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MERRY MAGAZINE

2062

Albert A. Roland
The Chance Of A Lifetime!

★

Thirupathi
The Badminton Ghosts

★

Jayalakshmi Varadachar
The Sequel

★

Louisa Dyer
The Lawyer & The Moneylender

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Emkay
The Renegade

Vol. IV No. 27

4th July 1936

ANNAS TWO

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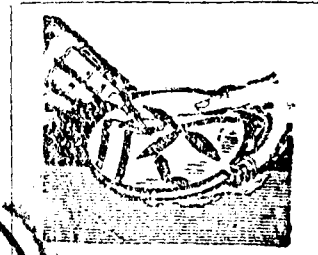
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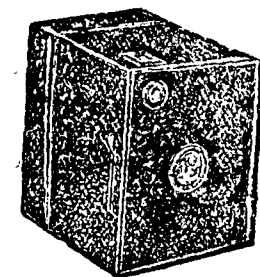
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The
MERRY
MAGAZINE



Madras, July 4, '36

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Albert A. Roland

Written On The Sands
A Play

Extraordinary isn't the word to describe this story. The devotion (!) of an old retainer for his *memsahib*. Don't miss it on any account.



Embusque

The Scheming Vazier

A woman's wit triumphs over the villainy of a Vazier.



Jayalakshmi Varadachar

The Comb

No doubt, most of you young fellows have girlfriends who expect (no wonder, the darlings!) birth-day presents from you. If you are idiotic enough to choose a comb for a birth-day present, make it an ivory one, gold-mounted. Or better still, pretend loss of memory as the birth-day draws near.



Also

Diana Don, John A. Henry, P. P. Samuel etc. etc.

SPARKS FROM OUR ANVIL

Commenting upon the reduction of duties on certain classes of Lancashire textiles, the *Manchester Guardian* says that it ends the uncertainty regarding the future level of Lancashire trade with India.

More important to us still, it ends, for a time, the uncertainty regarding the future of Dewan Bahadur Ramaswami Mudaliar!

In the birth-day honours lists, the Maharajkumar of Vizianagaram gets a knighthood as an M. L. A.

The main thing to note is that it is not as Captain of the Indian Cricket Team.

Sir Herbert Austin, the motor magnate, is made a baron.

The reward of sound investment—in an Austin!

In the course of the debate on Sanctions, Sir John Simon declared that he was not prepared to see a single British ship sunk in the cause of Abyssinia.

Naturally, they are intended for the cause of Britain!

It is expected that Egypt will be admitted as a member of the League soon.

It looks as if Egypt's troubles are not yet ended!

Mr. Watney, a film-agent, who has offered a film-career to Mr. Thomas, in the course of a

statement, says: "Like Mr. Will Rogers, Mr. Thomas possesses the inimitable gift of story-telling."

Unfortunately, the last one he told did not quite convince!

Commenting on the new l.b.w. rule forced on the Indian Team, Mr. Jardine says: "The manners of the East are notoriously better manners than the West, and the charming way this high-handed treatment has been accepted has not been properly appreciated by the public."

We in this country however realise that Mr. Jardine is a better cricketer than writer!

'CO-EDUCATION:

Mrs. Hensman said that it was a success among children up to eleven years. Beyond that period were various problems which propped up, and which rather tended to upset the system.

All that comes of propping; they should have been popped!

One of the charges against Amarnath was that he threw his bat in the dressing-room.

After all, it is much better than throwing away his wicket, which he never did!

Sir Feroze Khan Noon, the new High Commissioner for India, told pressmen before his departure that he favoured the formation of parties on an economic basis.

We agree: the fewer the better!

Sir C. V. Raman describes the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Sastri as one

who makes great after-dinner speeches, usually on an empty stomach.

This explains where they come from!

Replying to an address at Gobichettipalayam, the Hon'ble Mr. P. T. Rajan is reported to have promised to dedicate the rest of his life to improve the condition of the villagers.

Apparently, he has had no time for this kind of work during his Ministry!

The Consul-General for Italy says that women riding in the streets of Addis Ababa are not forced to dismount and salute the Viceroy's car.

