating in some of our universities. If a prospect of some of those trained in them being taken into the army is held out annually, they would be galvanised into a new life, and we will hear no more of any lack of response.

The Government have made a sort of beginning. Meanwhile it is clearly the performance of a public duty to draw attention to the need for the development among our young men of a sturdier, manlier physique. Mr. Satyamurti said that we needed not the Bhagavad Gita for the present, but football fields. It is really not an alternative; but it is an arresting way of putting the need for military training. The Gita deals with the finest soldiers known to fact or fiction. Students of the Gita are valiant fighters. I would therefore amend Mr. Satyamurti's epigram to read thus: What our young men need is to practise the Gita as much in the playing field as elsewhere.



Dewan Bahadur 'Ramsay': I am prepared to forget the past and work for a united front...

The Public: It is easier for you to forget, Ramsay, than for us to forgive!



****—Extraordinary ***—Excellent
**—Ordinary *—Poor
0—Discreditable

DEAR MR. MERRY,

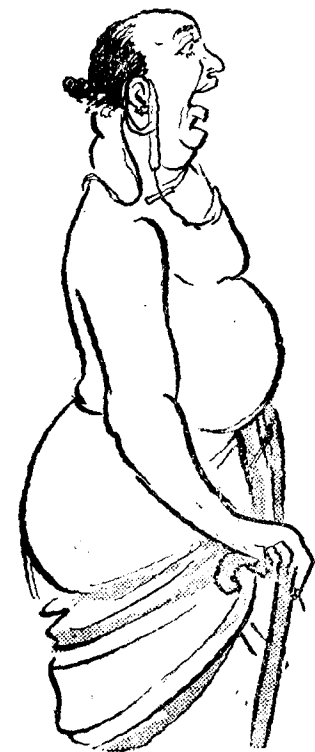
THE great event of the fortnight has been the 'unveiling' of *Bhakta Nandanar* to the astonished gaze of an impatient public. Thanks to a publicity campaign of unprecedented ferocity, we had been led to look forward to it as to an impending miracle. Now that it is before us, it is possible, and indeed necessary, to estimate the performance in the light of its earlier promise. With your permission, Mr. Merry, I propose to pinch an idea from an American film critic, and appraise the values of the various parts of *Nandanar*, as examiners do the answers of candidates, by awarding 'star' marks. I am a plain man, speak for plain men, and am anxious to record my impressions in a plain manner.

It is needless to give a resume of the story, since all of us know it. The producers have given the film the

subsidiary title of 'Opera', thus throwing the emphasis on the singing part more than on the acting. Let me therefore first deal with the music in *Nandanar*.

****—Extraordinary: I am emphatically of opinion that pride of place should be given to the songs of the Vedar's wife. The reader who has seen the film might exclaim in some bewilderment that this character does not sing a single song throughout the opera. That is exactly the reason that has prompted me to give her the palm; for, as the poet has feelingly exclaimed:

'Heard melodies may be sweet, but those unheard are sweeter!' No other character in the film gives us quite such an excellent opportunity for enjoying unheard melodies.



Bhakta Nandanar

***—Excellent: Next to her the distinction goes to the pariah woman who sings with abandon, and dances as she sings. She is a buxom lass—to the manner born—whose arch freedom and facile grace tickled my fancy hugely. Discerning play-goers must vote her and her part a mighty 'hit'.

**—Ordinary: Here I must with some trepidation, place Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer. His handicaps were many. His reputation as a Vidwan was great; he was known to hold audiences spell-bound by his adroit manipulation of the finer nuances of *ragas*; and he possesses a voice which gains in consistency what it may lack in sweetness. Yet, he forgot the weight of his pedantic burden, and actually made a gallant attempt to sing his songs naturally, and with evident enjoyment. There were of course occasional lapses when he didn't know where to stop. Nevertheless, he had some definite idea that the songs were a means to an end.

His acting was even better. It was a chunk of realism when we are given the morning darshan of the 'Vediyar', and he keeps it up in all his appearances, marked as they are by an admirable sense of proportion. The only awkward movement of his career was where he has to fall headlong at the feet of the Bhakta; and even that he carries off with that shame-faced contrition which is natural to a high caste, driven to the painful necessity of recognising greatness in the lowly and downtrodden.

*—Poor: I have great admiration for Srimati K. B. Sundarambal. She is *facile princeps* the queen of music on the Tamil stage. She is an artiste who has triumphantly demonstrated the possibility of combining nationalist fervour with strains of music such as Orpheus had sung.

Well-known stars of the West have shown a commendable distrust of their powers when called upon to repeat their stage successes on the Screen. There have been dazzling exceptions; but they only prove the soundness of the general rule. Srimati Sundarambal has certainly not shown herself to be one of such exceptions. A lesser person might have got off with a much worse performance, but the very splendour of her previous reputation made us look to nothing short of perfection. To say that the *over-dressed* Nanda of the screen is a failure is an under-statement. Several of the songs sung by this erstwhile idol of our hearts fell far short of the highest requirements of *sruti* and *thala*.

Her dialogue was no better. She made the disastrous mistake of walking, speaking and singing on STILTS. I have noticed that the up-country novice using



Her speeches were very often not in character; more than once she appears to play the role of a public speaker addressing a political meeting. As for the musical setting of well-known songs, I don't know what made her disturb them capriciously; others better known were left out altogether.

Her acting was, on the other hand, as poor as it is on the stage. Would that she had maintained her *forte* for soul-piercing strains as easily! When she slinks away from the Vediyar, after being refused permission to go to Chidambaram, her movements were a piece of unintended burlesque! They were those of a pick-pocket caught in the act, or a school-boy caught in his truancy.

My private classification of Indian films has always been, Bad, Worse and Worst. *Bhakta Nandanar* is emphatically *not* BAD!

0—Discreditable. Hereunder I propose to consider such abstruse matters as photography, sound-recording and directing. We were told that a gentleman had come specially from Hollywood to attend to some of them. Let me first state that the dodge to throw the responsibility on Hollywood will not go down. We are bound to admit however that the opening scenes were excellently conceived and executed. They struck the right atmosphere, and provided the right setting. But it was for a minute only. A series of ghastly mistakes neutralised the first favourable impression. There was a scene of toddy-drawers, for instance. I have nowhere seen in South India such a crowd of them simultaneously ascending a score or more of trees. The toddy contractor will tell you that it would be uneconomical for him to conduct his business in that style. One man does twenty or thirty trees a day, not twenty or thirty men all the trees in ten or twenty minutes. But let it pass. What amazes me however is the jejune-ness of the sound-recording. There was no synchronising at all in many places. It was painful to see the mouths of your favourite actors working convulsively while the sounds came from somewhere else, and always a little behind time! Most of the actors failed to 'connect', and were infallibly bowled middle-stump; but the tragedy was they didn't know it! I hit upon a desperate device in the course of one of such ordeals. It answered,

reasonably well. I closed my ears as the mangled music was unbearable; I then closed my eyes in order to be saved the sight of the agonising contortions of the speakers. The result was entirely satisfactory, for I had much needed relief for my sight and hearing.

Now I come to the directing. Nanda sees a vision of the dancing Nataraja in one of his trances. The impersonation of the god by a chap who was skin and bone was passable in the static pose. But he had to dance in character.

The mystic dance of Nataraja is the cry of the soul in rhythmic movement of the supreme life. What we witnessed was an outrage, not on our sense of piety, but on that of decency. I have seen in matters of high art, and high philosophy, most spectators the movement of the hips, whether of man or woman, suggests something lascivious. It was a vision of orgies which might have been indulged in by primitive or decadent peoples. He popped up and down, he swayed backward and forward, for all the world as if he was made of—rubber!

Miscellaneous: There were other minor episodes of a humorous character. For instance, there was the old man—the pariah patriarch—whose senility was variable and uncertain. An appearance of rejuvenated strength and vigour after he is initiated into the glories of *Siva bhakti* is quite understandable, but the sight of the person acting the role of the old man frequently forgetting to shake and tremble and suddenly remembering to do so before the initiation is more humorous than impressive.

(Continued next page bottom)



The Type—

by Sheikh Iftekhar Rasool

A persistent catarrh of the throat drove me, glad to be driven, though resenting the perpetual sensation of having a 'foreign body' lodged in my larynx, to Upper Egypt for the winter. Early in December I was established in the Villa Pagnon, a long bungalow standing in the midst of an assemblage of tall palm trees not three minutes from the Nile. The mists of the Swiss mountains had given place to the unclouded blue, the apparently eternal sunshine, of the land I had once known well but had half forgotten. I settled down to enjoy an enchanted winter.

Through this enchanted winter passed a procession of individualities. My experience of human nature was enlarged almost daily. I met people of many nations—English, Americans, French, German, Italian, Hungarians, Albanians, Swedes, Swiss, Greeks. I even met authentic Egyptians, who were proud of their country and considered it a splendid thing to have been born Egyptian. (And I wasn't going to disagree with them.)

I met collectors, Egyptologists, clergymen, doctors, princes, pashas, wandering old ladies who had confronted Persia with trembling limbs and floating veils, American girls so thin that a straw could scarcely contend with them, hunters of big game, tennis players, creepers in mummy pits. I met people who lived for Egyptology, and people who hated Egyptology, surprising people who had travelled thousands of miles to see Egypt, and who complained bitterly of the number of Egyptians in the land; female tourists who got on donkeys clad in plus-fours of black silk, with mauve stockings and zebra 'jumpers', ladies of apparently easy virtue, who had to be adroitly got out of hotels to the excited regret of enterprising young gentlemen inflamed by the climate of Egypt; professors, professional dancers, an Indian wrestler and a juggler. I met painters, musicians and opera-singers.

And I met the 'writer'.

He was an old Indian Army Officer, and as soon as I was introduced to him my spirits naturally rose. But I soon found out after a day that he was not the slightest use for my purpose. The only remarkable thing about him was that he was staying in a cheap boarding-house, when he was obviously quite prosperous and rather fastidious. Here was the possibility of a mystery. Perhaps he had stayed here as a young man and had come back for memory's sake, or perhaps he was secretly in love with a widow living in a nearby villa.

One fine morning I broached the subject with my usual tact, and he laughed.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I write for some of the better-class magazines, and I have come here to study types."

"So have I."

Then, as always happens when two writers meet, we tried to find out what papers the other wrote for, hoping thus to steal some of his markets, and we took away the characters of other writers, and boasted about long chats we had with editors and how they had said that the only reason they didn't use more of our stuff was because it was above the public's head.

I asked him if he had found any material during his stay there, and he confessed that the people round about seemed to be a very interesting crowd. He had made one little sketch, he said, which he had sent to *Good Laughs*. I wondered which one had provided him with the material. The Colonel left the boarding-house next day and I was able to make a little improvement in my health. During my spare hours I also wrote a little and sent it to the English magazines. But I spent most of the time looking after my health. Humour was absolutely absent from Egypt.

About a month later I had copy a of the *Good Laughs* sent to me. I opened it eagerly to find if the Colonel's article was in it. I found it, and read it through carefully.

It was an extremely distorted character-sketch of myself.

THE END

Bhakta Nandanar—(Continued from previous page)

If however it had been permitted to us to enjoy the film as a screaming farce. I do not know if I can sing out anything more exquisite than the little vignette pertaining to the kitchen department of the Vedic's household. The cook is absolutely first-rate; and I rather suspect that it was because he wanted to be not a s but a cook. And so he succeeds where his better have failed lamentably.

At the premiere, Srimati Sundarambal made a speech appealing for constructive criticism of the film. If she really meant what she said, and is prepared to back her words by deeds, I suggest in all seriousness,—for the sake of her reputation, for the sake of the large number of her disillusioned admirers, and for the sake of the future of the film industry itself in our country, to make ANOTHER FILM OF NANDANAR. We assure her in advance that it cannot be so bad as this!

Picture-Goer,

The Decorative Art

II. Panels and Panels

'by Kumudini'

PANELLING is a very old form of decoration used in architecture. Many are the materials employed in panelling and various the designs used. But none so startling as those one sees when walking along any high road that boasts of spacious bungalows of rich merchants, such as the P— High Road in Madras.

There, without any warning, the innocent traveller will find himself suddenly confronted with panelled gate-posts, and what are the panels?—not pieces of rare artistic mosaic work, not imitated Greek Corinthian columns; neither marble slabs with the name of the bungalow chiselled nor brass plates with the owner's name engraved; he will find panels of glazed tiles.

Simply that; glazed tiles, laid one on top of the other, four on each side.

The smooth and the glossy has ever had a peculiar fascination for the primitive mind. Hence the phenomenal success of bead merchants in savage countries, and dealers of glazed tiles in Madras.

The industrious merchant has accumulated wealth. He can buy land; he buys it. He can build a bungalow; he builds it. He can choose his own materials for the building; he chooses it. And then, there in the tile market, he sees the glazed tiles. He sees, he looks at them with interest, and alas, his doom is sealed. He is fascinated. He cannot escape their lure, their slithering smoothness, their strange fantastic patterns. He can actually buy this cold, proud

beauty and possess it as his own. He buys it, and what does he do then? He does not floor his bathroom with the tiles. It looks like sacrilege to him. He puts them in the panels in the outer gate-posts, so that all may see and enjoy this piece of art, and envy him his possession of it.



Is his wife to lag behind her husband in the matter of tastefully decorating their home? Not she. Has she no artistic taste? She has. So she claims her share. "You have bought eight tiles for your gate, have you?" she asks. "Well then, I want sixteen (or may be thirty-two) to cover the altar front in the puja room." She gets her sixteen (or may be thirty-two) tiles, and in a most devoted and worshipful manner covers the altar front of her deity with these slabs of baked tiles.

It does not strike her that they look gaudy and out of place, and that to put them in the altar front where only the best, the most beautiful that could be procured by us, should be laid, is desecration.

"The Madras Chetty," writes Dr. Tagore, "spends lakhs of rupees in building a temple in exact imitation of one that was built hundreds of years ago. Beyond that his tired mind cannot go."

But to my knowledge, one person at least has gone further. He has built a temple, and in front of the Garbhagriha, where it is usual to build a mantapam of beautifully polished black marble, he has built a square mantapam of glazed white tiles. No doubt Dr. Tagore would be glad to hear of this improvement on our part.

THE SONG OF SADANAND.

"Underneath the Damocles' sword
Fate's ordained my bed and board:
To seek my destruction is vain
For I only die to be born again!"

The MISFORTUNES of Meena



STORY BY
DIEISVI

ILLUSTRATED BY
SEIKAIR

In the Previous Nine 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 and attempts to drown herself in the big lake that adjoins the Railway Station.

Railway Police Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer rushes into the waters and rescues 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 takes the baby to his sister who is married to a Dikshidar at Mayavaram, and tells her that the baby is an orphan, having lost her parents 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. 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 give her away to 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 decides to follow her husband. Meena's letters to her father written from her husband's

village reveal an amazing state of affairs. Meena is the fourth wife. The three previous wives are reported to have come to grief owing to the monstrosity of the husband. He has been choosing and marrying wives from all corners of the country mainly with a view to offering them to inspecting officers and thus curry their favour to cover and condone his maladministration of the village. Alarmed at the news contained in Meena's letters, Rangaswamy Iyer proceeds to the village where Meena resides. A gang of men under instructions from his son-in-law waylay him and take him into a grove at dusk. Rangaswamy is threatened with death. A pit is ready and he is told by his son-in-law that he will be buried alive.

Tenth Instalment

The Man with a Bear

"WHAT is the nature and extent of my offence, may I ask, that you should have made all these arrangements to bury me alive?" asked Rangaswamy calmly.

"Perhaps you would care to remember," said his son-in-law Somayajulu, equally calmly, "a document which you signed prior to the marriage and wherein you said that Meena was your legitimate daughter. I knew even then it was a lie."

"I plead guilty. But the punishment which you propose to mete out is out of all proportion to the offence!"

"I haven't finished," went on Somayajulu. "I hate your interference in my affairs. I know that your precious girl has been writing to you some tall stories. I knew you would be coming over here. The Station-master also knows everything: he is my friend. Everyone here is my friend. No one can afford the luxury of being my foe. You, with your absurd ideas and silly notions of your self-imposed parentage over a convict's daughter, stand in my way. I will use her as I think fit. To me you are a mere mosquito and I won't have you interfering in my affairs."

"Is that all?"

"No. There is the burial service—quite a simple affair."

Rangaswamy smiled—a deprecatory smile and spread his hands.

"One's life is after all sweet to oneself," said he. "Believe me or not, I am not ready to die just now. Apart from the Rs. 2000/- you gave me, I have saved another two-thousands and the whole amount is lying in a bank. All my life, I have slaved and sweated and I do not know what comfort, luxury, rest and all other good things in life mean. I am old. I love my life and should like to be spared what little of it is still left. I assure you that you have knocked all the nonsense out of my head regarding her whom you have rightly called a convict's daughter. I have carried my infatuation for her mother too far even into the life of the daughter. I assure you, nay, I swear, that from this moment I shall not interest myself in your affairs or in Meena. Give me my life. It is an old man who begs for it from you on bended knees."

"Let him go, poor devil! After all, what is it that he can do?" said one of the men, moved by Rangaswamy's appeal.

"Let him go! We will keep the pit open and if ever he wags his tail, the pit shall receive him!" said another.

"That will do!" said Somayajulu, motioning his men to be quiet. He turned to Rangaswamy and said, "My men plead for your life. I'll spare it to you. You shall give me a letter confessing that Meena is the daughter of

convict No. 1783. And you shall make no effort to enter this State hereafter on penalty of death."

"I agree and swear to do so!"

"Blindfold him and throw him into the cart!" ordered Somayajulu.

Four men got hold of Rangaswamy, tied a bandage over his eyes, lifted him bodily and carrying him to the cart, threw him in. They tied up his hands and legs with ropes. He lay there for half an hour speculating on what they would do to him. Suddenly with a jerk, the cart moved and rumbled along the road.

His feet and hands tied, his eyes blind-folded, his whole body aching by the jolting of the cart, Rangaswamy was taken at midnight to a lonely hut that was situated in the middle of a field. He was dragged out of the cart and thrown inside the hut. He asked for water and for a little freedom of limb. But his requests fell on deaf ears. He suffered untold agony all night and when he was again dragged out of the hut, he had no idea of the hour. He was led like a captive on foot. The men who led him were silent and when eventually they untied the ropes and the bandage over his eyes, Rangaswamy saw that he was near a Railway Station. The day was dawning. Four of his captors were grinning at him.

"You a policeman?" asked one of them.

"Yes," said Rangaswamy with a grimace.

"How much money have you?"

"About 80 Rupees."

"Good! That," said the man pointing to the station, "is Garla. Buy two tickets for us to Bona-Kalu and for yourself one to hell. Keep your mouth shut. At the slightest suspicion we have orders to kill you. Therefore, behave yourself!"

When eventually Head-Constable Rangaswamy Iyer arrived at Chingleput Railway Station, to his cup of misery was added a startling communication from his headquarters. He was directed to report himself to headquarters to show cause why he should not be punished for absenting himself from the Station without obtaining previous permission. Rangaswamy was inclined to consign headquarters and all that it stood for, to blazes. But Police Constable 526 took a serious view of the situation and insisted on Rangaswamy reporting himself as directed. To Police Constable 526 Rangaswamy never gave a hint of the happenings in the dominion of his Exalted Highness. Police Constable 526 was not even aware of the precise nature of Rangaswamy's visit.

"Is Meena well? Did she give any message for me?" asked Police Constable 526, but a significant "Tch!" from his 'head' and the agony in his face made Police Constable 526 suspect that all was not well with Meena.

He was more worried over the orders from headquarters and therefore bundled Rangaswamy Iyer against his will, to that much-dreaded place.

"What have you to say for yourself?" asked Deputy Superintendent Sivaswamy Iyer, who was a stern disciplinarian, and a terror to the subordinate staff.

"The truth is sir, I had to proceed to the Nizam's State to rescue my daughter. I won't mind, Sir, even if you were to order me to face a firing squad. I am sick of life!"

"Very well, go on with your story."

Rangaswamy delivered an unvarnished tale beginning with the birth of Meena right up to the reception he had from his son-in-law. And as the story went on, Mr. Sivaswamy Iyer's mask of office was unconsciously put aside and it was a very human person who listened to the conclusion of Rangaswamy's tale of woe. He bade Rangaswamy sit down in the middle of the story and gave him a glass of water to drink, noticing the pitch of his emotion. "It is a pitiful tale!" said Mr. Sivaswamy Iyer when Rangaswamy had concluded his story, "and I sympathise with you. Did it never strike you to seek the help of the Bezwada Railway Police? I shudder to think what unspeakable horrors the poor child is enduring there. I was very angry with you for having deserted your post of duty. Now, I feel as if I must do something to rescue the poor girl. Let me think it over. See me to-morrow or the day after. Have you any plans?"

"I was thinking of seeking redress in a court of Law."

"Pooh! You will gain nothing thereby. There is such a thing as a writ for *Habeas Corpus* but the girl is in the dominion of an ally and the courts would reject any application on the ground that they have no jurisdiction. I have an idea which I shall develop during the course of the night. Perhaps, I may visit the headquarters of the intelligence department during the day. I hope you have no objection to leaving the matter in my hands."

"I leave it entirely in your hands and I am deeply grateful. You have given me hopes and a new lease of life."

"That'll do. I'll see that you are relieved quickly. See me now and then and if there is anything to be done I shall send for you."

"Thank you, Sir!"

Ella was very much worried. He had been warned that if he went near Meena or talked to her, he would be hacked to pieces and thrown to the wolves. He wondered why Meena never received any replies to all the various letters to her father. He went to the Post-Office and asked the post-master if there were any letters for Meena. "Well, my hero!" said the post-master, "you will be sent to jail one of these days. You have been posting letters here from that Tamil-girl in your village without the knowledge of her husband and I was about to lose my job because I did not, forsooth, put a stop to your pranks. If you come near this Post-Office any more, I'll break every bone in your body!"

Ella next expressed his fears to his mother but the old dame was herself in disgrace. Gujji had asked her not to come near the house and had threatened her with dire consequences if she did so. "My boy! What can we

poor people do! My heart goes out to that lovely girl there, imprisoned may be, by those monsters. If we open our mouth we would be murdered in our beds. Even Gunda has been warned not to mix with the village-folk. What can we do?" wailed Etchi, Ella's mother. A commotion was heard in the distance and Ella went out to see what it was all about. It was a man with a bear followed by a crowd of village urchins.

"Ella! For one rupee this man says he will convert the bear into a girl!" cried one of Ella's friends.

The man with the bear looked at Ella closely and then assumed a serious air, inclining his head. "I am a magician!" said the man, "and I know everything. You are Ella and your mother is Etchi."

"That is true," acquiesced Ella.

"And you are in great sorrow over a girl!"

The crowd of urchins tittered. The man with the bear turned on them with a ferocious look and bade them go away. They hesitated. He let loose the bear on them and they flew helter-skelter. Ella too was about to run away when the man caught hold of him.

"Stay! Isn't it true?" asked the man with the bear.

"Isn't what true?" asked Ella.

"The beautiful girl who is in trouble."

"How do you know?"

"I am a magician. I know everything. You, you, Ella, son of Etchi, you love this beautiful girl?"

"How dare I?"

"You adore her?"

"As I adore the village Goddess!"

"Very good. Supposing a demon plans to carry your village Goddess and the demon could be stopped only by a human sacrifice, would you offer yourself?"

"Willingly."

"Would you do the same thing to yonder Tamil lady?"

"Most cheerfully!"

"Ah, my lad, you must love her very much indeed! I know it! Remember, I am a magician and there is nothing in this world which I do not know. I tell you that the fair one whom you adore will not come to grief. Deliverance is at hand. Mighty Hanuman is at work! There is magic in these words. When you hear any one uttering these words, do whatever they ask you to do, even if it be the giving-up of your life. If you fail, if you hesitate, I shall convert you into a bear and put an iron hoop through your nose and lead you like this," and the man with the bear, to Ella's dismay, demonstrated what he would do.

"Now, repeat the magic words!" commanded the man with the bear.

"Deliverance is at hand! Mighty Hanuman is at work!" muttered Ella.

"Don't forget the words. Repeat them to yourself a thousand times and don't reveal them to anyone. If you do, I'll turn you into a pig."

The man with the bear frowned at Ella, for, there was a look of scepticism on Ella's face.

"Give me a handful of sand!" commanded the man with the bear. Ella stooped down and scooped-up a handful of sand from the road and gave it to him.



"Stand up!
Walk on two legs!"

"Open your eyes wide and watch me!" said the man with the bear and covering the sand in his hand with a piece of cloth, he made a few passes, incanting certain unintelligible words. When he removed the cloth and showed his hand, it was full of brown sugar. He gave it all to Ella who tasted it with relish and wonder. "My name is Maruti, the Magician. This bear is Jambo. Do you know the Ramayana?" asked the man with the bear.

"My mother has told me the story many times," said Ella.

"Remember Hanuman who set fire to Lanka?"

"And quite rightly too!" chirped Ella with enthusiasm.

"Why?" queried Maruti the Magician.

"How could the ten-headed monster kidnap Sita and imprison her in his island?" flared up Ella.

"Too bad, isn't it? Well, well. Even to-day we see one-headed Ravana: but, unfortunately there are no Hanumans or Jambuvans to help. There are people like you, worthless fellows, fit for nothing. Hm!" sighed Maruti and looked significantly at Somayajulu's house in the distance.

In a flash, Ella realised the significance of what the man with the bear was saying. He pondered for a second and then lifting his head and looking Maruti squarely in the face said: "I cannot cross oceans or lift mountains on my shoulders. But if ever I can lay down my life to help her to escape from this place, I shall do so."

"Good boy!" said the man with the bear and passed on, cautioning Ella not to follow him. He approached Somayajulu's house chanting loudly in a sing-song voice, "Weep not, Kamu's daughter! Fear not, Rangu's child! Be brave, child of Ramathilakam! Deliverance is at hand! Mighty Hanuman is at work!"

The front-door was half-closed. In spite of the noise he made, no one came out to see him or his bear. He squatted on the road in front of the house and began a song. Gujji came out with a frown on her face.

"Go away you! There is no one here to see you and your bear! Try the village!"

"Ah, mother, I am hungry and so is Jambo here. Look mother, Jambo is a nice boy! Once before he lead a whole battalion against the Rakshasas. He supervised the erection of a bridge! He was an architect! Weren't you Jambo? And now you fool, you haven't even a full meal! What a fate! What a fate! But Jambo my lad, there are people worse off than you. Salute the old dame, you rascal! She is going to feed you!"

Meena came to see what it was all about and the man with the bear hailed her.

"Ah, here is Sita, Jambo! Salute her too! Stand up! Walk on two legs! Grin! My! What teeth the old boy has! Now, roll on the floor! Sit! Sing a song! See, Sitamma how he sings!"

"Are you going or not?" asked Gujji angrily.

"Oh, mother, this son is hungry! Don't be angry! Give him some food or a piece of cloth!"

"You can't eat a piece of cloth for your hunger!" said Meena to the man, good humouredly.

"Can't I? Try me! I am Maruti the Magician! Deliverance is at hand! Mighty Hanuman is at work! That is my message! I ask only for a handful of food! If food is denied to me, I will die here!"

Gujji went in, apparently to bring some food for the man. A change came over the man; he looked around cautiously and tossed a letter to Meena.

"Sh! Hide it and read it when you are alone! Don't get excited. I beseech you in the name of Kamu amina and Uncle Rangu!" whispered the man with the bear. Meena hastily thrust the letter into her hip and covered it with her saree. Gujji came with a vessel in her hand and on seeing her, the man made the bear dance with joy.

"Here is food, Jambo, my lad! The mother is kind! Fall at her feet, you old sinner and pray to the *Lokamatha*! May you live a hundred years, mother!"

Receiving the food in a tin-can and invoking many blessings on the bestowers thereof, the man departed chanting and dancing, "Deliverance is at hand! Mighty Hanuman is at work!"

As soon as Meena could find the time she shut herself up in a room and with trembling hands opened the letter. It was from her father.

My darling Meena,

If ever this letter reaches your hands I want you to know that I am doing all that is humanly possible to rescue you from your present position. Day and night I am praying to God to show me the way. I have been a Godless man all these years and I dread to think what would happen if my prayers were to go unheeded.

I started for your village immediately after I received your letter of the 29th August. I endured untold agony when I read your letters and I had no idea that your husband (the monster!) wouldn't hesitate even to kill me. The Station-master evidently sent word in advance about my arrival and I was waylaid very near your village and your husband with a gang of men threatened to bury me alive. I had to beg my life and promise not to enter the State again nor take any interest in you. You can imagine my agony and helplessness when eventually they agreed to let me go.

The Railway Superintendent of Police here to whom I had to narrate the whole story is taking an active interest in our affairs and but for him I would have committed suicide. Even now, I dread to think what agonies you are made to endure there. If by the grace of Providence nothing untoward has happened to you, I want you to read this letter carefully and act up to the instructions contained herein.

The man who is arranging to have this letter delivered to you is a notorious K. D. Among many aliases he is known as Maruti the Magician, a name of which he is very proud. He belongs to those parts and knows the country and its inhabitants

(Continued on page 16)

Madras Calling

by P. P. Samuel

THE other day, on April 1st 1935, if you are inclined to be inquisitive, I had the privilege of taking a visitor round the city of Madras. He was a man from Sumatra, born of Indian parents there, and he was simmering with excitement when he stepped on Indian concrete at the harbour.

"Visiting Madras for the first time?" I asked.

"Yah," he replied, "the very first; but I have heard a lot about the city and should like to have a look round."

"Righto," I said. "Shall I buzz you round before I drop you at the hotel? What would you like to see first? The zoo—or the council chamber of the Corporation of Madras?"

"Does it make any difference to you?"

"Not at all," I said thoughtfully. "To-day is All Fools' Day. Even those people on the pavement there seem to be aware of it."

"Who are those ragged people?"

"Beggars, of course. Don't you allow your beggars to camp on the pavements in Sumatra?"

"No, we don't; our municipalities provide workhouses for them."

"How inhuman your municipalities are to clap all the indigent in virtual prisons! Our large-hearted, large-souled city fathers should never dream of doing anything so revolting. They recognize the right of every citizen, healthy or diseased, to roam unrestrained about the city. 'Give and take' is their motto. And the beggars do give much more than they take."

"Hullo! What are these?"

"Why, dogs of course. Don't you have dogs in Padang? The friends of man, you know, from the dawn of history."

"Well, there are dogs in Sumatra, but not such decayed ones. Have these poor brutes no owners?"

"I suppose they have. They all belong to the Corporation of Madras, I shouldn't wonder. You can see them all the time on the high roads. That beauty over there (yes, the one with little skin and less hair on him) has been living under that lamp-post for about a year now."

"Sickening!" said the Sumatran. "In Palembang and Padang such animals get sent to the lethal chamber the moment they are seen abroad."

"Well," said I, with a soupcon of civic pride, "our municipality (Oh, I'm sorry. I mean 'Corporation.') will never descend to such depths of barbarity. They live and let live, and never forget that 'a dog is a dog for a' that."

"Ha, ha," he laughed. "Barbarity indeed! But do you mean to say you have no lethal chamber in Madras?"

"I don't. You shouldn't run away with the impression that our councillors do not read municipal reports from Palembang and Padang. As a matter of fact we do

have a well-appointed lethal chamber, though it is perhaps just decorative like old china on the mantelpiece or buttons on your coat-sleeve or ministers under the present regime or—"

"What—Oh, sorry. I shouldn't have interrupted."

"Not at all. Children, income-tax people and visitors have always the liberty to butt in."

"Very well, then. What are these bottomless drums strewn anyhow all over the city?"

"Dustbins, sir, dustbins. And may I add that in the matter of bins we lead—other cities follow. Calcutta, they say, is the second city in the Empire; very true in regard to dustbins. Our rigid, reliable, reversible receptacles for rubbish *refy rompetition*. And they can be emptied with incredible ease like the top-hat of a conjurer. All you need do is to give it a smart kick in the solar plexus, as every urban cow in search of plantain leaves or yesterday's *Hindu* knows. The bin rolls right away, leaving all the dust behind. Isn't it too cute?"

"Yah," he agreed. But absent-mindedly, for his attention had been distracted by a crowd watching something in the centre of Broadway. He turned to me inquiringly.

"That again," I said, "is characteristic of Madras. Your Madras is a born goggler. Give him a medium-size hole in the road or a stalling motor car and he will stand goggling at it till Tuesday week. Those lads over there are just watching the road-menders at work. Pelmanism is abroad, don't you see?"

"Why on earth are they digging up that road? It looks newly paved."

"Well, as a matter of fact it was rolled according to regulations only yesterday. But I suppose they have suddenly discovered, as they often do, that they have mislaid their theodolite or overseer or something. And they are tearing up the road in case—"

"What do you call this road?"

"Broadway."

"Why?"

"Better ask the Mayor when you get to Ripon Buildings. But I suppose they call it Broadway because it is so narrow. There is only one other main street which is as narrow as Broadway. Big Street. You know, don't you, that 'god-parents' are among the most contemptible practical jokers. Why, I know a man who is ugly as a dyspeptic camel, and guess what they call him. Alagasundaram!"

"Your houses too seem to have funny names, if you will allow me to say so. Why is that one called 'Corporation View'?"

"Obvious," I said. "It stands opposite to a sewage pumping station. You may take it as a general rule that if a building in Madras is not a 'Vilas', ten to one it is a

View! Tank-View; Court-View; School-View; View-View!

"What's in a name," said the Sumatran.

"Oh, only about so much," I said. "People all over the world have the knack of giving foolish names. I know an Englishman, otherwise quite respectable, labelled Cheesebug. And just imagine a genius like H. G. Wells naming his novel 'Blupington of Bulp'."

"Bulpington of Blup," he corrected.

"As you please," I rejoined. "Now shall I take you to one of the best roads in Madras?"

"If you don't mind."

"This," I announced, with not a little pride, "is Mount Road—one of the best motor highways in South India."

"Ah," said the visitor, "not half bad. Almost as good as a second class road in Padang, I should say. It must have cost you quite a few guilders. But why this jagged, dusty margin on either side?"

I could answer that one.

"These are days," I enthused, "when the whole world is crazy for 'records'. Madras I am told, holds the world record for dust and the Empire record for smells. And our vigilant city fathers do not fail to maintain the distinction attained. If a foolish overseer, for instance, insists on tarring the whole road, an indignant city father is likely to totter up at the next meeting, cough slightly and ask the Mayor, 'Is the Mayor aware of the fact that Willingdon Road has been tarred from gutter to gutter, leaving not even a square inch for dust? And if so what action has been taken by the authorities to teach the erring overseer a bit of local patriotism?' I don't personally agree with the local Professors of Economics that those dusty margins are a means of solving unemployment. Do you?"

My friend was just opening his mouth to reply when A.R.A.M.C.Z. Emden Chettiar's Rhino Super Sixteen roared past in a typhoon of dust. The Sumatran had to scoop out the dust from his mouth with the crook of his finger before he could speak.

"Thomas Cook, please," he said.

THE MISFORTUNES OF MEENA—(Continued from page 14)

very well. Several years back he carried his depredations into British Territory where he was caught and sentenced. His term, in the usual course would have expired in about six months' time. It was the Deputy Superintendent's idea that we should use this man to effect your rescue. I am told that there is no legal remedy and that Courts here would reject any application which we may put-in, on the ground of lack of jurisdiction. Further, there is the well-founded fear that if your husband were to know our plans of rescuing you, he may ill-treat you or otherwise harm you. We therefore interviewed Maruti inside the jail and put the whole case before him. He has promised to somehow rescue you and bring you into British Territory if he is allowed a free-hand and if the British Police do not attempt to shut him up once again inside a penitentiary. The man is clever at disguises and sleight of hand. We have been able to arrange for his release, writing-off the unexpired portion of his term for good conduct and we have put him in sole charge of this work. From now on I'll be staying at Bezwada where Maruti's men would be able to get into touch with me.

I want you to remember that whomsoever comes to you and says 'Deliverance is at hand, Mighty Hanuman is at work' is a friend. You must implicitly act as directed by persons who give you these watch-words. We cannot anticipate when and in what manner we would be able to rescue you. Therefore memorise these words and, without the slightest hesitation, act as instructed.

Please do not worry, my dear, about the future. To rescue you from your present position is the immediate task before me and I am stinting neither energy nor expense in this task. May God preserve you and bring you soon to my aching heart!

Your distracted father,

Even as Meena was reading the concluding part of the letter, there was some commotion outside the room. Secreting the letter in her jacket, she opened the door. Gunda was babbling with excitement to Gujji. He had left three days before with his master on a visit to the Revenue Headquarters. On seeing Meena he asked her, "Have you heard the news?"

Gujji was looking strangely at Meena.

"What news can there be in this benighted place?" asked Meena in disgust.

"Don't say so, *thalli*! Next full moon, on the final day of the Anjaneya festival, you will see the finest troupe of players enacting the Ramayana in open air. This village has never seen such a show. And what is more, the drama will be enacted in the presence of the Revenue Officer. He has graciously consented to camp here during the festival. We are in for great things in the village during the next fortnight."

"More work for me!" grumbled Gujji. "For the last three years, no officer has visited this village. Now that one is coming, I am sure, there would be clerks and visitors clamouring for food. What caste is the officer?" asked Gujji of Gunda as an after-thought.