We understand however that this honour is reserved for the men alone!

A sister poet says that the most beautiful nose is on Edith Sitwell.

Where it sits well!

Speaking on the Art of Public Speaking, Mr. S. Satyamurti confessed that he is tired of hearing his own voice.

How much worse therefore is our lot!

An A. P. I. message says that H. E. the Viceroy paid a visit to the police station at Simla and that he walked the whole distance.

In official circles there is some doubt as to whether this is intended to popularise walking or visiting police stations!

The Tariff Reduction

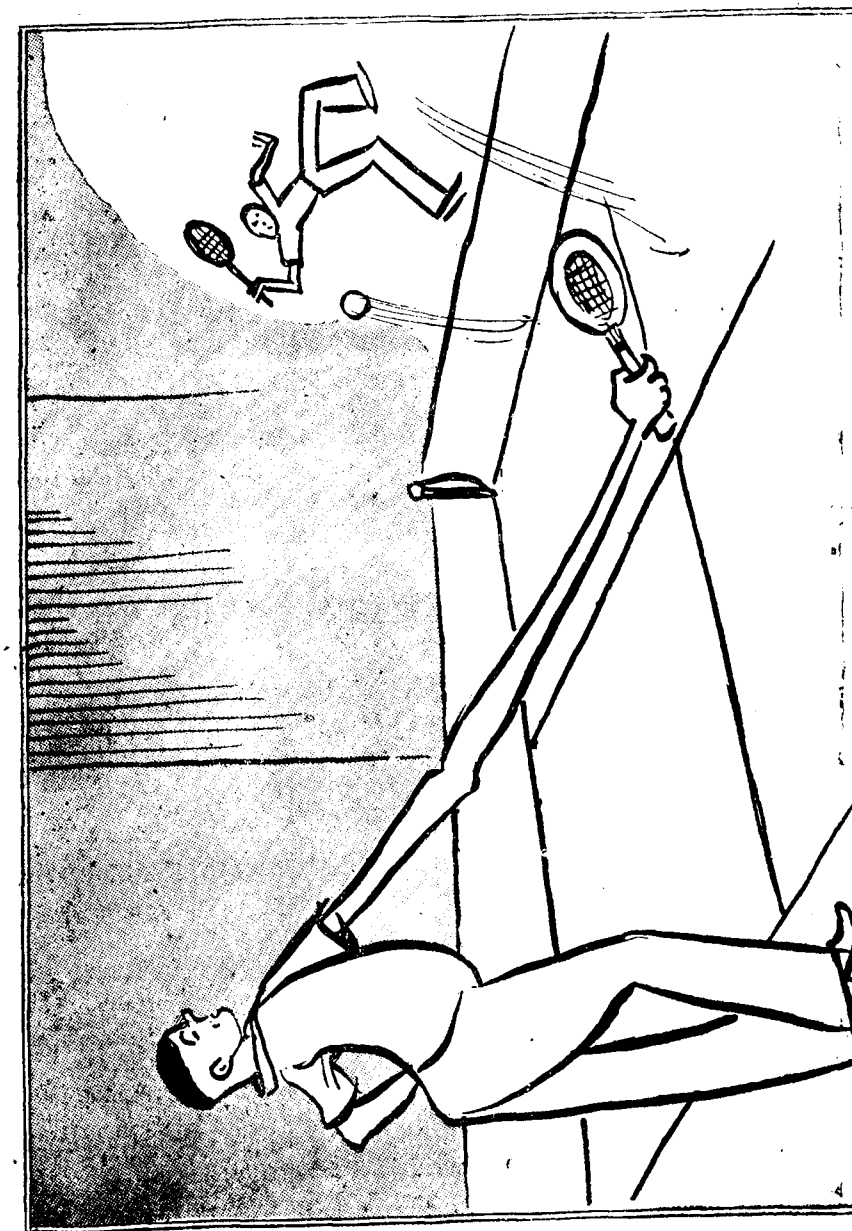
The recommendation of the Tariff Board has been brought into effect with a degree of despatch which shows how efficient the Government can be to act when it suits its purpose. The conclusion was to some extent anticipated by the country, and there has been but a feeble, and we are inclined to think, half-hearted attempt at a protest. The matter at issue is of no interest to the bulk of the discerning public who had ceased, for many years now, to buy even an inch of foreign textile stuff. We have no doubt that the extra 5% duty will ultimately be paid by the loyal minority which lives, moves and has its being in the conception of an Empire in which it is to be the perpetual penalty of this country to find a shadowy existence. What we are interested in are the implications of this duty. It is the beginning of a movement to adjust the claims of big business—both Indian and British—to delimit their respective spheres of influence, and batten on the common victim,—the miserable millions of this country. We hold no brief for the indigenous mill-owner. He has had the field clear to himself during the last twenty years. He has deliberately pursued a policy of underproduction, so that there is still the need for import of foreign goods. If he had cared, he might have made the country self-sufficient in regard to its textile requirements. But he has followed the capitalistic, not the patriotic impulse. If Japan could under-sell in the Indian market, India should have no difficulty in underselling the rest of the world in her own market. It is therefore misplaced sympathy to commiserate with the Indian mill-owner. It is true, he backed the Swadeshi movement when it started. But that was because, he was the sole beneficiary. He now fights shy of the National movement: for he has made his pile and would like to see it undisturbed. We do not mean to suggest that he should be destroyed. It is impossible, for one thing. He has created powerful vested interests which are well