"Mussalman!" replied Gunda.

"Thank God! I wouldn't be asked to cook for him!" said Gujji with a sigh of relief.

But Meena's heart sank. Only a fortnight more! And a Mussalman officer was expected to camp in the village! She repeated to herself the words, 'Deliverance is at hand! Mighty Hanuman is at work!' and smiled sadly, recollecting that she was in the 20th century and not in mythic Lanka.

(In the next instalment read the exploits of Maruthi, the Magician.)



"What would you do if you married a rich woman?"
"Nothing."

"Do you spend your time with puzzles?"
"Yes, with the one I married."

The bad boy of the class kept asking silly questions. The teacher kept his temper until the young rascal asked: "How long can a donkey live without brains, sir?"

Actor: I'm always getting letters from ladies.

The master's chance had come. "Wait and see," he snapped.

Cynical Friend: Landladies?

The judge was disgusted with the attempts of the accused to defend himself.

"I've never seen such clumsy lying," he declared. "Why on earth don't you get a lawyer to act for you?"

"Are you on speaking-terms with your wife?"

"Well, I listen."

Scot: Do you know the difference between a taxi-cab and a tram-car?

Girl: No.

Scot: Good! Then we'll take a tram-car.

Manager: We want a man who can answer all sorts of questions.

Applicant: I'm your man. I've got seven children!

Tom: I see your wife has a new coat.

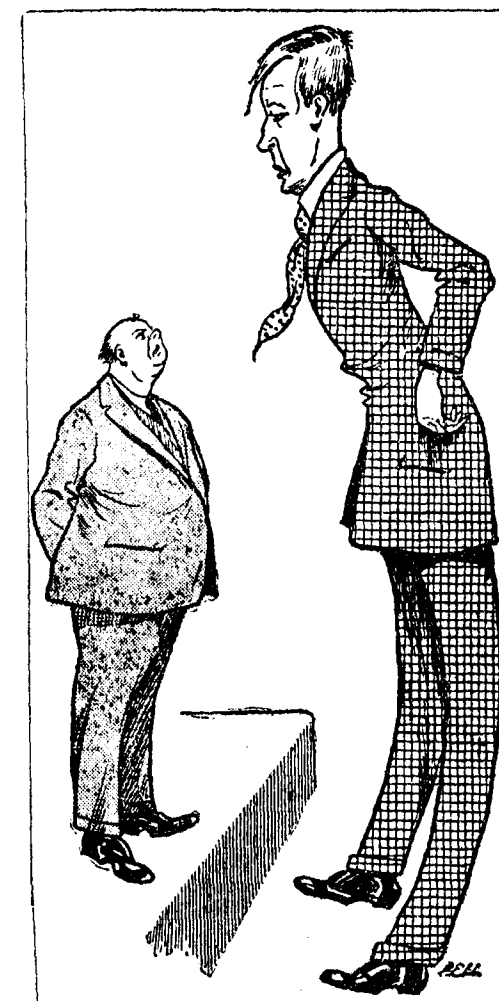
Dick: No, she hasn't.

Tom: Well, there's something different.

Dick: Yes, it's a new wife.

Two men, who had been bachelor friends, met for the first time in five years. "Tell me," said the one to the other, "did you marry that girl you still darn your socks and your own cooking?"

"Yes," sadly the other, for both.



"Darling, the new maid has burnt the bacon and eggs. Would you be satisfied with a couple of kisses?"

"Certainly! Bring her in."

First Actor: At that hotel they'll ask you for the money in advance, because your luggage is emotional.

Second Ditto: Emotional?

First Actor: Yes, easily moved.

He: Shall we dance or talk?

She: I'm so tired. Let's dance.

"What cured him of arguing with his girl?"
"Arguing with his girl."

"Did you call me a stork?"
"Er, no, your highness!"

The Letters of

Private Joyfull

59. On the Job

Dear Mother,

Madras, 27th July, 1935.

It was morning when I awoke, and the relief train was chugging slowly up a long incline, through a country that looked like the gateway to Hell. It was a country of tawny-coloured barren rock, with cruel, jagged lines of slate-coloured hills in the distance.

The train rumbled to a halt at a wayside station. At first everything looked normal, though rather desolate. Then I noticed the strange appearance of the building beside the platform. There were the usual solid masonry arches, but behind this frontage there were no ticket-offices, nor waiting-rooms, nor the mysterious cubby-holes where assistant station-masters conduct their rites. The arches opened on to nothing but a great heap of rubble.

An Indian railway official sat at a table on the platform. His turban was askew, and his blue serge uniform was caked with dust. His eyes were red, and he drooped with fatigue. Even his iron-grey whiskers hung limply down.

"Why don't you take a rest, old son?" suggested Sergeant O'Brien.

"There is no one else to keep the line open," responded the railwayman simply.

"Many casualties here?" asked the Sergeant.

"Many. My family is dead."

The Sergeant looked at the haggard man, who was quietly crying. "God Almighty above!" cried the Sergeant, "and soldiers get medals simply for facing a few bullets!"

The train crawled onward, going slowly over cracked culverts and shaken sections of the line. Presently we stopped at another station like the last, with a few railwaymen creeping about like ghosts. This time we had to wait for a refugee train which was coming down.

"Can we give some assistance when the train comes in?" cried our medical students, crowding eagerly to the telegraph-office, which was an enclosure of a few rush-mats, put roughly together on the platform.

"Doctor Jekyll! Mister Hyde!" cried the Sergeant, "tell your future Harley-Street specialists to keep away from the telegraphist. He's got enough to do. Don't worry him with officious enquiries."

Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde were the two leading medical students. Doctor Jekyll was a Hindu, and Mister Hyde was a Mohammedan. Of course, these were not their real names, but bore a slight similarity to them. The Sergeant had given them these nick-names, and it amused the students very much, because they had all read R. L. Stevenson. In return, the students called him Sergeant Dracula.

"But we only want to help," protested the students.

"Well, give your help in a disciplined way," said the old Sergeant. "Don't rush about like a lot of wet hens, getting in everybody else's way. Wait until you are allotted a job, and then get on with it. You'll soon have plenty to do."

"Dracula!" grumbled the students, but they saw the sense of the advice. They were good chaps.

There was a lot of truth in the Sergeant's lecture. We noticed, a few days later, that for hundreds of miles in the area outside the earthquake, there were thousands of people anxious to give help; but they were unorganised individuals. Thousands of organised helpers were wanted, but unorganised individuals were unable to give full value to their efforts. What was needed were disciplined organisations, whose members would work under a leader according to a concerted plan, and not indulge in curiosity.

There were a number of proper organisations, and these did fine work. There were boy-scouts, and also a kind of grown-up boy-scouts. The grown-up boy-scouts were especially splendid. They were self-sacrificing young men, who humbly obeyed the orders of their leader. When there was a pause, they stood quietly with folded hands, ready for the next allotted task. There were also little groups of Indian women who had been properly trained to render service, and these were splendid, too.

But there were not enough of these organised helpers. More Indian people need to learn the value of discipline in national effort. To illustrate the trouble which must follow well-meaning but individual labours, there was the cholera-scare. Two or three days after the earthquake, refugees were being sent away in train-load after train-load. Suddenly there came sickening reports from a dozen down-country centres at once, announcing cases of cholera on every train. Imagine the additional burden of anxiety on everyone, and the choking-up of the wires with anti-cholera instructions.

Then reports began to dribble back that the illnesses were not cholera, but severe indigestion! At every station, private individuals were feeding the refugees, and some fortunate sufferers had as many as ten sumptuous meals a day! Good luck to them; but naturally they reached their destinations rolling and groaning in agony, with their abdomens alarmingly distended. The admirable spontaneous generosity of private citizens deserved a better result.

However, these matters were still in the future when we waited for the relief-train to come down. It arrived, comprising all kinds of vehicles—luggage-vans mixed up with bogie-carriages. As it stopped, there came a kind of sighing moan from the coaches.

The people packed into the train were pale and terrified. Nearly all were bandaged, and nearly all had lost everything they possessed. Some were wailing over lost relatives; others cried out as they remembered the incidents of the calamity; others sat in silent grief, facing the sudden stunning fact of homelessness and destitution. The engine backed the train a little way, and as the couplings clashed, people cried in terror, "Let me out!" Others only trembled; others struggled lest the roof of the carriage should fall on them.

As soon as the line was clear, we drew out past this train-load of pity; and the next stop was our destination.

The train ran in very slowly, and halted between two lines of soldiers. The moment the train stopped, the soldiers opened all the doors, and scrutinised all persons on board. Presently there was a commotion in the luggage-van behind us, and two Ghurkas pulled out a man clutching a large camera. It was the man who had offered a thousand rupees for a chance to get pictures of the earthquake. He had actually paid someone two hundred rupees to be smuggled into the van. The Ghurkas took him to an officer, and then across the line to another train almost loaded with refugees, and put him in the guard's van. I heard the officer say they could not afford to have even one extra mouth to feed.

While the Sergeant was reporting our arrival and the contents of the train, I went and sat on the edge of the platform for a change, dangling my legs over the metals. Suddenly I felt a big shock, as if a giant with a big flannel foot had given me a terrific kick in the pants. While my heart was still leaping into my mouth, my eyes were fascinated by the wheels of our train, on the next set of metals. The train was leaning over, and the wheels nearest to me were three inches above the rails. As I looked, fascinated, the wheels gently descended on to the rails again, and the train squeaked, and rocked on its springs.

From the refugees came wails and howls of fear, and those who could do so rushed out of their carriages, while the injured begged not to be left to be crushed to death.

"Come on, boys," said the Sergeant, "we are the relief-gang for Block D, Plot 18." The ruins had been divided into sections and sub-sections, and each plot was being methodically excavated.

Other gangs were already unloading our train, with lists to say where the supplies were to be sent. A line of military lorries had appeared like magic, ready to take the stuff. Everyone seemed very tired, but everyone knew what to do.

A little man from Bengal was waiting to show us where to go. He was a quaint chap wearing steel-rimmed spectacles and carrying some papers. We immediately christened him Mister At-Em-Boy, and he giggled and said he understood soldiers' jokes, having once worked

in a military office. He started to tell us about the comical soldiers he had known. His cheerfulness was unabated in all circumstances, and he chattered to the Sergeant as we marched along, taking two steps to our one. He said he knew the locality where we were going, and it was his duty to try and identify the bodies in our plot, and to make a record of the valuables.

The vicinity of the station was crowded with lines of injured, lying on the ground. Doctors and attendants worked among them, assisted by some European ladies. One of the platforms was a hospital, with operations and first-aid going on amid the general bustle. I noticed a lady with blood up to her elbows, carrying away a bucketful of amputated limbs.

The town was a great heap of piled-up refuse. Most of the walls had fallen inwards, and the roofs had descended on to the ruins like giant candle extinguishers. Sometimes there were tottering walls remaining upright, and military tanks were pushing these down, as they were a danger to passers by.

Soldiers were controlling the traffic. The first one we passed was eating a huge sandwich in one hand, while signalling with the other.

"Hullo!" we called out, "having an early dinner?"

"Go on!" he replied indignantly, "this is yesterday's breakfast!"

"Why didn't you shave this morning?" asked someone else.

"I haven't got a razor," he replied cheerfully.

Tied to a fence near by were four Patnans. "Caught looting early this morning," said the traffic-policeman. "I'm looking after them until the Provost-Marshal takes them away." At the feet of the miscreants were bundles of jewellery. They moaned for water, and the traffic-policeman promised to give them some when there was a lull in the traffic.

At last we reached our plot. It was part of a district called a Mohalla. A party of very weary-looking soldiers was working in the ruins. "There are no more alive here," said their Sergeant. "We got the last out yesterday. Yesterday we went over the ruins, and dug wherever we heard anything. This morning we started methodically, working straight across in a line. Here are the shovels and crowbars. As you come to the bodies carry them out to the roadside, and a lorry will collect them every hour. Let Mister At-Em-Boy try to identify them first. When you find valuables, the Babu will make a note of them: then leave them as they are. Well, good luck; here come a couple of lorries to take us away for a rest." These men had been working for over thirty hours without relief.

Our Sergeant distributed the shovels and crowbars, and we started on our appalling task.

Your Loving Son,
OREAH JOYFULL.

Locarno —

by 'Ram'

ONCE upon a time all the Nations of Europe, and many not of Europe, decided that they would rather have peace than war, because war was much less profitable than peace, except to munition manufacturers, and they always faked their income-tax return sheets, so the government never got much of their profits, anyway. They finished deciding this after a particularly great war which was more wasteful than usual, since it ended unexpectedly and large quantities of material that had been prepared were sold at a loss to South American Nations who added the price to their National Debt instead of paying it. Well, they first of all made a treaty with the conquered countries, which was worded so that no one could doubt they had been conquered. Then they met at a place called Geneva because it had a nice climate and there were plenty of winter sports for the delegates, and christened themselves the League of Nations, and said they were going to prevent war in future. And they went on talking quite pleasantly for the next fifteen years or so, and no one disturbed them because there was no money for war anywhere. So peace prevailed, except in South America and the Balkans, where they do things in a most unbusiness-like way.

After a few years, when everything was getting on beautifully and the delegates were really enjoying them-



selves, suddenly all the people began to discover they had no money. It's funny they never realised it for so long, but possibly this was due to their happiness at being rid of the last war. Well, there was a slump (what-ever that means) on Wall Street (where-ever that is) and most of the Banks in America suspended payment; which means that they continued accepting deposits till they had enough and then hung out a notice saying they had suspended payment. Of course this was a pretty easy method of making money, so a lot of financiers tried it, but the people got angry and sent a few to jail, so they stopped.

The whole world was passing through a critical period, said the Press, and a new game was invented, which everyone took up—trying to turn the corner of Depression. And a few nations including England went off the gold standard, but no one worried very much about that.

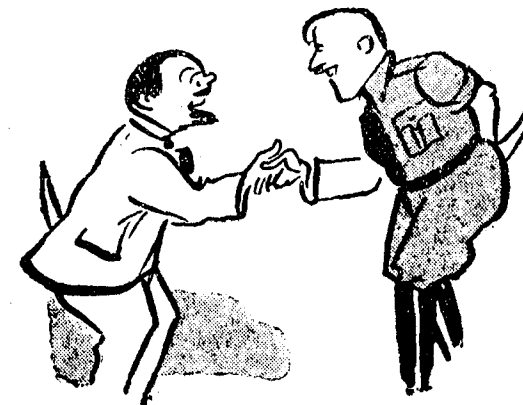
Meanwhile one of the countries which had been conquered got fed up with the restrictions imposed on them and said they were not going to keep the treaty anyway, and what were the rest going to do about it? The Allies (who had won) were scandalised, and said: "This sort of thing is simply not done, don't you know!" But the other country said: "Well, we're going to do it, so there—" and they did. The League of Nations was very disturbed, and lectured the other country so much, that they got fed up and left it. Then everyone said: "There's going to be a war" and all the papers polished up their old blocks

of sinking ships and dying men in readiness for the first battle. By this time every nation had more or less turned the corner, so there was every possibility of war, because money was nearly plentiful again, and Sir Basil Zaharoff bought scrap iron on spec.

While the Nations were preparing for war they kept on saying they did not want it, and no one had any clear idea of why there should be a war at all. They gathered at Geneva again and began talking of disarmament, only breaking off to send telegrams home, like this:

"Germany ordered 50 new cruisers; imperative we have more." OR "Russia's air force 5000; we must have 5100."

And in each country some speakers said they'd like war if it was forced on them, and others said they wouldn't, and there were Conscientious Objectors and Imperialists Militant in England, and Nazis and Monarchists in Germany, and a lot of all kinds in France. Well, eventually they decided that perhaps they had better not have a war after all. So they had another conference and Mussolini got there by waggling his magic wand, only it



was the joy-stick of an aero-plane, and said: "Who wants war?" And they all replied: "We don't." Then Sir John Simon (alas, late of the Foreign Office) who was very peaceable and Mr. Anthony Eden who was like him, went from country to country having talks and meetings and suggesting that peace was a jolly sight more interesting than war, because think of the number of International tournaments you could have, and how good they'd be, eventually, for trade. And Germany went on building her navies and introducing conscription, and France got very nervous and increased the term of military service and everything was more-or-less as it had been.

At last they had one grand talk-over at Geneva. The English delegate said: "What's all this fuss about?" And

they all began speaking together and then all stopped together out of politeness, but the Russian representative was asked to explain everything. He said: "We hear that Germany wants to fight France, and one of them might miss their way and stray into Russia like Napoleon did, so we are preparing a reception."

The English delegate asked: "Who told you this?" and was told: "We heard." So he understood at once it must have been a spy.

The German representative got up and said: "There's no truth in it," and the Frenchman agreed cordially with him, so the Russian said: "Then everything's alright," and they all clapped their hands. Afterwards they had a big dinner; when it was over, the Russian sent a wire home.

"Spy's report false—have him shot. But suspicious cordiality exists between France and Germany, so increase armaments anyway."

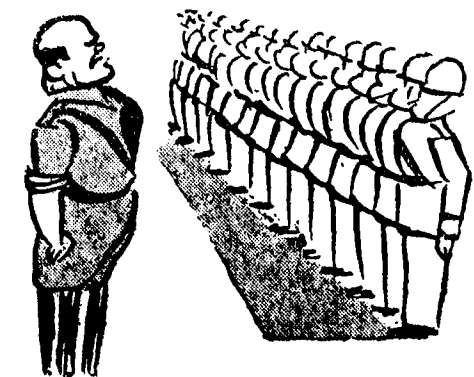
The Frenchman telegraphed:

"Germany denies all hostile intentions, therefore doubly dangerous. Redouble precautions against surprise."

The German representative wrote a D.O. to Hitler saying he couldn't understand the machinations going on but to continue strengthening the air-force and Richthofen's Circus.

Mussolini went home the next day and ordered a review of his troops just to show every one what they might expect if any funny tricks were tried on him.

But the Englishman said: "England is Caesar's wife—or is it Cleopatra? Good old England!" They made speeches about this Caesar who was murdered for saying his wife must be above suspicion, and said that England must be like that (not murdered I mean, but above suspicion). So they went home and reduced the naval grant by—"Hey, boy, hurry up with that beer, will you?"





XXXIX

WHAT do you think, dear boys and girls; someone has given Auntie a new fountain-pen. It is one of those whacking big ones, the size of a Burmese cheroot. "May you long flourish it," says the donor. Well, dear boys and girls, whenever Auntie wields that pen, her heart overflows with pride. It gives her a lovely expansive feeling, as if she were the proprietor of a Rolls-Royce.

It reminds Auntie of the first fountain-pen she ever had. It was given her by a nice young man who lived in the next flat. Auntie often intercepted him on the stairs, and mentioned that she happened to be going for a walk; but the young man was always too busy.

At last there came a day when the young man incautiously admitted that he was going to a certain *fete* in the country; and Auntie said she was going, too. She took her handbag and umbrella, and her little dog Fido, and set off with the young man.

At the *fete*, Auntie patronised the cock-shies, and won a prize hen and a big decorated jar. On the way back, the young man insisted on carrying Auntie's impediments. Presently the path led through a lonely wood.

"Oh, dear, it makes me nervous to go through this wood," said Auntie.

"Why?" asked the young man in surprise.

"Well, you might overcome my resistance, and kiss me," said Auntie.

"How can I kiss you?" objected the young man, "when I am carrying an umbrella, a handbag, a prize hen, a large jar, and a dog?"

"Yes," said Auntie, "but when we reach the middle of the wood, I shall feel tired, and have to sit down. Then you can stick the umbrella in the ground, tie the dog to it, set down the hen, cover it with the larger jar, put the handbag in your pocket, and kiss me."

"Er—was it yesterday you said you wanted to be a journalist?" enquired the young man.

"Yes," said Auntie, wondering.

"And that you wanted a fountain-pen?"

"Yes," agreed Auntie, still puzzled.

"Well, catch hold of this lot," said the young man, piling the umbrella, the handbag, the hen, the jar, and the dog into Auntie's arms.

"What for?" cried Auntie.

"Because I'm going to buy you that fountain-pen immediately," replied the young man. And before Auntie could say any more, he was rushing away down the path through the lonely wood.

So that is how Auntie got her first fountain-pen.

Conscience (Cawnpore). "Is it right for a girl to get married to someone who is an infidel? I have just had a proposal from a man who is not too bad, except for his disregard of my beliefs. He does not believe in Hell." Marry him, dear girl. He will soon revise his ideas.

Chetty (Triplicane). "I am shortly voyaging to Rangoon on business. Shall I be allowed to prepare my food on deck?" Don't bother to take any food, dear sir. If you do, divide it into portions, and throw a portion overboard at each meal-time. This will save you time and trouble.

Unusual (Madras). "I was fishing from the jetty, and I found a sweepstake-ticket in the gullet of a sucker-fish. I wonder how it got there?" Auntie imagines, dear boy, that the sucker bought the ticket from a shark.

Suburbanite (Poona). "My neighbour wants to borrow my garden roller; but a little time ago he refused to lend me a book, saying he never allowed a volume to leave his library. Would it be fair if I refused to let him use my roller?" Always return evil with good, dear boy. Let him use your roller, on condition that it does not leave your lawn.

Master West (St. Thomas' Mount). "Now-a-days you never invite people to come and see you some time. Therefore I will extend the invitation. Why don't you come and see me some time—it is only nine miles as the crow flies." Thank you, dear boy; but Auntie isn't a crow.

Nipper (Tuticorin). "I want to be a lion-tamer in a circus. How can I find an opportunity, and how do I begin?" Watch the newspapers carefully, and when you

read of a tragedy in a circus, go and apply for the vacant post. You begin by removing the remains of your predecessor from the lion's cage.

Romance (Bangalore). "This afternoon I passed a bungalow where a gentleman was sitting on the verandah with a pretty girl. They were talking earnestly, and at intervals he laid his hand on his heart. Do you think he was proposing to her?" Auntie fears not, dear Madam. The young lady was one of those canvassers who are determined to sell you the history of the world in forty-eight parts, and the gentleman kept laying his hand on his heart to make sure that his pocket-book was still there.

Jockey (N. India). "There is a horse in our stables that will not run unless it has an injection of strychnine. But when it is treated in this way, it throws the jockey and makes a dash for the winning-post. That horse will never win a race." Auntie can think of a way, dear boy. Suppose you gave the jockey an injection at the same time as the horse? Then the jockey would run so fast that he would catch the horse and re-mount it before it reached the winning-post.

Careful (Godhra). "I always have money sent to me by Post, but someone has warned me that experts can smell currency-notes in an envelope." Then have the money forwarded in strongly-scented envelopes, dear sir.

Be careful to take the letters from the postman yourself, as it might be awkward if your wife discovered that you were receiving scented stationery.

In-a-fix (Nasik). "In the hot weather I sleep on the roof of my house. This morning, after my husband had gone, a police-officer of our acquaintance came riding by. He called to me and said he wished to speak about something. To my horror, I found that by mistake my husband had taken my dressing-gown when he went downstairs. I was in my night-dress, and the police-officer was saying, 'Slip on something, and come down. I had nothing to slip on!' Well, dearie, you could have slipped on the top step and come down.

Pensioner (Nagalapatti). "What must a man be, for his relations to secure his burial with military honours?" He must be dead, dear boy.

Wisdom (Powerpet). "What are the names of the last teeth a man gets?" Dentures, dearie.

Amused (Lahore). "In the magistrate's court here they produced a pitiable little man, who staggered into the room on a crutch, his arm in a sling, and his face in bandages. He was charged with assaulting his wife. The wife was a very powerful woman, while her husband was a physical wreck. It was absurd to imagine he had assaulted his wife." Yet perhaps he did assault her, dear boy. She made him a physical wreck afterwards.

Hopeful (Valavanur). "I intend to lead the life of a roamer, and to live by my wits." Auntie is afraid, dear boy, that unless you also have other means of sustenance, you will be hungry a good deal of the time.

Damsel (Ellore). "Is it wise for a girl to over-value her sweetheart?" It is positively essential, dear girl, when she sues him for breach-of-promise.

Temperance (Nannilam). "I notice you always print my remarks, although your replies are not always favourable. Once again we see the dire effects of liquor. An intoxicated man from this district was crossing a river after a carouse, and he upset the boat and was drowned. You see the dangers of excessive alcohol." No doubt, dear sir; yet the unfortunate person appears to have died from excessive water.

In Doubt (Begumpet). "During an argument yesterday, my neighbour said that my teeth were like a lot of French verbs. I have puzzled over this, and cannot see

any sense in the remark, though I am sure it was meant to be rude. What do you think she was implying?" Well, my dear, French verbs are notoriously irregular and defective.

Idealist (Galle). "Why did you say in a recent answer that you were not in favour of love in a cottage?" Well, dear boy, no one serves caviare on a tin plate.

Medical (Gobichettipalayam). "Can you suggest any remedy for the hoarseness experienced by my wife when she wakes up in the morning?" Yes, dear sir; don't stay out so late at night.

Pious (Salem). "O wanton woman, are you not afraid to meet your Maker?" No, dear sir; it is the interview with the other person that is going to bother Auntie.

DO YOU KNOW?

1. What is the difference between chauffeur and a chauffeur?
2. When was the first Atlantic cable laid between Ireland and Newfoundland?
3. Who invented lawn tennis?
4. Who is the author of 'I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad'?
5. Where did 'It's Greek to me' originate?

Answers on page 25



New Arrivals—

by Albert A. Roland

Illustrated by the Author

I had fallen asleep almost as soon as my head had touched the pillow.

Mine is a fagging, heart-breaking job. I'm a traveller in non-alcoholic drinks. It's useless trying to sell anything but whisky and liver pills in a city like Calcutta. The place is simply chock-a-block with Scotsmen.

I've spoken to Winnie about it more than once. But she won't hear of my travelling in any other line. She says she fell in love with me because I adored Coco-Cola. She, too, adores Coco-Cola. And another reason is because her people were in America in the Prohibition days. They were all ruined—by alcoholism.

Well, I love Winnie, and try to please her. We've been married a little under four months.

To return to the night of which I write. I was fast asleep in a few moments. How long I slept I don't know. But I awoke with a peculiar taste in my mouth. As if I'd been inhaling gas. A dreadful thought struck me. I shook Winnie's peacefully slumbering form, and she stirred sleepily.

"Winnie!" I enquired, "did you forget to turn off the gas?"

"Goodness!" she cried, suddenly wide-awake. "I did!" She glanced at her luminous wrist-watch.



A dreadful thought struck me. I shook Winnie's peacefully slumbering form and.....

"That was hours ago! Why, it's a wonder we're not dead!"

Then I noticed her looking round the room with a bewildered expression. So I looked round the room, and I was bewildered. *There was no room there!*

Instead, we seemed to be in the open air. All around us was a vast nothingness. We were not lying on beds. We were floating in mid-air! Then I found myself gazing at moving stars, bright, gleaming stars, bigger than any I'd ever seen before. Bigger, even, than those I saw when a brick fell on me once.

We appeared to be rushing swiftly through the heavens. Winnie clung to me in terror, and almost before we realized what was happening, we were swept through a luminous sea of clouds and deposited before an imposing pair of brilliant golden gates.

A venerable, bearded patriarch in flowing white robes opened the gates with a large golden key and beckoned to us to enter.

It was only then that I realized our position.

We were quite dead—

St. Peter (for it was he) was jolly decent to us.

He made us feel at home at once. In his pleasant, benign presence, I couldn't even find it in my heart to feel annoyed with Winnie for forgetting to turn off that gas. Well, anyway, there wouldn't be any more travelling in Coco-Cola to worry about—

"This seems a very nice place, St. Peter," I remarked conversationally.

"If heaven's not a nice place, I don't know what could be," he replied, with, I thought, the teeny-weeniest trace of asperity.

"Of course," I acquiesced, "there's really nothing nicer than heaven. And now, St. Peter, where are our quarters?"

"There are thousands of halls and palaces about the place," he said. "Just take your pick and move in whenever you like."

I hesitated a moment, loth to leave him so soon. He seemed such a jolly nice saint.

"Do you get many people coming in here?" I asked.

"Quite a good few," he said, "considering—" He paused.

"Considering what, St. Peter?" Winnie enquired. Women are always curious. Even in heaven, evidently.

"Considering what the world is coming to. But in spite of all the night clubs, Sunday morning golf, nudism cults, 'spicy' American magazines, politicians, and a thousand other cancerous growths, people still find their way here. If you're in no hurry to get settled down, I don't mind your waiting here at all and seeing some of the interesting types that—er—blow in."

"Delighted, St. Peter!" we chorused.

"Hisst!" he warned, "here comes someone now—"

The newcomer was an American. His horn-rimmed spectacles and the thick cigar he was chewing blended quaintly with the long white robes he wore (and which incidentally we also wore), and from the back of which projected the dinkiest pair of wings. (We had wings, too, of course.)

"Wal, St. Peter," drawled the American, without removing his cigar, "this all comes along of that durned little ol' country, England, marketing a product that looks for all the world like chewing gum!"

"Oh?" said St. Peter with polite interest. "What happened?"

"Happened! Darn it, I'm used to chewing gum. Can't get along without a dozen bars a day, the least. Wal, I chewed a dozen bars of this heah stuff in England—"

"Was it spurious?"

"Wal, I don't know what that means, but it was certainly a hell-fire, high-powered laxative!"

The next new arrival was a nudist lady. Which effectively explodes the theory that there is anything immoral in nudism.

There seemed to be nothing wrong with her, and I was on the point of asking her what had brought her to these parts. But Winnie objected. In fact she made me turn my head. For the lady, unlike the average new arrival, wore no robes at all.

But as it happened, St. Peter himself put the same question to her that I'd intended asking.

"I caught my death of cold," she informed him.

"What d'you expect," Winnie chipped in, "if you go about like that?"

"I've been a nudist for months, with absolutely no ill effects," returned the lady. "It's really my own fault. I should never have taken my ear-rings off in that storm!"

YES, I KNOW

Answers to questions on page 23

1. A chauffer is a kind of stove; a chauffeur is one who operates on an automobile for pay.
2. In 1858.
3. It was patented in England in 1874 by Major Wingfield.
4. Shakespeare in *As You Like It* Act 4, Scene 1.
5. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act 1, Scene 2.

The next to enter the golden gates was a mild-looking parson who gave us the impression of having been crushed; flattened out.

On enquiry, he informed us that he had been crushed to death in the lobby of a cinema theatre. He had had no intention of seeing the picture, he took pains to explain, but he had been caught in the current of surging humanity. He had gone down, and been trampled on. What was the title of the picture?

Oh, just *Paris Review*. He couldn't understand all that crowding!

The next was a lady who had won the prize offered by the Canadian Government for the largest family produced in a given period of time. She had had no twins or triplets, let alone quintuplets.

Two men entered next. One was asking the other something, and we were just in time to catch the remark: "Well, it doesn't matter *now*. It's too late. But what I was trying to tell you was that her husband was coming upstairs!" (N. B. How these two gentlemen found their way into heaven was amazing to me)

The next arrival was the victim of a fire, he explained. "I jumped from the fourth story," he said, "a distance of sixty feet, to the safety-sheet they were holding for me below."

"I'm sorry," sympathised St. Peter. "You missed it, I suppose?—It was held too close?"

"No; it was rotten—old stock!"

The stout, elderly lady who arrived after this was at humanitarian. She had paid a visit to the zoo that evening, and had been orating on the criminal wickedness that allowed animals to be imprisoned year after year, when they should be roaming free. She had been so pre-occupied with her theme, that she had not noticed that a Bengal tiger had escaped. Bengal tigers, I understand, are partial to stout, elderly ladies, provided they haven't acquired the tobacco habit.

A welcome change from the rather morose individuals who had recently been trickling in through the heavenly gates was the bluff and burly Irishman who arrived next. He exuded jollity, though his heavily bandaged features indicated he had been involved in a serious fight. Even his wings were droopy. But he wasn't. Far from it.

The first thing he asked St. Peter was whether a certain man of his acquaintance had arrived. And when informed in the negative, he beamed:

"Well, St. Pater, sorr, it's moighty plazed with meself Oi am, indade!"

"But you've been fighting, my man!" exclaimed St. Peter, a trifle shocked.

"Yes, but in a good cause, an' all! Faith, it was a beautiful fight!"

"Ah! but you came off worse, apparently," said St. Peter, winking at us slyly.

"Oh, no, your 'Onour! As I lay in hospital, after the fight, me ould friend Fatsy O'Connor comes in and he sez: 'Moike,' he sez, 'I've gr—rand news for ye! *Murphy's not expected to live eyther!* Begorra, it cheered me up no end, it did!"

"How d'you reckon, Mike," I said politely, "that you've come off better than Murphy?"

"Well, Oi'm in Hiven, aren't Oi? *And he died two days ago!*"

As it was getting rather late, and we were feeling a little worn out after being gassed, we bade St. Peter 'Au Revoir' at this point, and went on into the grounds, or rather clouds.

We hadn't gone far, when I stopped suddenly, rooted to the ground, or rather clouds, with astonishment.

"It isn't possible!" I cried. "Look!"

"My mother!" cried Winnie.

"Your mother, my mother-in-law in heaven? Why, I must have been dreaming!"

[You must have been—Ed.]

THE END

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Banishing a Bad Habit

by R. K. Narayan Swami

I chewed tobacco, took snuff, ate at irregular intervals, shouted at servants, slept till nine in the morning, and bit my nails in addition to drinking immense quantities of coffee. But somehow when I thought of giving up a bad habit, coffee first came to my mind. It is just coffee's luck. When we get into a fury of reform, coffee is first singled out for conquest.

I drank and I still drink immense quantities of coffee. I never leave bed till I am certain that coffee is ready. I lie in bed and wait for the milkman's shout, and the tinkling of coffee vessels, in my humble opinion, is the most auspicious sound that one could wake to in the morning. But I suddenly realized what harm coffee was doing me. It coated the walls of my stomach and intestines with coffee powder, and the result was that the digestive juices stayed on one side of the coffee barrier and the food on the other. This led to such permanent diseases that it cut a huge slice out of man's just allowance of years. In addition to this, coffee sent cunning essences through all the pores and cells available and reached the heart and scooped flesh out of it and lashed it into feverish activity. A heart thus emasculated and speeded up came to a stand-still before its appointed time. And then the nerves. Coffee sent further evil essences to the nerves and browbeat and bullied the nerves till the nerve cells and fibres melted and a man was left with next to nothing in the matter of nerves. And so on and so forth. The total effect of coffee was that it diluted a man's make-up. And then the moral and spiritual consequences of the coffee habit were unmentionable. It made of a man a drunkard and nothing less. I had heard stories of men who committed arson, loot, and murder; uttered great lies; and snatched the bread out of the mouths of their dependents, and so on and so forth, all for coffee and through coffee habit.

I decided to give up coffee.

I told my people of the dawn of wisdom in me. I begged them to give up coffee and to banish it from the kitchen. I explained all the havoc that it did to the human body and mind. They hinted that they were not keen on having too perfect a body and mind. I expatiated on the economic advantages of abolishing coffee. Milk, sugar, and coffee seeds, alone took nearly fifty rupees out of the family purse every month. A house could be built with the money saved from coffee and put by every month. However, all my arguments fell on deaf ears. I was left alone. I had to fight coffee single-handed.

Next day I woke to my first coffee-less morning. The rest of the family were sitting round and swilling the poison. I looked at them half in disgust and half in pity. I demanded a glass of cold water and drank it. Nothing like it. A glass of cold water early in the morning is the greatest tonic on earth. It tones up the system and washes off all the poison. I went about, rather tried to go about, my work. I was considerably toned-up and poison-washed, no doubt, but all the same I could not

help feeling a little empty. Here I wish to indicate a little moral. If a man is in educational service and is also addicted to coffee he must not attempt to give up the bad habit except during the long vacation. I say this now, because of my educational activities that day. I took my classes and found that 99 out of 100 among the modern students are utterly worthless, irresponsible, and undutiful. They prefer to remain almost illiterate. This realisation led me on to a great educational reform that day and I gave impositions to a dozen boys in the sixth form, made five modern students in the Fifth form stand on the bench for a whole hour, flung out of window composition books belonging to some fourth form boys, aimed chalk pieces at several boys, spoke sharply to my colleagues, would not stand any nonsense from my Head-master, returned home, ate my food alone and in silence, and went to bed.

Next day I realised that cold water alone would not do but that a warm substitute for coffee was necessary for my system. I had a decoction brewed from coriander seeds, and drank it with a little sugar. Its merit was that it was warm and that it purified the blood. It was certainly better than cold water, but at school it did not change my view of the modern student. I awarded more impositions, threw chalk pieces at boys, and detested all the boys of all the classes. I returned home from school and went to bed early, so early indeed that I lay awake most part of the night and rose from bed even before the cock crew. In due course the coriander decoction was placed before me. The smell of it made me retch. I poured the drink on the cat. I demanded some other drink. Some porridge was prepared and given to me. It tasted better than coriander, though it did not purify the blood so well. My educational reform went on at greater pace that day. Next day I drank again the porridge. And on the day next to it the thought of it made me lie in the bed a little longer, and when it was brought to me I dashed the vessel on the floor. I returned to that toner of the system—cold water. My zeal for educational reform reached the zenith that day. I even toyed with the idea of using the ruler to improve the boys. The Head-master sent for me and said that he was receiving numerous complaints of my temper and methods. Since I had got into the habit of not standing any nonsense, I barked at him. He asked me to shut up and asked if there was any trouble at home. He cajoled me to speak. I told him, almost with tears in my eyes, that no one at home would give up that extravagant, poisonous habit of drinking coffee.