able to take care of him. But it ought to be an eye-opener to the public. The large number of mills have neither solved the problem of mass poverty, nor its low purchasing power. They have given us a few over-grown plutocrats. Thus the moral is clear; and Gandhiji has pointed it out recently with his thoroughness. Leave the mill-owners, whether indigenous or foreign, severely alone; and buy Khadi only!

The Lords' Debate on India Orders

This provides an amusing instance of our masters engaged in the pleasing task of self-deception. Lord Zetland warns the Congress against adopting wrecking tactics, Lord Lothian wishes that Ministers are given a few lakhs to fling about in a pretence at social reconstruction work, while the sanctimonious representative of horny-handed Labour parodies Nelson's exhortation and expects us to work the Reforms honestly. All these speeches are an eloquent amplification of the views of the anti-ministry party in this country. We do hope public opinion will soon crystallise on this main issue, and the left wing of the Congress clearly separated from the Right. It is important for the country as a whole that its best minds and spirits should stand beyond the pale of the legalised mockery camouflaged in the new constitution. It is far, far better for the Congress to wander in the wilderness than to lose its soul in quibbles, as undoubtedly will happen if Congress should officially agree to accept office. A new race of moderates is springing up, composed of those who suffered in the last struggle, not out of conviction, but out of policy. They should be allowed the luxury of being disillusioned by grasping the power which they imagine is there for them to wield. They must announce that it is dead sea fruit, and not those who know it already intuitively. That disillusionment alone can give us the momentum for the next struggle, whether it be constitutional or extra-constitutional!

If It Were So!



The acquisition of an empire has added tremendously to the already tremendous responsibilities of the Duce. However much a Duce one might be it is deuced hard to act as a wet-nurse to a black baby born of mustard gas. Intelligent man that he is, Mr. Mussolini has typed three resignations, resign-

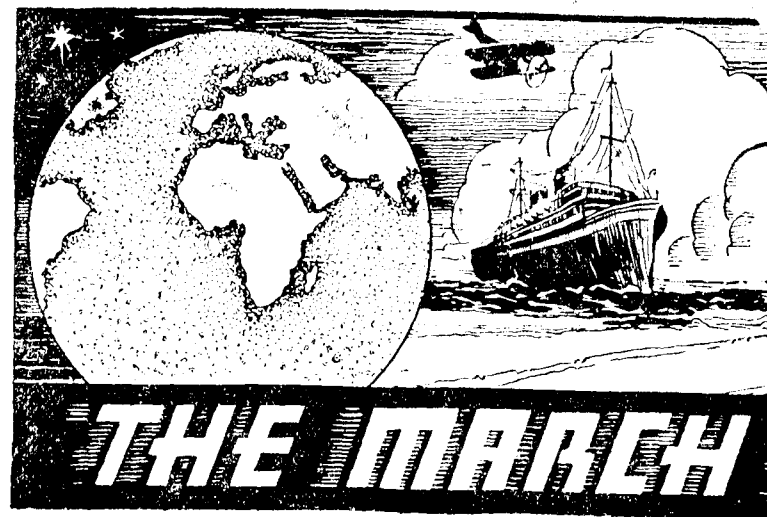


ing three of the seven portfolios which he was managing as the Boss of Italy, and posted the resignations to himself. In due course the resignations arrived. Mussolini read the resignations with a sad look and accepted his own resignations and posted the acceptances to himself.

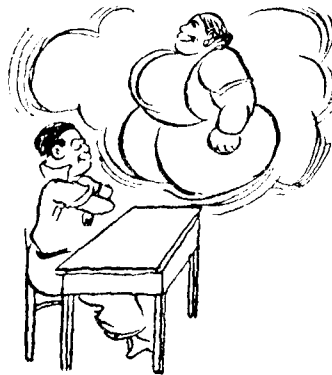
Which no doubt sounds damn goofy, to fellows with no imagination. There is nothing funny in it really. I did something very much like what Mussolini did. It happened a couple of years ago. It is a pity I did not release the circumstances of the case earlier through Reuters. Ah! Procrastination, you are indeed a sneaking rascal!

Well, as I said, a couple of years ago, about this time, I felt very lonely. All the people I knew, both males and females, married right and left, creating a sort of vacuum in my life. They say nature abhors a vacuum. I didn't give nature a chance to fill up my vacuum. I filled it up myself.

I advertised for a wife to comfort my manly bosom in all the



leading papers and answered the advertisements myself inclosing beautiful pictures cut out from the illustrated periodicals. All told I got twelve-hundred applications from twelve-hundred beauties. One fine day I sat down to consider the appli-



cations. Believe me, I enjoyed the job hugely. It made me as pleased as a Sultan with a harem of twelve hundred houris. I rejected all the applications sorrowfully one after another, kissing one, patting another, and accepted the services of one lady who had really magnificent curves. You see, I am rather partial to curves, particularly those in the Mae West tradition. I wrote to her (*i. e.*, myself) to come up and see me on Friday, because

Friday is my lucky day. The lady turned up correct to the minute.

"Sit down, Janaki," I said kindly.

I blushed and giggled behind the hem of my sari. "No, sir, I don't sit before males."

I was very pleased indeed at Janaki's respect for the old-world traditions of Hinduism.

"That is fine, Janaki," I said with a happy smile. "I am glad that you as a woman realise your position. Now to business. Frankly, I like your face (here, don't get conceited) and—yes—your structure. You think you could get along with me for a husband, eh?"

I retired behind my sari again and giggled my approval of my own query.

"So that is settled! We shall get married this afternoon. There, there, don't demur. I believe in quick marriages. Now, look here, Janaki, what do you think of my face? Don't be so shy, girl."

I looked coyly at myself. It is dashed hard for a fellow to look coyly at himself. But I managed the look, and said: "I fear, sir,



you may not agree with me, but there is something elusive about your beauty."

"Oh, come," I smiled. "'Elusive' did you say?"

I achieved another coy look. "Yes, sir, elusive it is."

Well, the long and the short of it was, Janaki and I were married under the Civil Marriages Act that afternoon. Of course, the Magistrate who registered the marriage, the bride, the bridegroom and the witnesses were all myself.



My nuptial night I need hardly say was the happiest night I spent in all my born days.

For one week I lived like a Sybarite. Indeed I did not know whether I was sitting on my seat or standing on my head. One day two of my friends, Godavari Bai and Kaveri Bai, two of the women who got themselves married and forgot me, came to see me, out of

pity, I suppose. It is astonishing how quickly some women do have babies. Mrs. Kaveri Bai and Mrs. Godavari Bai each had in her



arms a baby. The babies looked as if they walked out of one of those marvellous baby-food advertisements. One of the unwritten laws of friendship is that you are expected to kiss your friend's baby, whatever your private opinions of babies. So I made the two women comfortable and took their babies into my lap. The babies thought that my lap was a public convenience and used it rather freely. I kept my temper commendably equable. You have got to, if you want to retain the friendship of a mother, particularly if the mother happens to be young.