"Have you given it up?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"About four or five days past."

(Continued on page 32)



The Educated Donkey

(Concluded)

by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

After that seven long years followed,
And two long ears had been lost ;
The poor potter paid his donkey
For its education's cost !
And the school went on as usual,
And the same school-master taught
Students, and the years went slowly,
When one day the potter thought

" It is seven years since Birju
Joined the school, and now I trust
He is nicely educated,—
I must call on him,—I must !"
So he donned an emerald turban
And he walked the schoolward way,
Happy was the aged potter,

And thrice happy seemed the day !
" A good morning to the master,"
Bending low the potter said,
" How is Birju, how much learning
Surely, through these long grey years.
He must have become a man,
For you have a way of teaching
In a way you only can !"

" Why, alas ! most worthy potter !
You have come two months too late !"
" Is he dead ?"—" Ah no, friend potter !
He has grown to man's estate.
Just two months ago he finished
Being educated, and
Went and joined the Taluq Office,

Potter, do you understand ?
" I implored him, " Mr. Birju
Before you become a clerk
You should go inform your father,
And not leave him in the dark
For the potter is your father,
And has tended you with care,—
But alas, good friend, he did not
Care to listen to my prayer.

" So he went without a moment's
Tarrying, without delay
To the Office. You could meet him
In the Office any day.
You will find him always holding
In his hand a busy pen,—
He's a man now among men.
I congratulate you, potter !"

Without any further question
Off the happy potter went,
Very, very, very aged,
Too, too good and innocent.
In a little while the potter
Reached the Office and began
Without any hesitation
To address his donkey-man.

He had walked into the office
Right into the central hall,
And on entering discovered
Some one busy, fair and tall.
Busy with accounts and busy
With a hundred other things.
" Why," the potter thought, my donkey
Has become a king of kings !

" What a lovely handsome fellow,
And what hands and feet, and brain !
Magical is education,
Its results are very plain !
O to think that is Birju
Our young donkey's grown so tall,
Grown into a man and sitting
Now within an Office hall !

" Hallo, Birju ; Hallo, sonny !
How are you, my gentle lad ?
Has your father been forgotten ?
Have you lost the love you had
When you were a grey-brown donkey
And you lived with us before
You were put to education ?
Love you not your father more ?

" Tell me, Birju ! lovely Birju !
Have you quite forgotten me ?
I'm your father I'm the potter
Who once fed you, can't you see ?"
But the figure took no notice
Of the potter, for his heart
Was engrossed in Office figures
At which he was rather smart.

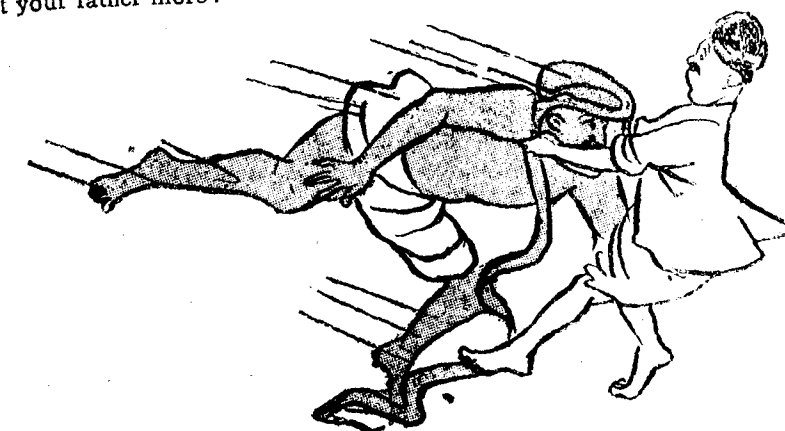
But the potter still continued
" Birju darling ! leave your desk,
And come home with me, our dwelling
As you know, is picturesque ;
Why should you be bothered, Birju
With accounts and stupid toil ?
Come with me, we will together
Go back to our native soil.

" And we'll work at pots together,
We will work at pots and feel
The delicious joy of working
At the spinning potter's wheel ;
We will make sweet pots and pitchers,
Goblets, cups and pretty bowls :
Come, my Birju ! we together
Will be very happy souls !"

Hearing this ecstatic lecture
The tall figure raised his head
And in angered tones he thundered,
" What d'ye want with me ?" he said :
" Come, dear Birju ! leave the Office,
Come away, do come away,
Let us both be back together
And make vessels out of clay !"

" Get away " the figure answered,
" Porter, drive this fellow off !"
" Birju ! have you quite forgotten,"
Said the potter with a cough,
" Quite forgotten me, your father
Who once tended you with care ?"
" Porter !" louder the voice thundered,
" Kick this fellow off from there !"

In a trice the porter rushing
Caught the potter by the throat
And within a moment swiftly
Dragged him off like any goat.
Poor old potter ! he still wonders,
Though he may not ever know
Why his good devoted donkey
Birju, had him treated so !



The Woman in Business

THE story I have to tell you begins in the manner of nearly all magazine-stories and particularly of the stories in those magazines of a light and frivolous nature which are commonly read in deck-chairs on sunny beaches in holiday-time. Despite this, the story has a certain interest, which seems to justify its repetition.

Keseb was a very quiet, shy young man. Like all the quiet and shy young heroes of the magazines aforesaid, he had no use for women. Or rather he had no use for such women as he had met in the daily round of office life; they simply did not attract him. Further, and this is where the story becomes so formal that I blush to write it, Keseb was a bank-clerk, who travelled to the City every morning, in unvarying monotony, by the 8.35, and returned to suburbia every evening, with the same unflagging precision, by the 5.15.

One thing alone distinguished this otherwise distinguished young man, and that was a positive greed and passion for literature—literature in the wider sense, books in short. Books were the breath of life to him. He loved them, not merely for the poetry that was in them—and having a sensitive soul he saw poetry in most things—but physically. He loved the very feel and touch of them, he was an artist in bindings, in type, illustrations. All his meagre pocket-money went on books. Not merely on the popular books of the day, nor even on those books which were acclaimed by critics as the classics of the future, but on all sorts of old books which attracted his fancy, queer little duodecimos which had served as hand-books to the youth of a previous generation, curious old folios with their double columns of print foxed and water-stained, or sometimes a stray Victorian with its fascinating engravings. He had never found any one in his ordinary walk of life to whom he could communicate the strange joy he felt in all these things. The people at the office did not understand and, in the manner of all average and commonsense people, had long ago decided that he was mad (in a harmless sort of way, of course). The custodian of the grubby old second-hand shop in Chetty Lane was his best friend, and Keseb spent many hours in his company. But even with him there was no spiritual union, for he was a merchant in soul and his outlook was different from Keseb's. So in the main this quiet, shy young man perforce must take his delights in glorious solitude. The beauty of books was nectar to him, but he sipped alone.

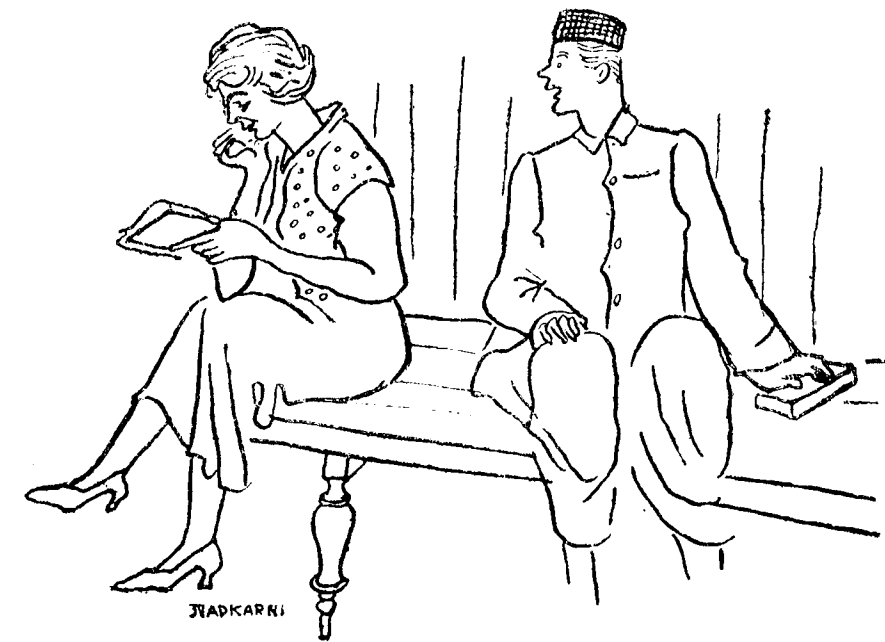
He was not ignorant of love. He had often read about it. But it always seemed to him that the only girl who could give rise to passion within him must be one of his own kin, a book-lover like himself, one who would come like an angel to share his joys and dissolve his solitude. And since he had never met a girl like that, the thought remained a dream. When it came to him, he would dismiss it abruptly, and turn with a sigh to his book again.

Now it follows from what has been said, that Keseb was more or less oblivious of his fellow-passengers on his daily journeyings to and from the City. For, with his insatiable thirst for books, he naturally occupied those journeyings with reading. Consequently it was only after the young lady had been travelling about two months that Keseb paid her any particular attention. Indeed he would probably never have noticed her at all but for the fact that one day looking up as the train came to an unexpected standstill half way between two stops, he noticed on her lap a book—not the usual kind of six-penny novel that is generally read by young ladies in trains, but a perfect gem of a little book, a small, square octavo, in grey boards with an imitation vellum binding, one edge gilt, the other apparently left untrimmed. It was a book he coveted at once, and he lifted his gaze to see what sort of person could be the possessor of such a charming volume. The vision that met his eyes need not be described at great length here. For in truth the young lady was exactly like all the young ladies who travel in trains in the magazines, that is to say, a rapturous vision of beauty such as Keseb had never dreamed possible. What particularly attracted him was her eyes, which he saw as she also glanced up inquiringly to see why the train had stopped. They were bright eyes, mischievous almost, good in life where most people saw only bad. At the same time Keseb fancied he saw in them a hint of earnestness, a hint of something deeper, a hint of poetry, something which appealed to his own soul. He felt at once that here was the long-dreamed ideal of his life. He gazed awe-stricken.

Keseb had suffered in those months. He was weary and heart-sore. He was in love with her from the first, for every man falls in love with what he conceives to be his ideal. He found himself, whenever she chanced to be in his carriage, gazing furtively at her throughout the journey, from behind a book, which no longer served any purpose, but to act as a screen. He even found himself lingering on the platform till she should arrive

by P. K. N.

Illustrated by Nadkarni



to board the train, and sneaking into the carriage after her. She was oblivious, or at least gave him a casual glance. He wished he was like the chaps at the office. They always seemed to be able to get to know girls. He wondered how they did it. He could never even catch her eye. She was still absorbed in reading. It was the same book, the same little grey-backed octavo which had first caught his wandering eye. He thought of the days when he, too, had carried a pocket edition of the *Inferno*, snatching odd moments for its perusal.

The strain was beginning to tell. He was becoming pale and worried. He determined that, for better or worse, he must put an end to an intolerable situation. One morning, therefore, as he walked to the station, he bore under his arm his greatest treasure. It was, needless to say, a book, an exquisite copy of Donne's *Lyrics*—not a first edition, for Keseb could not afford first editions, but still an early and valuable one. He had bought it, however, not because of this, but because he thought it a fascinating volume, and the purchase had been the result of many a week's self-sacrifice. It was not without a pang, therefore, that he made up his mind to part with it. On his journey to town he was unlucky, for the girl was nowhere to be seen. But on his return he was more fortunate, for just as the train was about to leave, along came his vision of glory and stepped into the carriage beside him. The shock upset him so much that for a time he was paralysed into inaction, and even when he had recovered a little, he still waited nervously, unable to pluck up courage in the presence of other people, to claim acquaintance with a girl to whom he had never spoken in his life. As for the girl, she was languid as usual, and quite unconscious of his agitation. Had they not got out at the same station, the presentation might never have been made. But as they passed the barrier together, Keseb brushed against her, and as she turned to see who was beside her, he pressed his little parcel into her hands, and fled. He was thankful, now, that he had put a note inside to explain everything.

We would we could draw a veil over the end of the story, but since it is the end that is most instructive, we must perforce tell it. However, we will be brief. On the following morning Keseb, unable, from some strange feeling of self-consciousness, to wait on the platform as was his wont, flew at once to the friendly shelter of a carriage. Venturing to peep out a few moments later, he was at once overjoyed and alarmed to see the object of his adoration hurrying along the train-side, surveying with a quick glance the occupants of carriage after carriage. Hastily he slid back into his seat, and waited, in an agony of fear and trembling. Was she looking for him? Then she must have accepted his gift, and was wanting to tell him.

In a moment his agony was ended, for the girl herself appeared at the window and, seeing him, stepped in. Coolly she walked up to him, handed him a little parcel very similar to his own, and seated herself opposite. With trembling hands he opened the package. Could it be that she was reciprocating his gift? What exquisite little memento lay hidden in his hand?.....The note inside was brief and to the point. It ran:

"Dear Sir,

Yours of the 15th Nov. received with thanks. I beg to inform you that I have no interest in second-hand books and return same herewith.

Yours faithfully,
Sudha Row."

With eyes that felt inclined to fill with tears of rage and grief, Keseb looked up. She was watching him, but as he looked, she turned away and raised her book to shield her face. He stared, desperately. It was still the same look, the same delightful volume. Now for the first time, he saw the title. The book she was reading was Pitman's 'The Woman in Business'.

He sighed, and turned to his book again, to take up the tale where he had left off so many, many weeks ago.

BANISHING A BAD HABIT—(Continued from page 27)

"Ah," said the Head-master and remained thoughtful for sometime. He called the clerk and asked him to bring a flask of coffee from the nearest coffee hotel. It arrived. The Head-master filled a glass tumbler and commanded, "Drink it." There it stood in the glass tumbler, the seductive brown liquid. But principle was principle. I trembled at the sight of it. But principle was principle. And then said the Head-master, "I can't allow this kind of work any longer. You take that coffee or I shall be obliged to write a note about you to the D.E.O." I could not afford to lose my job. I drank the coffee. The Head-master said, "Hereafter unless you come and report to me that you have had coffee, I won't allow you to go near the boys."

I still felt too proud to tell my people at home that I wanted coffee in the morning. So for the next few days I went to a nearby hotel as soon as I got up in the morning. But coffee-truths, like murder, will out. The people at home came to know what I did in the mornings and I had no other go but to face the fusillade of jokes for the next few days. I defended myself by saying that it was an official necessity, a bread-and-butter necessity. They don't believe a word of this. They still treat me as a big joke. I don't mind anything. But what galls me is the fact that even on the days on which I was drinking coriander and cold water and porridge, according to them, I was visiting a hotel secretly.

A WISE

HOUSEWIFE

SHE HAS BEEN
SAVING TIME
MONEY & LABOUR
by using

LION BRAND

ALLUMINIUM
COPPER - - -
BRASS - - -
GERMAN SILVER -
UTENSILS



R. B. ANANT SHIVAJEE TOPIWALA
MOTI BAZAR : BOMBAY, 2
[We also deal in Velvet, Pictures and Artistic Picture-Frames]

Help! Help!



A Deal in Emeralds

by 'Embusque'

Illustrated by Bahadurje

BALAJI Rastamwala surveyed his new shop with pardonable pride. It was a shop with a front of plate-glass, and the fittings were of chromium steel. The shop gleamed brightly, yet austere. It was an adornment even to the palatial thoroughfare in which it stood.

The frontage was small, but the interior gave an impression of spacious stateliness. A few handsome glass-topped cases displayed choice items of stock. A few ornate chairs were disposed artistically for the convenience of customers. A single gentlemanly assistant, of impeccable manners and education, added the final touch of quiet richness.

How different it was, thought Balaji Rastamwala, from his grandfather's grubby place in the bazaar. He pictured his grandfather squatting on soiled cushions, the scales and account-books by his side. He recollected the haggling with middle-class customers over tawdry sets of crude gold ornaments. To the end of his days, the old man had stuck to that dirty little place of business, refusing to move with the times. Still, he was a shrewd old man. He amassed the capital which made the present firm of Rastamwala Brothers, dealers in jewellery and precious stones.

Eulaji Rastamwala, the second brother, had inherited his grandfather's instincts. Eulaji ran the other side of the present business. He sat on his grandfather's cushions, and haggled with the brokers. Eulaji bought what Balaji sold. There were always a hundred thousand rupees in the big safe at the back of the dirty old shop. That was the secret of the firm's success. It was known to the trade that Eulaji Rastamwala paid spot cash for fine and rare jewellery. And Eulaji bargained mercilessly with the brokers, as a man may do when he pays spot cash.

There was no bargaining in the beautiful, austere shop conducted by the other brother. To Balaji's door came the great silent cars of the very rich. In the hushed splendour of his premises, Balaji placed before his customers the miracles and treasures of lapidary art. He was no sordid trafficker, but a high priest of luxury.

Even as Balaji was surveying the morning glitter of his beautiful shop, an Olympian entered the portals of the temple. He arrived in a splendid hired car. Beside the driver sat a gigantic Negro in rich livery. The Negro descended, opened the door, and gently assisted his master to alight. The master was infirm. His servant led him into the shop, and made him comfortable in one of Balaji's ornate chairs.

"Good morning, sir," said Balaji, coming forward.

"Permit me," replied the stranger, and presented his card. Below an imposing heraldic crown appeared the legend: BARON ERNEST OFFENBACH-RUNESTEIN.

"Pardon me, Baron," said Balaji. "May I show you something?"

"Perhaps you have a small ornament in emeralds," replied the Baron. "Something suitable for my daughter's birthday."

"Ah, your Highness has heard that I specialise in fine emeralds," said Balaji, smiling urbanely. "I may have something to please the taste of a nobleman such as yourself."

Balaji went towards the safe, and, unobtrusively, the gentlemanly assistant moved within reach of the loaded revolver hidden behind a ledge, and stood with his shoe lightly poised over the electric alarm-bell concealed beneath the heavy carpet. Not that such precautions were likely to be necessary in the present case. The half-paralysed Baron sat motionless in his chair, and the Negro attendant stood motionless behind him.

Balaji came forward with a tray of beautiful baubles, and the Baron inspected them closely. He picked out a fine, but small, emerald pendant.



"Good morning, sir,"

"Ah!" said Balaji, "I perceive that your Highness is a connoisseur. Though not the largest, that is undoubtedly the best piece."

"I will take it," said the Baron, and snapped his fingers. The Negro leaned forward, drew the wallet from his master's breast-pocket, and placed it in his hands.

"The price, please?" asked the Baron.

"Six hundred and fifty rupees."

The Baron drew out a thousand-rupee note. The practised eye of Balaji Rastamji perceived that the wallet contained at least twenty thousand rupees. The jeweller motioned to his assistant to bring change and a receipt, and leaned confidentially towards his wealthy customer. "If your Highness is interested in very fine emeralds—" he began.

"I am," replied the Baron.

"In exceptional emeralds? In a unique emerald?"

"Have you a unique emerald?" cried the Baron eagerly.

"One worth a prince's ransom, your Highness."

"If it is really unique—" hesitated the Baron suppressing his excitement.

"It is the Kabul emerald," whispered Balaji.

"The Kabul emerald! It disappeared years ago!"

"Yes, but I have it. If I show your Highness, a virtuoso like yourself will at once recognise it as none other than the great Kabul emerald."

"I must see it!"



"The price is eighty thousand rupees."

"If it is the Kabul emerald, I will buy it."

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Balaji suavely. He closed the plate glass, steel-grilled door, and snapped the safety-lock. Then from the safe he brought a small case. Holding it in front of the Baron, he slowly raised the lid.

"It is the Kabul emerald!" cried the nobleman, gazing covetously at the blazing, living splendour of the great jewel. "I will buy it!"

"Very well, your Highness," said Balaji, without emotion. "A certified cheque—"

"I will pay cash," replied the Baron. "Permit me to explain. I am cruising in my steam yacht—the vessel that anchored in the harbour this morning. We are sailing at mid-day. In the circumstances, perhaps you will allow me to send a messenger for the money immediately."

"By all means," agreed the jeweller.

"A piece of notepaper—"

Balaji brought a pad of the firm's superlative crested notepaper. "Would you write for me?" continued the Baron. "This wretched arm of mine—"

Balaji invited the Baron to dictate. "Dear E," he wrote. "I have made a wonderful deal in emeralds, that must be closed immediately. Please give the bearer, Marcus who is to be implicitly trusted, eighty thousand rupees in cash. Urgent and imperative."

"I will sign it," said the Baron. Borrowing the jeweller's pen, he slowly wrote a signature, and handed the paper to the Negro attendant.

"Go in the car, Marcus, and take this," said the nobleman. "I will wait here. I expect you back in twenty minutes."

Balaji cautiously replaced the emerald in the safe, and re-opened the door of the shop. The Negro departed without a word.

A priceless ornulu clock ticked away the minutes while the paralysed nobleman waited. When half-an-hour had gone by, the Baron began to display restlessness. "Has that ebony-faced fool made some mistake?" he muttered.

"Merely a slight delay in the traffic," said Balaji soothingly.

Ten minutes later, the Baron could no longer restrain his impatience. "Call a taxi!" he exclaimed. "I am not an active man, but I will bring the money myself. The Kabul emerald must be mine!"

Balaji and the assistant helped the infirm nobleman out of the shop, and placed him carefully in the taxi. "To the docks!" cried the Baron.

When the vehicle had gone a little way down the street, Balaji started. The infirm old gentleman was standing up and talking to the driver, gesticulating freely.

"That man isn't paralysed!" cried Balaji, and rushed to his safe. When the heavy steel door swung open, he heaved a sigh of relief. The Kabul emerald was still there.

(Continued on page 48)

Blind—

by John A. Henry

Illustration by Pandia

HENRY didn't like sympathetic old ladies. They always made him feel that he could make strange noises at them with his lips and not feel any compunction at all for his act.

But in the hospital where he lay, he was doomed to encounter one of the most sympathetic old ladies he had ever seen or heard in all his life.

She came prancing down the middle of the ward one 'Visitor's Evening,' distributing apples and sweets and words of pity amongst the patients. Henry had only entered the hospital on the previous day and was, therefore, not aware of her notoriously garrulous reputation.

"Ah!" she said sadly as she reached Henry's bed, "poor man!"

"Huh!" grunted Henry, his eyes staring vacantly at the ceiling.

"Poor, poor man," she said again, looking at the bandages that swathed Henry's body. "And what is the matter with you?" She did not appear to know that she could glance at the board at the foot of his bed to find this out.

Henry thought he would soon stop her.

"I am," he stated calmly, "the Duke of Wellington, and I was badly wounded at the Battle of Waterloo yesterday."

The old lady's eyes opened wide.

"Surely not?" she said, and then laughed. Henry likened the sound of her laughter unto the neigh of a horse. "Some of you poor men will have your little joke, won't you? Ha! Ha! Poor men, if you didn't have a joke now and then, I suppose you'd go mad. But really now, what is your complaint?"

"I'm blind—" began Henry and was interrupted by loud clucking noises of pity and commiseration.

"Oh, how terrible! You poor man!" said the old lady.

"You have," said Henry wearily, "said that before."

She seated herself on the edge of his bed.

"Now who would think it!" she exclaimed. "You are the only blind man in this ward, and, I think, in the whole hospital. I wonder that they haven't put you into some hospital where blindness is specially treated."

"Br-r-r-rh!" said Henry, but the old lady evidently thought he was suffering from ague.

"Yes, it *must* make you shiver," she said consolingly, "to know that you may never see again. Now, my poor man, how did you lose your sight?"

Henry thought he'd have another shot at shooing her away. So he began wearily,

"I was walking down the street one windy day when a girl who was walking along in front of me had her skirts blown up into the air. So—"

"You became blind!" she finished for him. She was apparently used to these sarcastic retorts, for she became even more sympathetic than ever.

"Being blind," she went on, after gently patting Henry on the stomach, "do you find that your other senses, such as feeling and hearing, become keener? I have heard that this happens."

"Decidedly," said Henry. "I hear a strange noise somewhere and I feel that I am beset by some strange animal."

But she ignored his insult.

"Really?" she said. "How often do you feel and hear like that? There must be something wrong with you."

"I'm feeling it now," said Henry. "And, of course, there's something wrong with me. I'm blind—"

"You've told me that before," said the old lady. "How sad it must be not to be able to see the beautiful things around us!"

"It would be a blessing sometimes," said Henry suggestively, but she didn't seem to see his point.

"Oh, how *can* you say that?" she exclaimed. "Why, wouldn't you like to see the green trees and the flowers and—"

"Sympathetic old ladies!" snorted Henry, but alas!—in vain!

"What," she went on sadly, "do you intend to do for a living when you leave this hospital?"

"I'll just carry on with my old job," said Henry, "which is writing novels."



The old lady gasped. Henry's eyes were still staring vacantly at the ceiling.

"But," she said, "how? How will you be able to continue writing?"

"I tell you," said Henry impatiently, "I'm blind—"

"Yes, yes, I know. Then how—"

"I'll take a pen in my right hand and wield it over sheets of paper with the occasional use of a bit of blotting paper," said Henry in a heavily sarcastic tone, wishing that the old owl would take herself hence and throw herself down a well.

"But you won't be able to see what you write," said the old lady.

"Oh, all *right*!" Henry began to give up. "I won't be able to see. Now are you satisfied?"

"Are you married?" she asked next.

"Yes, and I have two children," answered Henry. "My brother eats snails, one of my aunts has a cast in her right eye, and my great-grand-mother had triplets the other day."

The old lady jumped.

"My God!" she said. She was evidently at last coming to the conclusion that Henry was fed up with her. "I perceive that you are being sarcastic."

"Not at all," said Henry, his vacant eyes still on the ceiling. "I was merely anticipating some of your questions."

She seemed slightly mollified at this.

"Does your wife come to see you regularly here?" she asked.

"Yes, she'll be along in a few moments, I hope. I haven't been here very long, you see. Only came in yesterday. So I don't know if she *does* come regularly. It was only very recently that I got blind—"

"Oh! how awful!" she interrupted him. "How terrible!"

"Yes," said Henry. He was tired of all this repetition.

"But what I can't understand," she continued, "is why, if you are blind, these foolish doctors go and bandage the rest of your body."

"But, I'm blind—" began Henry again impatiently.

"Yes, a soul-searing affliction," sympathised the old lady, and Henry groaned aloud in despair.

Just then Henry's wife came to his rescue with a baby on her arm. As she came down the ward, Henry's eyes left the ceiling and he said:

"Ah! Here's my wife at last!"

"How did you know?" asked the old lady curiously as she rose. "Did you smell her scent?"

"Oh, I *saw* her!" almost yelled Henry.

"But—but—" stammered the old lady. "You said—"

"I *am*! I'm blind—" began Henry.

"Then how on earth—"

"Because, you old hen," said Henry rudely, able to explode at last, "there's nothing wrong with my eyes!"

Henry's wife came up to the bed.

"Hullo, darling," she said as she kissed him, "How are you—"

"One minute," snorted Henry. "I want to explain something to that old turkey there." He glared at the old lady. "I've been trying to tell her for the last twenty minutes that I'm blind—"

"Isn't it sad?" interrupted the old lady turning to Henry's wife. "I feel so sorry for you, my dear!"

"That I'm blind boils all over!" shouted Henry at the top of his voice. "In other words, I've got blind boils all over my body. BLIND BOILS! Do you hear?"

The old lady heard, and faded away.

THE END

B. B. A. Avoids



Collision No. 1

MEET Mr. Bhattacharya, B. A., of the Madras University—B. B. A. to his friends, clean-shaven, thinly built with a slight stoop, and the proprietor of a long, pointed nose. B. B. A. is a young man of about five and twenty.

He was travelling from Raichur to Bombay by the Express which was scheduled to arrive at Victoria Terminus at 19-13 hours; and would you believe it, punctual to the minute the train slid alongside the platform!

Immediately all became bustle and confusion.

No face wore a more distraught expression than that of Mr. Bhattacharya, B. A., as he alighted from a third class compartment, forcibly propelled from behind by a stout Brahmin lady.

When the train arrived at its destination, he descended to the platform with becoming dignity. But Mrs. Gangabai the stout lady who was following grew restive. She propelled him from behind; gently at first, then more forcibly, using a small attache case. Finally she jabbed the unconscious Mr. Bhattacharya fairly and squarely in the rear part of his anatomy!

With such motive power behind him, B. B. A. leapt forward, crashed into a cooly *en route*, and finally landed in Bombay.

To struggle to his feet, clutch desperately at his braces, beckon wildly to the cooly with his luggage, and then to race down the platform was, with B. B. A., the work of a moment. Ticket Collectors, Assistant Station Masters, Station Masters, Station Superintendents, and a host of other uniformed railway officials saw only a white blur flash past.

It was B. B. A.!

The cooly was not many lengths behind, having cottoned on to the idea with commendable promptitude; with the result that B. B. A. found his luggage reposing on his toes in the taxi almost as soon as he had put them there. His toes I mean.

"The Hindu Hotel," he said, a wild light in his eyes. The taxi driver understood and the car whisked off.

"Collision No. 1!" said B. B. A. to himself.

At the hotel he stopped by the lift. The gates clicked, a humming sound ensued and the cage began to ascend.

B. B. A. turned round. Then his jaw dropped open and his eyes formed themselves into two saucers; for not a foot away from him, stood a pretty girl of about eighteen or thereabouts. And she was regarding him with a friendly sort of smile. B. B. A. gasped. His eyes blinked hard and he swung round to his original position with his back to her.

"Collision No. 2!" he muttered.

Entrenched in room 22 he sent the boy back for his luggage, recovered his mental equilibrium, and looked about him. There were two single beds in the centre of the room with spotlessly clean linen on them. A teapoy stood beside each. A dressing table, an almirah, and two easy chairs completed the rest of the furniture. But what struck B. B. A. most was the number of doors the room possessed. Doors seemed to be on all sides.

Ever of an inquiring turn of mind, he commenced exploring. The first door led into the bathroom; the second into the dining hall. He unbolts the third door and kept it open for exactly one-twentieth of a second. During that space of time he had seen a lady reclining on an easy chair and reading a book. Softly yet speedily he rebolted the door and went away from it on tip toe. Nor would he risk opening any more doors. He shuddered to think what the next one may reveal. No. No. He had had enough of females for one day. They seemed to be all over the shop.

"Collision No. 3 fortunately averted," he murmured, and proceeded to dress for dinner, which the Call Boy had obligingly informed him would be served at eight.

Dinner over and after sitting awhile on the balcony overlooking the street, B. B. A. decided to sleep.

The corridor was dark; so he couldn't see the numbers of the rooms painted over the doors. But he judged the position of his room, cautiously pushed open the door and peeped. Yes...there were the two beds, the dressing table and everything else as he had left it. Thus unwittingly B. B. A. entered the wrong bedroom, and commenced undressing with the aid of the bathroom light which shone through the doorway.

Women

by 'Kismet'

Illustrated by Bijoy

He was standing barefooted and clad only in a *dhoti* when the door of the antechamber opened and—horror of horrors!—a lady entered. And it did not take more than a fleeting glance for B. B. A. to recognise his erstwhile companion of the railway carriage: the one who had helped him descend by the shortest possible route to the platform, and who had caused him to leave the railway station with such ungentlemanly haste.

Mrs. Gangabai was drawing the curtain across the door. Soon she would turn and come into the bedroom! B. B. A. became desperate. He felt certain she had mistaken the room for hers, but how was he to tell her so—especially clad as he was? No, he decided he couldn't do that. He must get out himself. He looked about him. Only the bathroom door stood open, and he was just about to make a bee-line for it when a fearful thought struck him. Suppose she also came to the bathroom still under the impression that it was hers? What then? He could conceal himself, but what if she undressed and commenced having a bath? Phew! B. B. A.'s hair stood on end.

And he felt that to try opening other doors would be simply asking for trouble; there might be a lady behind each! Time pressed, so he decided to hide himself under the bed until the lady discovered her own mistake and took herself off. Safety First for this lad, thought B. B. A.

He had just slid into position and drawn his legs after him when Mrs. Gangabai crossed the threshold. She switched on the light; then with a sigh of relief threw herself on the bed under which B. B. A. crouched. With difficulty he suppressed an exclamation; and there began for him a period of mental torture which can better be imagined than described. Suffice it to say that poor B. nearly snuffed it, as he himself confessed later.

Presently the cause of his perturbation rose. "Now," thought he, "she will realise her mistake and fly." But Mrs. Gangabai appeared to be in no hurry either to discover her mistake, if any, or attempt to fly. In any case she would have found the latter proceeding fairly difficult.

She pattered about for a while, opened the almirah, looked at her reflection in the mirror on the dressing table, yawned sleepily and stretched herself. B. B. A. blushed furiously and covered his face with his hands, because.....well.....I mean to say.....What ho!

Then he heard a step. Looking up he saw her go and switch off the light. Leisurely she went and opened a door which B. B. A. now devoutly thanked his stars he had not ventured to open, since it evidently led into her room.

"Ah," he muttered his satisfaction at seeing her pass through the doorway and close the door behind her,



Collision No. 2.

"at last she has found out her mistake. Well...well... that's Collision No. 4. NO CASUALTIES!"

He crawled out from his hiding place, massaged his limbs in order to restore lost circulation, and then completed his preparations for the night. He was soon between the sheets and fast asleep.

Women haunted even his dreams. He dreamt that he was once again under the bed and that Mrs. Gangabai had discovered him there. She was pulling him out by an end of his *dhoti*. Sweat broke out upon B. B. A.'s brow while he slept, for, in his dream the *dhoti* threatened to become undone and that was the only garment he had on! Suddenly the determined lady seemed to give the *dhoti* a fierce tug and—B. B. A. awoke.

Now when one has had an unpleasant dream and suddenly awakes at the crucial moment, one is always relieved to find that it was only a dream. But B. B. A.'s case proved entirely different.

When he opened his eyes it was to find a soft arm encircling his neck, and to feel the sheet being pulled away from over him. The situation would have been O. K. from the ordinary man's point of view. I mean to say...I mean, it would not have been too dusty, what? Don't you agree?.....I thought so. Atta Boy!

But Bhattacharya, B. A., was not ordinary in this respect. Moreover matters were fairly complicated in the present situation. In the first place, contact with one of the opposite sex would have been sufficient inducement for him to turn and run like a hare. But when, as it soon became apparent to him, Mrs. Gangabai obviously mistook him for her husband, things assumed a

new aspect. A menacing aspect. His senses reeled before the prospect. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Suppose...suppose...but B. B. A.'s mind refused to suppose any further.

"I am very angry with you, Bapu," Mrs. Gangabai was murmuring in his ear. "Why didn't you tell me that you had come in? You knew I would be waiting for you in the dressing room. Now I come in and find you asleep!—and in my bed too! Come, tell me is there anything wrong?"

She waited for an answer, but none came. B. B. A. was incapable of speech or movement. She shook him.

"What's the matter, Bapu? Answer me soon. If you don't I shall think you are seriously ill."

Still no answer from 'Bapu'. He was thinking:

"This No. 5 is a dreadful collision. Dear me! This emancipation of women...they occupy the same railway carriage as men, instead of going to the Ladies' Compartment; they steal up behind you in lifts and smile when you turn round; they hide behind doors pretending to read; bounce upon beds under which you happen to be; and finally they get into bed with you! Where and when will this forward movement end?" B. B. A. peevishly asked himself. It makes it dashed difficult for any decent chap to keep to his policy and avoid women.

Meanwhile Mrs. Gangabai became convinced that something was seriously amiss. She withdrew her arm from round B. B. A.'s neck, got out of bed quickly and went to switch on the light.

Then B. B. A. came to life. His chance had come and he seized it. Desperately he galvanised his limbs into action shot out of bed, and in four leaps was in the antechamber and heading for the door.

Mrs. Gangabai heard the movements as she switched on the light. What she then saw caused her to stand rooted to the spot in sheer amazement. She caught a momentary glimpse of the flying figure of her imagined husband as he rounded the doorway. Had he gone mad?

At that moment her real husband happened to come out of the drawing room. He switched on the lights at the far end of the corridor. To say that he was surprised to see a young man shoot out of the bedroom like a racing colt and tear down the passage towards him as if were the home-stretch on a race course, would be to describe Mr. Gangabai's feelings very inadequately. He stood stock-still while the runner bore down on him in a fast sprint.

Suddenly B. B. A. raised his head, probably to take fresh bearings or perhaps he scented danger. He perceived the man in his path. Was B. B. A. delighted to meet one of his own sex in his hour of need? Did he increase his speed on beholding this brother in arms? I can answer both questions with one word. No. Something in the other man's pose warned the Bachelor of Arts that here was no friend in need; no champion who would put his arm around your shoulder, place his left foot forward, look the world straight in the eye and say: "Love me, love my monkey," or words to that effect. The ominous set of the man's jaw, the peculiar gleam in his eyes, and the dangerous clenching of his fists, were signs with which B. B. A. was not totally unfamiliar. He had had one or two previous experiences of them. Nor had he enjoyed the subsequent proceedings.