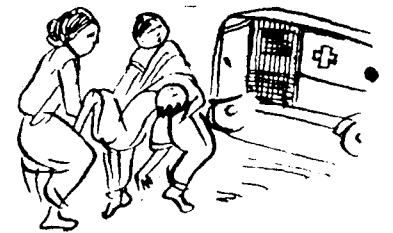
Suddenly I remembered my Janaki, and wanted to show off before these two mothers.

"Oi, Janaki!" I sang out, so that my voice may reach the kitchen where my Janaki was, or should be. "I say, Janaki dear, here are a couple of my friends come to see you. Look slippy and bring three cups of coffee."

I followed my voice into the kitchen and said, "Three cups, sir? Yes, sir. Would you rather have the coffee strong, sir?"

I came back to Kaveri and Godavari and beamed on them. "That is my wife Janaki, my dears. You will like her..." I turned in the direction of the kitchen and cupped my ear, trying to catch what Janaki was saying. "Yes, yes," I said, "make the coffee strong. These friends are very thick friends."

Kaveri Bai and Godavari Bai looked blankly at me. They gathered their babies and left me hurriedly. Within half an hour a motor van stopped in front of my house with a terrific screech of brakes. I hurried out to see what it was. Kaveri Bai and Godavari Bai were getting out of an ambulance car. And before I framed the question: "What is the matter?" four hefty arms grabbed me and



bundled me into the ambulance. And before I could collect my wits, I found myself in a mental home. I found myself there for six consecutive months.

No wonder I and Mussolini say: "What an unimaginative world!"

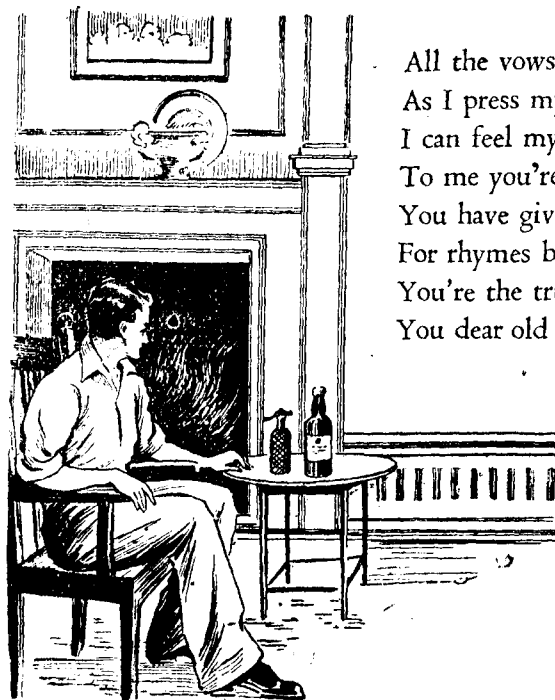
A Reverie!

We are sitting beside the fire,
Just you and I alone;
And the flickering light falls softly,
On a figure that's all your own.
It gleams, where your round smooth shoulders,
From a graceful neck, swoops down;
I wouldn't exchange your beauty,
For the best dressed woman in town.

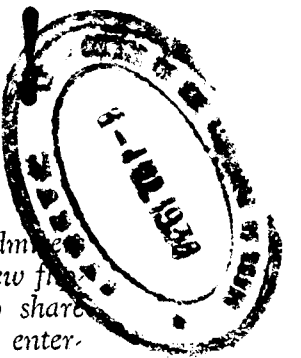
I have drawn the curtains closely,
And from my easy chair;
My hand I reach towards you,
Just to feel that you are there.
Your breath is laden with perfume,
As my thoughts around you twine;
I can feel my pulses burning,
As your spirit is mingled with mine.

All the vows of the flesh are banished,
As I press my lips to yours;
I can feel my life's blood flowing,
To me you're the kindest of cures.
You have given me inspiration,
For rhymes both soulful, and fine;
You're the truest girl in creation,
You dear old bottle of Wine!!!