On this occasion he took warning in time. Pulling himself up with a jerk, he turned right about and raced back up the corridor, with Mr. Gangabai in full pursuit. The latter was fully convinced that B. B. A. was a burglar. Else why should he come darting out of bed-rooms at ten o'clock at night and charge down corridors?

In the race which ensued B. B. A. led easily, though the husband of the lady strove his hardest to draw level, or at least within striking distance. B. B. A.'s cause of fright requires no further investigation; but the husband was imagining all sorts of dreadful things as happening. Beginning with the murder of his wife, his mind ran over all the possibilities and ended with the theft of his slippers from the bathroom. And the fact that the burglar was returning towards the room added poignancy to the situation. Either, Mr. Gangabai thought, the rascal intends to dispose of the dead body, or to collect more loot—the socks this time probably.

However, the distressed husband was soon afforded some measure of relief, if relief it could be termed; for B. B. A., instead of turning into the room whose door still stood open, leapt past it. The terrified lady within, thus, had another glimpse of flying legs, arms and a dhoti.

Her astonishment increased tenfold a moment or two later when another figure shot past the doorway. In her amazement she forgot her fright and ran to the door just in time to see B. B. A. swerve into a doorway at the far end of the corridor. Followed the banging of a door and then a woman's piercing scream. Out shot B. B. A. again, with another man hard on his heels. The new runner apparently did not believe in reserving his breath for the chase. He shouted as he ran:

"Thief! Thief! Catch him! Police! Help!"

Doors all along the main passage began to open. Heads popped out, heard afresh the sounds of the shouting and the chase, though B. B. A. had wisely chosen as his route a corridor which intersected the main one. Nevertheless, soon all the third floor residents, attired in costumes varying from dress-suit to a simple home-spun dhoti, were in full chase. And all were giving tongue like hounds on the scent.

B. B. A. who had been thrust into the role of fox, gave them a good run for their money. Give him that much credit. He ran for dear life. Availing himself of every corridor on the third floor, he also passed through nearly every room, shrill feminine screams renting the air on all sides.

Finally the chase became too hot for him and he was almost run to earth. Just then he came upon the stairs leading down to the second floor. Straddling the bannisters he slid down with alarming rapidity, until brought up with a jerk near the landing of the second floor.

Disregarding the bruise which his rear thus received for the second time that evening, he was about to get round the obstructing post and descend per bannisters again to the first floor, when he observed coming up the stairs a lady and a gentleman. And they were viewing his antics with no small amount of curiosity. The lady even exhibited signs of distress. She was alarmed, convinced that B. B. A. was off his top—a lunatic.

The poor hunted fellow turned tail once more and ran—this time along the corridors of the second floor. The vanguard of the pursuing army were also arriving and the noise of the chase brought out the guests of the hotel occupying rooms on this floor. They added considerably to the numerical strength of the pursuers and to the awful din they were creating.

You might be inclined to think that B. B. A.'s number was now up. But not a bit of it. He had got his second wind and was moving in really fine style. So much so that his pursuers were strung out in a long line, like a field of unevenly handicapped horses. Of course allowance must be made for the fact that the field was large, the corridor narrow, and the runners all differently built. A few were in the bantam and light weight classes, some in the middle and welter, while the more ponderous members would easily have turned the scale for the heavy weight—even before dinner. These latter especially found the pace exceedingly hot.

B. B. A. led them on a topping run, keeping them on their toes all the while. In a canter he brought the field round the bend and into the straight, and headed once more for the staircase.

He won by lengths. A neck separated the second and third, and a leg divided the third and fourth.

B. B. A. mounted the bannisters and shot downwards, this time like an experienced bannister-rider; and there being no obstruction at the first floor landing, he flashed past that stage with a furious blinking of eyes.

The humming of the lift came down to him, telling him that his hunters were coming down by as short a route as he did. But he paid no attention; for to make a success of sliding down bannisters you must give the matter your undivided attention. Unless of course you don't mind breaking your neck; in which case your mind is free to admire the scenery.

B. B. A. however was taking no chances. He timed his jump to a perfect nicety, his dhoti skimming the bottom post of the staircase by just a millimetre. Not more, I give you my word.

And so B. B. A. concluded his stay at the Hindu Hotel. But his luggage is still there.

THE END



Merry Magus

Replies

The free offer of character-reading which I made on 6-7-1935, and am continuing, proved very popular with readers. Commencing from this issue Merry Magus free readings will be published each week. For announcement and free character-reading coupon, turn to page 49.—Ed.

T. B. Seetharaman. You are self-willed and have obstinacy of purpose but you lack caution. You are a capable organiser of big schemes. You resent all criticisms and are independent. You do everything in your own way and will hopelessly muddle in your plan and retire from the field of action if others interfere. Though you crave for affection and sympathy you will be unhappy in your domestic life for want of proper understanding. Why are you carried away by flattery and praise? Drop that weakness and you are safe. You are making enemies for want of tact. Of course you are good-hearted and generous but you are impulsive in your actions. Do not over-work your brains, as you are liable to suffer from all ailments affecting the head.

* * * *

S. N. Baradwaj. I am glad you are decisive in your thoughts and actions. Always act on your first impressions. You have good presentiments and can make a good spiritualist; but why do you spoil all these gifts by your over-reasoning faculties? Do not weigh and balance matters too much, as by this nature you will be courting disillusion and disappointment, even in your married life. Do not be exacting, especially in home-life. I should congratulate you if you have studied or are studying for law or medicine. Take whatever opportunity is thrown in your way. You are prone to suffer from nerves, depression of spirits and skin diseases.

* * * *

D. V. Kameswara Row. Why are you over-sensitive and feel lonely in your life in spite of the fact that you love theatres, concerts and crowds of people. It is good you like to work for the public and give all you have to help others in their distress. You are able to argue and debate successfully. You are peculiar in that you can make more money for others than for yourself. Do not wait for a call to duty or a circumstance to show your qualities. Push yourself forward and create opportunities. There is another peculiarity in you; you can subdue excitable and insane persons by your

compelling eyes. Please take care of your stomach and nerves connected therewith.

* * * *

K. Narayanamurthy. You have got the instinct to speculate and gamble to make money. Crush that instinct. You cannot get anything by gambling except loss. Turn your brains to some good business. You have a strong desire for travel and change. You will have extraordinary and unexpected changes for good or evil. You are romantic and of affectionate disposition, but as you are not demonstrative, you are misunderstood as an unemotional man. You do not shirk work but you require encouragement and appreciation at every stage. Why are you so sensitive? Do not dream of large plans; but be within your sphere. You are liable to be attacked by gastric troubles.

* * * *

"Providence." Do you know providentially President Carnot of France? He was born on 11th August. I will be happy to make your friendship as I can rely on you to defend me in the face of all my enemies put together. You are very sympathetic and generous to a fault but are extremely independent. You cannot bear disloyalty and deceit as you are honest and truthful. Be warned that by your extreme honesty you are liable to get terribly deceived. Why are you so proud as not to ask others for any favour, even a legitimate one? Don't you know that you are making enemies by your frank speech, hatred of under-hand dealings, impetuosity and quick temper? Always be engaged in active work, as without it you will become morbid. Your heart is susceptible to all diseases connected therewith and you will have pains in the head and ears.

* * * *

S. S. T. Chari. You are mentally quick and keen. Are you not ambitious for social position? I would like to have you for my friend as you are a delightful companion, but the pity is I cannot expect you to be constant. You change your plans and ideas about anything too quickly. Why are you restless and want the thing that

you have not got? Are you not able to see and judge the weak points in others and act suitably? You love passionately; but are you able to be constant? Do one thing at a time and be decisive and stick to it till you finish it; then only you will be successful. These are lacking in you. Be careful of your nervous system.

* * * *

Narasimhan. You cannot be easily imposed upon or deceived. You have a wonderful memory. You want everything to be in good taste and elegant. You are very conservative, respecting rank, position and law. Are you not selfish in trying to achieve your aims? You have a good intellect and can be self-possessed and self-reliant; but why are you so sensitive to your surroundings? Do not drug your system. Why do you imagine that you are afflicted with some illness or other? Peace and harmony are better cures for your imagined ill health than any of the medicines.

* * * *

"Viskay." Almost always first impressions give you a correct grip on things. Your greatest asset is your decisiveness. Your weakness is, you are over-argumentative. Your strong points are a bit vitiated by a tendency to weigh and size up matters. Your instincts are sound. You have leanings towards extra-mundane things. In home-life let your motto be 'give and take'. Don't wait for opportunities; create them. You are prone to suffer from nervous disorders and skin diseases.

* * * *

Kishen Kumar. You are extremely independent. You resent criticism. You are so sensitive in this respect that if anybody interferes with your plans, you drop the whole thing and walk away. Self-willed and obstinate, you lack caution. You yearn for affection and sympathy. You will be unhappy, my friend, if you don't bring a proper sympathetic understanding into your domestic life. In short you have no tact. That means you are making enemies. On the other hand you are good-hearted and generous. A little more of tact and a little less of impulsiveness will carry you very far. You are liable to suffer from ailments affecting the head. Don't do too much brain work.

"Thillai." You love travel and change. Be prepared for extraordinary and unexpected changes in your life—both good and evil, more good than otherwise. Steer clear of speculation and gambling, for that way is absolutely barren for you. You are affectionate and romantic; but not being demonstrative you are taken for an unemotional man. You are too sensitive. You dream of great things. My advice is, confine yourself to your sphere. You are prone to suffer from gastric troubles.

* * * *

"Shentaty." Your presentiments point towards spiritualism. You have a penchant for reasoning—too much of it. Don't be too nice in weighing and sizing up matters, for you will be disappointed and disillusioned. Your strong point is you are decisive. Your first impressions are unerring. Be a sport in matters domestic. You will have many opportunities. Don't weigh them. Take them as they come. You suffer from low spirits. Shake it off. You are prone to suffer from nervous disorders.

* * * *

Hunsurhuli. It is only a lucky few that have made anything out of speculation. You are not destined to make anything out of this, except disappointment. So avoid speculation and get-rich-quick gambles, as you would the Devil. You will have big changes in your life. You are not demonstrative, but you have an affectionate and romantic nature. Don't be too sensitive. Your physical weakness lies in your stomach.

* * * *

A. S. Narayana Iyer. You are extremely generous and sympathetic. You are independent—very. You hate disloyalty and deceit. Don't measure others by your code of honesty and probity. Your frankness is making enemies for you. Your memory is great. You are exacting in your tastes and prone to be a bit selfish in achieving your aims. Yours is a complex character. Your health is fairly good, but you imagine you are suffering from some ailment or other. Eschew drugs.

"De Profundis"

by T. P. Scott-O'Connor

Illustrated by Bijoy

SIR Julian Marsh was looked upon by Society as an eccentric person. That was because he neither fed nor amused its members. He certainly shocked them. But as the said members had succeeded in shocking each other as much and as often as they possibly could, Sir Julian's contributions were nothing really outstanding after all. He was loathed for his niggardly ways which affected no one but himself, and respected for his wealth which affected everyone but himself, for it aroused that most poisonous and most natural of all human feelings, envy, and that is a terrible thing, especially when the envious know that they can never attain the position which they think belongs to them by right of doing absolutely nothing to attain it.

In his youth, Sir Julian had been very far from well off. In fact there had been a time when he had seriously, (for him) thought about quitting this world for the next. Not that he believed in an existence hereafter. With him seeing was believing—a very sound, practical basis upon which to build one's life. But, faced with an entire lack of the world's goods upon the one side and with no hope whatsoever of attaining them upon the other, he had somewhat naturally given way to the resultant feeling of hopelessness which followed. And then had come the turning point, as it generally does come, at the wrong moment. He conceived an idea and acted upon it. He made money—how, it would not be too discreet to inquire, and nobody did inquire. Money begets money. In five years he was worth a small fortune; in ten a very large one; and now at sixty two years of age, he was considered by the world a person of consequence albeit rather 'queer'. What exactly Sir Julian was 'queer' in, no one ever troubled to find out. Some said it was his manner which was cold, stiff and crude. Others, that it was something to do with his way of entirely ignoring his betters, or those who thought they were so. In this matter he showed extreme good sense. To ignore one's equals, even one's inferiors, is a tragedy. To do so in the case of one's superiors is a comedy, for there is nothing your fine feathered friend hates so much as to be completely ousted from what he looks upon as his, by accident of birth. It had even been whispered at one time that Sir Julian showed a trait of cruelty in his character, but this was never proved. True, once when he was quite a child, he had torn the wings off a butterfly and repeated the experiment upon a young bird. Neither of these creatures protesting, but continuing to wriggle in an ungainly manner about the floor, he had lost his temper and put his foot upon them both, simultaneously, with excellent results. They ceased absolutely to exist. It had given Timms, the boot-boy, a nasty quarter of an hour, cleaning the sole of his young master's shoe. But boot-boys are used to that kind of thing; at

least they should be. And so Sir Julian, seeing how very simple it was to remove the presence of anything he wished eliminated, proceeded with equal success to metaphorically plant both his feet upon the less fortunate persons who caused him annoyance by getting in the way of his personal progress. The results were as excellent as in the case of the butterfly and its companion in distress. They ceased to exist also; the only difference being that, whereas the former departed from this life instantly and probably without time for regret, the latter lived on, somehow, broken, destitute, and with plenty of time for reflection. Sir Julian possessed a vivid imagination, and he pictured to himself the reflections of these people whose social ruin was due to him, for he was what the upper orders and the Police and such useless people call a 'blackmailer', and what the serving classes call a 'help', for he paid well and on 'on the nail'.

It was upon the night of the 24th of December, 19—. Sir Julian was sitting in his favourite leather-covered armchair near the log fire in his study. Behind him, its green shade at such an angle as to throw a circle of yellow light upon his pink, bald head with its edging of fluffy white, and upon the evening paper in his hands—an electric reading lamp was placed upon a stand. In the corner of the room a tall, oaken-cased clock ticked monotonously. It was a wet night out of doors; the wind moaned and soughed around the building and came sobbing down the chimney as if seeking sanctuary from itself in that well-lighted and peaceful apartment. The patter of rain against the window-panes and the occasional splashing of cab-wheels or the hurrying footfalls of some lone pedestrian added to the feeling of warmth and security within. Sir Julian felt comfortable and he looked it. He wore his dressing gown over his pyjamas, his bare feet thrust into red, heel-less Turkish slippers. The door opened and Barrymore, the butler, a large person with a soft voice, a pair of side whiskers upon which his entire revenue depended, and a noiseless method of progression—entered, and moved towards the centre of the room. He never walked—he floated.

"Will you be requiring anything more to-night, sir?" he asked, deferentially.

Sir Julian did not raise his eyes from the paper before him. "No!" he snapped, "get out!"

"Certainly, sir," said Barrymore, and slid towards the door.

"Stay!" Sir Julian snapped again. He always snapped. It was one of his habits, amongst others.

"Sir?" The butler turned obediently, one hand upon the knob of the half open door.

His master laid the paper across his knees and looked at him. "You never wished me good night, Barrymore. Why?" he barked.

"I did not think it necessary, sir," replied the butler. Sir Julian frowned. "Indeed?" he said, "and pray what makes you think that?"

"It is now five and twenty to twelve, sir," replied Barrymore. "I considered it hardly worth while, sir, as it will very shortly be morning."

"I see," said his master. "In that case you will remain outside that door and, when it strikes mid-night, upon the last stroke in fact, you will enter and wish me a very good morning. You understand? A very good one."

"Perfectly, sir."

"Excellent! By the way, Christmas eve, Barrymore."

"Quite so, sir."

"Rubbish, Barrymore!"

"Exactly, sir." The butler glanced at the clock. Sir Julian intercepted that glance, as he intercepted most things—and made use of the results. "Why are you looking at the time?" he demanded.

"No special reason, sir," replied Barrymore.

"Then you're a fool. Everything should be done with a reason, no matter how trivial it is. That is the secret of success, Barrymore. It is the secret of my success."

"I can quite understand that, sir."

"You see me as I am now—"

"Perfectly, sir," murmured his servant, looking eighteen inches above the top of the bald head.

"Don't interrupt me, damn you! As I was saying, you see me as I am now, healthy, prosperous, the envy of all my acquaintances—I don't believe in friendships, they limit one in addition to making continual demands upon one's good nature—" Here Barrymore coughed

soothingly and elevated his eyes another three inches. Sir Julian glared at him, but there was nothing in the other's appearance which suggested the slightest impertinence. There was a short silence. The butler's eyes ascended another inch.

"I suppose," said Sir Julian, leaning back in his chair and looking at his servant through half closed, amused eyes, a sneer playing about his absurdly well shaped lips, "I suppose you're thinking of your Christmas Box? If so, you'd better cease to think about it, and at once. I'm not going to give you one,—neither you nor any of the other over-fed, lazy swine of servants. So forget it."

"I have already done so, sir," said Barrymore; "and thank you very much, sir," he added.

"Do you know," said the baronet musingly, still regarding the other with supercilious eyes, "I can never be sure whether you're trying to be insufferably polite or damnably insolent."

The butler appeared to be struggling with his emotions. "I endeavour to give satisfaction, sir," he said.

"You may go."

"With pleasure, sir." And Barrymore slimmed from the room.

Sir Julian looked at the closed door and his expression altered to one of cunning. "Wait, my pompous friend," he murmured, throwing the paper upon the carpet. "Awful servants one gets nowadays. And one has to pay through the nose, too. I suppose some idiots would call Barrymore a model butler. He's a piece of model impertinence. What a night! Thank God I'm not out in it. Too late for callers. Think I'll go to bed." He glanced at the clock. The hands pointed to seventeen minutes to twelve. Suddenly the door bell rang, and he cursed. "Now who the devil can that be? What a time to come! People have absolutely no consideration. At any rate I shan't see the person, whoever it is. Barrymore knows I never interview anyone after half past ten." There was the sound of the chain being unlatched,



Sir Julian recoiled a step, and his face became ghastly.

the opening and closing of the front door. A murmur of voices, and of footsteps ascending the stairs. The door of the study opened, and Sir Julian rose snarling to his feet.

"What's this, Barrymore?" he shouted. "What's this? How dare you overlook my orders? Don't you know—" he broke off spluttering with rage.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the butler. "He wouldn't give his name; says he knows you intimately, sir."

"What the—"

A tall, thin young man pushed past the servant and entered. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, extremely pale, and walked with a slight stoop. He was in full dinner dress, over which was an opera cloak. In one hand he carried his hat, stick and white gloves; in the fingers of the other a lighted cigarette.

"Sorry to trouble you at this hour, Sir Julian," he said, advancing to the centre of the room. "Circumstances you know. Awkward things, and they would always appear to turn up at the right moment." He turned and addressed Barrymore. "Take off my cloak," he ordered. The butler obeyed. "Put it on that chair," he said, motioning towards a small, high-backed chair near the window. "Also these"—handing the servant his hat, stick and gloves. When Barrymore had obeyed: "You may go," said the stranger. Barrymore went, closing the door gently after him.

Sir Julian's face was a study in baffled rage and amazement. He commenced to splutter again. "How dare you, sir! My butler informs me you told him I was intimately known to you. I have never seen you before. I do not wish to see you now. You will quit this room, the house, instantly! Do you hear? Instantly!" He fairly danced about in his anger.

The other paid not the slightest attention to him, but, going over to the chair facing the one in which Sir Julian had been so lately reclining, pulled it nearer the fire and sat down, holding out his well shaped hands towards the cheerful blaze.

"Sit down, Sir Julian," he said, without turning his head. The baronet foamed at the mouth.

"I will not sit down, sir!" he cried. "How dare you ask me to sit in my own chair? And you have occupied—usurped the other, without my permission. Get up at once! Scandalous—!"

"Quite," said the young man, gently. "I agree. You are." He threw the cigarette into the fire.

"I was referring to your conduct, sir!" shrilled the baronet. "You will instantly leave this house, or—"

The other turned and looked at him. "Yes?" he inquired. "Or?"

Sir Julian did not reply. Something in the other's eyes froze the words upon his lips.

"Sit down, Sir Julian." The latter sat down. "Thank you. People like you should never stand up—not when there's anyone else present. You see, sitting, you produce a false impression of a human being. By the way, do you mind if I turn the light out? It makes my eyes ache. That's the worst of people like me. We can't bear any strong light."

Without waiting for permission he rose, went over to the reading lamp, and switched off the current. Sir Julian

followed him with his eyes. He had reached the conclusion the man was a lunatic. And yet the face bore no signs of an unbalanced mind. The deep set, thoughtful eyes, the fine forehead, the firm chin, the well fitting dinner clothes, the gold-headed cane upon the chair—all pointed to a man of taste and refinement—a gentleman.

The stranger re-seated himself and, leaning forward, thrust his face close to the other's.

"Do you know me?" he asked.

The baronet shook his head. The other leaned back with a sigh of satisfaction. "No," he repeated as if to himself, "how could you? You never had the chance."

Sir Julian leaned forward in his turn. "My dear sir, you've mistaken the house, I feel sure. That's what it is."

The young man shook his head. "No," he said, "how could I? I've known it and you, for the last twenty-eight years. No; twenty-seven to be accurate. For that period in this house, and one year prior to that at your place in Berkshire—the 'Gables'.

The baronet looked hard at the man sitting opposite him. "Well?" he asked. "And what then? Say what you have to say and get out."

"Certainly," said the other. "A little patience, that is all. I promise you that by mid-night, another eight minutes, you shall know everything. Now, I want you to go back twenty-eight years—to a certain Christmas eve in fact, a night the same as this—the night your wife died."

The baronet frowned. "Who are you to mention my wife?" he rapped out.

"That doesn't matter—just now," replied the stranger. Taking out a flat silver case from his waist-coat pocket, he extracted a cigarette, lit it, and replaced the case.

"Have a drink?" sneered Sir Julian.

"Thanks, but I never drink."

"Indeed? Perhaps you would like something to eat in that case? Though I must say you don't look as if you've ever had much."

"Do you know, I don't eat anything either? It's not necessary."

"I congratulate you," said the baronet, leaning back comfortably in his chair. "You must find life cheap enough I should imagine."

The young man made no answer for a few moments. Then: "No," he said. "You see, I've really no life worth speaking of."

"Bad as all that, is it?" The sneer was very evident.

"Bad as all that."

"I see," murmured Sir Julian.

"You don't, but you will. Now, without your permission I'm going to tell you a story," said the stranger.

"Charmed," snapped the other, smiling hideously. "You would appear to be an adept at doing things without permission. Well, what is it?"

"I must get to the point without delay, I'm afraid," said his unwelcome companion. "I had great trouble in coming here, and I don't want to leave without completing what I've to do. Oh! no," as he noticed a pallor spreading over the other's un-healthy face, "I am not

going murder you. I'll leave that—to you. Now, what exactly was it your wife died of? I know it was put down to a fall, but—was that the *only* thing?"

"Look here!" cried Sir Julian, "I don't know who you are—"

"There you go again. A little patience. Answer my question."

"Well, if you want to know, though I cannot see what possible business it is of yours, my wife fell down the stairs. Internal injuries. She died of them."

"Ah!" The stranger leant forward and gazed into the embers.

"Peculiar! A fall down the stairs, internal injuries, unable to move."

"I did not say so." Sir Julian's voice was shaking.

"It's true, though, isn't it?"

"Well—yes."

"Yes. Unable to move, and yet they found her in the billiard room, three rooms away from the hall, lying writhing in agony upon the floor. *Very* strange." There was a deadly stillness in the room. The wind moaned eerily about the house. A spatter of rain beat against the closed windows. The hoot of a passing motor sounded mournfully depressing. The fire had died down to a few glowing pieces of wood.

"Who *are* you?" the question was breathed rather than spoken by the now thoroughly frightened baronet. "A little more patience."

"Damn your patience!" Sir Julian was upon his feet.

"Tut! Tut! Control yourself, do," said the young man. "By the way, you didn't control yourself that night, did you? The night your wife died, I mean?" He looked at the clock. "Another five minutes. Must be hurrying. Sit down, Sir Julian." The other did so. There was a power that compelled him to obey. The stranger rose and looked down upon the bloated, terrified creature in the chair. "You killed your wife, didn't you? You might as well own up. You can always deny it afterwards. Besides, there's not another human being present, only ourselves, and I'm—" he checked himself. "Nearly slipped out then! Now—"

Sir Julian cowered in his chair.

"Are you in the Police?" he inquired.

"Nothing nearly so practicable," replied the other. "You did kill her, didn't you? And your wife wasn't alone, was she? I mean, she wasn't *entirely* by herself? I'm not counting you."

Sir Julian rose to his feet, his face injected with blood, the veins standing out upon his neck, the lips drawn back, the whole figure shaking with a devilish merriment. "Yes!" he cried, "I killed her. I'd do it again if I could. Do you know what I did to her?"

The other nodded. "Yes," he said, quietly.

The baronet screamed at him. "I gave her a damned good kick, as hard as I could. Do you know what I did then?" He writhed with unsuppressed glee. "Do you know what I did then?" His voice had risen to a shriek.

"Yes," said the stranger. "But I want you to tell me yourself."

"By God, I will! I kicked her again, several times. Do you hear? Answer me, do you hear?" A thin edging of foam appeared at his lips.

The young man nodded again, never taking his eyes off the other. "I hear you. I also felt you—every single one of those kicks. The first was the worst, the one that really mattered—to you. The others were unnecessary." He looked at the mouthing man in silence. Then: "You see, I am your son," said he.

Sir Julian stared at him for some moments, and then burst into a high-pitched, neighing laugh.

"Brilliant!" he cried. "So that is what you have been leading up to? Why, my dear young man, I never had a son."

"No," said the other, "but you were going to."

Sir Julian recoiled a step, and his face became ghastly. The perspiration appeared in little drops upon his high-domed forehead. He felt blindly for support with his right hand, his left clutching at his heart. As he fell into his chair, one glowing ember suddenly leapt into flame. By its light he caught a momentary glimpse of the tall, thin, almost emaciated figure. It appeared to him that the latter swelled out until it filled the room. In the centre of everything were the two thoughtful, deep-set eyes. They regarded him with pity. There was not a trace of anger in their depths. The clock struck the hour, each chime a hammer-blow in his brain. And then on the last stroke the flame died down and the room was in darkness. He tried to rise but something seemed to be pressing him down. He threw up his hands. They met nothing solid; he tried to call out, to shout for Barrymore. His tongue refused to function. It clove to his palate. There was the soft sound of footsteps in the room, the opening of the door, the glimpse of something silhouetted against the greyness of the passage, the door closed noiselessly, and Sir Julian was alone. With a tremendous effort he threw off the oppression and staggered to his feet. He switched on the lamp. Nothing. He looked towards the chair upon which the stranger had placed his cloak and stick. Nothing. Finally, he rushed to the bell and rang it furiously. After a time, during which Sir Julian paced about the room biting his lips, the door opened and the butler entered, barely concealing a yawn behind his fat hand.

His master looked hard at him. Barrymore concentrated his gaze at its usual height above the baronet's head.

"Barrymore!"

"Sir?"

"Who was that who came to see me? Where has he gone? Where did he come from?"

"Came to see you, sir?" The butler's crescent-shaped eyebrows lifted themselves precisely half an inch.

Sir Julian stamped with annoyance. "You heard what I said," he cried. "Who was it? You let him in—"

"Pardon me, sir, I let no one in. Your orders, sir, are that you will see nobody after half past ten." He looked reproachfully towards the clock. "It is now five minutes past twelve, sir. I wish you a happy Christmas, sir. Will that be all, sir. Thank you, sir." He bowed and moved towards the door. Near it he turned. "A very good morning, sir," he said, and twisted himself out of the room.

Sir Julian came over to the fire and kicked at the dead embers. Suddenly he lifted his head and sniffed. A faint, a very faint scent of white lilac assailed his nostrils. It had been his wife's favourite flower.

A DEAL IN EMERALDS—(Continued from page 35)

"Why did he come here and make all that *tamasha*?" wondered Balaji. "He is an impostor. He did not intend to buy the emerald. Yet he has stolen nothing."

"No doubt he wished to gain our confidence," replied the assistant, "but was thwarted by our precautions. Shall I call the police?"

"Wait a while," replied the jeweller, and took down the files of the Police Gazette. After a long search, he found the entry for which he was looking.

"Flash Harry, American forger and jewel thief. Appears to be wealthy and uses large funds. Usually poses as a continental nobleman. Travels in private yacht with a Negro accomplice. Disarms suspicion by affecting to be paralysed."

"That is he!" cried the jeweller. "Phone the harbour police, and tell them I am coming."

Balaji leapt into a taxi, and directed the driver to the harbour. As he drove off, he fancied he heard someone shouting behind him, but was too preoccupied to take any notice.

The taxi was speeding along the sea-front, when from behind came a car driven at a terrific pace. The car swerved in front of the taxi, and skidded to a standstill. Balaji's driver jammed on the brakes, and drew up just behind the offending vehicle.

"What—!" exclaimed the jeweller, and then saw his brother getting out of the car in front.

"Eulaji! What are you doing here at this time of the day?"

"I have followed you all the way from your shop," panted Eulaji. "Look here, how many times have I told you to leave the buying to me?"

"But I haven't bought anything!" protested Balaji.

"Then what have you done with the eighty thousand rupees?"

"Eighty thousand rupees!" screamed Balaji, "what eighty thousand rupees?"

"The eighty thousand rupees I gave to the Negro."

"My God! You gave eighty thousand rupees to a Negro? A Negro in a purple livery?"

"Of course I did. Your letter gave me no alternative. But let me tell you, I will never comply with such a message again."

"Show me this letter!" shouted Balaji.

"It is on our own notepaper. Look!" And Eulaji produced a sheet of splendid cream-laid, headed with the firm's monogram. In his own handwriting, Balaji read the following:

"Dear E., I have made a wonderful deal in emeralds, that must be closed immediately. Please give the bearer, Marcus, who is to be implicitly trusted, eighty thousand rupees in cash. Urgent and imperative."

And it was signed, in perfect imitation of his own handwriting, 'Balaji Rastamji'.

"I couldn't hesitate with such a message," said Eulaji, "especially in our business, where so much depends on the immediate production of large sums in cash. But what is wrong? Where is the money?"

Balaji pointed to a little white vessel which had cleared the harbour, and was steaming rapidly towards the horizon.

"The money is on that yacht," he said, and burst into tears.

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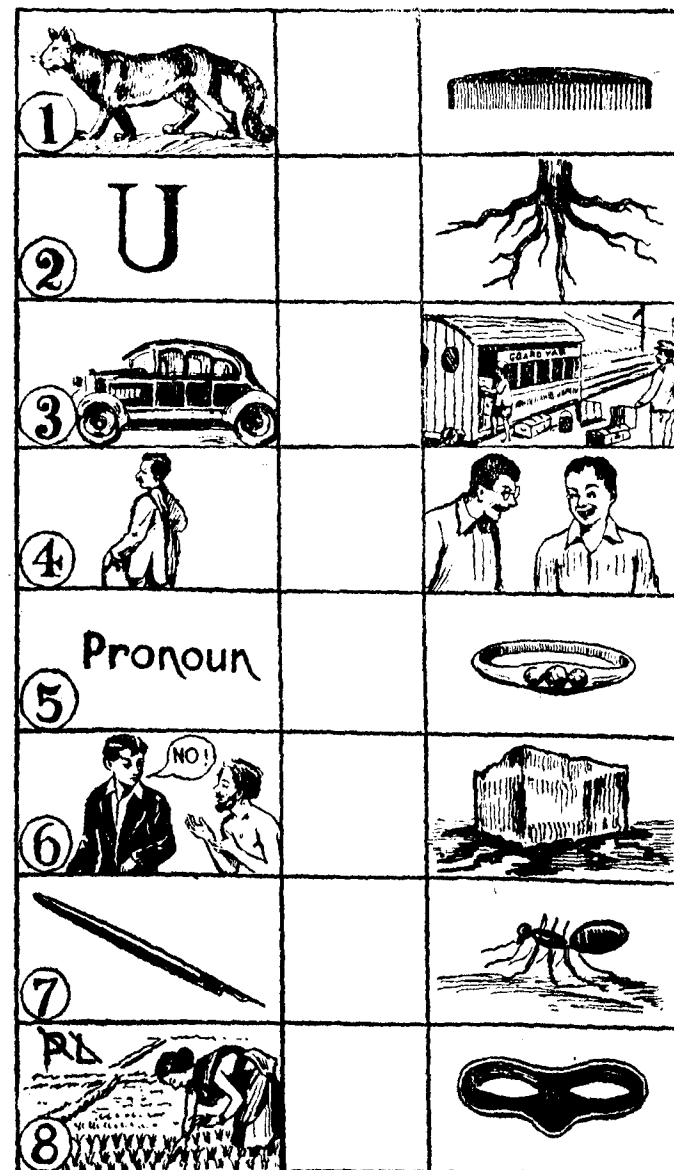
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You can send in any number of entries. Only they must be on the Coupon provided in page 52.

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

(Continued on page 52)

RESULTS

'Give & Take' Competition

The Correct Solution :

- | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|
| 1. MINE | 4. BRACE | 7. MOB |
| 2. STAGE | 5. INAPT | 8. REPEL |
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(Continued from page 50)

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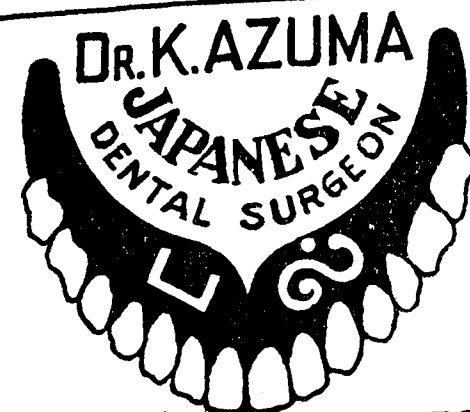
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No.	WORDS.	CLUES.
1.	SPA—	Flood
2.	P—ISE	Weight
3.	—ERN	Bird
4.	M—E	Animal
5.	I—B	Stab

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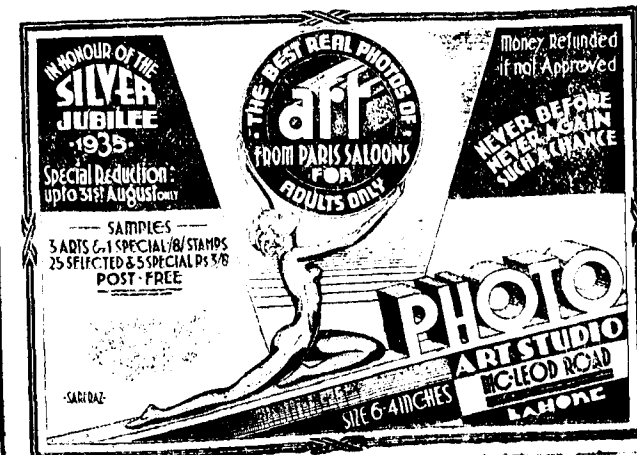
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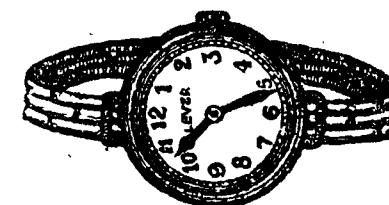
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No.	Words.	Meanings.
1	QU — — NT	Unusual.
2	FR — —	Wife.
3	P — ISE	Weight.
4	PRIV — — Y	Secrecy.
5	FE — —	One of the...
6	WH — P	Beat.
7	D — NT	Blow.
8	FL — —	Run.

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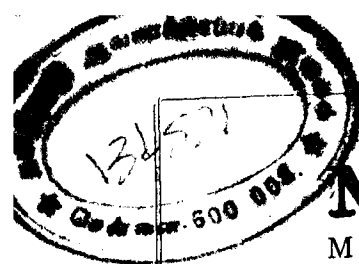
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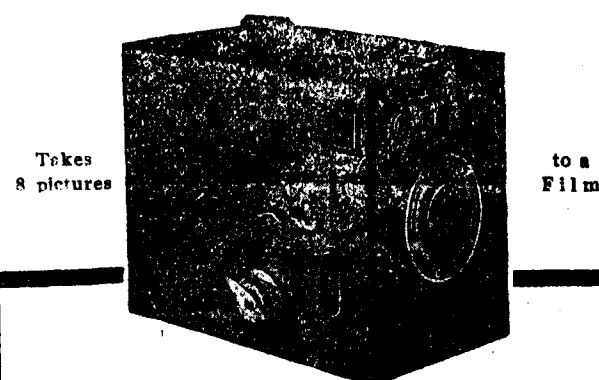
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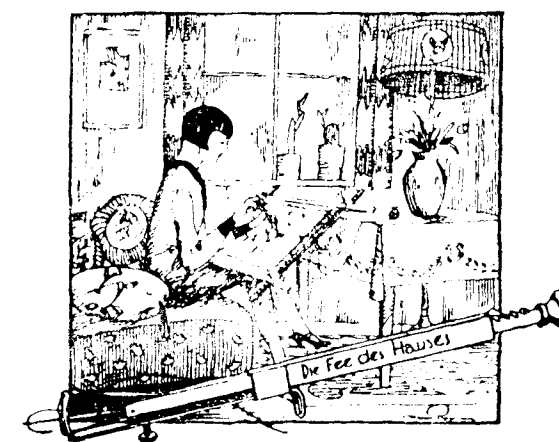
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