—C. G. M.



Vox Populi



[Ever since this Magazine started on its pilgrimage of fun, friends and admirers have been writing to me, some humorously, some seriously, and not a few faintly. Some of the letters I receive are so diverting that I decided to share them with the readers. This feature is the result of that decision. If enterprising readers wish to answer any of the letters appearing below, they are heartily welcome to do so. If the replies are interesting enough, they will be published.—Editor.]

After Amarnath, What?

Bombay:—This Amarnath affair is most deplorable. The sublime beauty of our inter-communal life in India is world famous. It is very heartening to see a pocket edition of our local achievements published in England for the amusement of our friends abroad. The men responsible for this great achievement ought to have their statues put up in our Capital and bequeathed to posterity. This young man Amarnath has come in for a lot of criticism, from talkers and scribblers who will talk and scribble. There was lack of discipline here, admitted. But don't you think in fairness to him that we suspend our judgement till we have all the facts in hand? I am so wild at this sorry affair that I feel like kicking myself.

—Cricketer

(For letting off self-generated steam, kicking oneself is a very good valve. If you are kicking yourself, I would advise you to remove all hard obstacles in the way. Ed. V.P.)

★

Tut, Tut

Guntur:—I am a poor unemployed young man. I appeared twice for the Public Services Commission examination. I do not know what is the matter with the examiners.

They plucked me. Why do they ask such impossible questions? I am sure even Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru could not answer the questions set to us poor fellows. That reminds me of what Pundit Jawaharlal was saying last week in one of his statements to the press. He said: "Personally I have no desire to serve the British Empire, nor have I any sympathy for those who have this passion." I don't believe him. Let him apply for a second-division clerkship in the Imperial Secretariat. Call me any bad name you like if he succeeds in securing employment. I shall be surprised out my life if the Government give him a clerk's post.

—S. S. Krishnayya

(I shall also be surprised out of my life if Jawaharlal succeeds in securing a job in the Secretariat. —Ed. V.P.)

★

Auntie, What Say?

Triplicane:—I don't like your fickle-mindedness Mr. Editor. Why do you keep on christening and re-christening Auntie in this startling manner? The last time she was Auntie Awful, she seemed to be on the wrong side of fifty. Now that you have subjected her to all the tortures of a re-christening, the only saving grace of which ceremony was the Siamese rice

soaked in Spanish saffron, she seems to have become several years younger and acquired new grace! Pray, between ourselves, had she been to Germany—or Russia, alternately?

Don't be shocked. I saw a photograph of hers which she sent to one of her nieces the other day. Would you believe me? She is not Auntie at all! She seems to be Uncle, yes, ghastly is the word. And she is undoubtedly of Negro origin. The curly hair and the thick lips cannot lie. And although she tried the clever stunt of getting herself photographed under high candle-power electric light, her colour—resembling Kiwi boot-polish—is unmistakably there!

After seeing Auntie's recent photograph, I was wondering if she was right in getting herself rechristened Jayalakshmi. I have an intuitive feeling, Mr. Editor, that people called Jayalakshmis are good-looking. Pray, will you please get the Siamese rice ready, just once more and coax Auntie into believing that her first name is the best—I mean the one that suits her best? And will you also tell her that she must get over this servile imitation of wearing tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles like her nieces do? Imitation might be the sincerest form of flattery, but her nieces would rather not be flattered!

—Janaki



The Past Is Dead!

by V. Vyasa Rao

Reading Time • About 6 Minutes

KARAMCHAND Gowalia was a great songster in Western India. He was very much in demand at the social functions in Bombay. Besides, he was a very popular radio star. He made a tidy income by his art, but he did not put by any money against a rainy day. Not that he was improvident. He was a man without a will where money was concerned. Poor relations, not-so-poor relations, friends, rogues who called themselves his friends, sponged on him.

So when, in the height of his fame, Karamchand died suddenly of heart failure, his wife and only daughter Kamini were left destitute. With a womanly instinct, Mrs. Karamchand had contrived to save a little out of the housekeeping money. However, what she saved unknown to her husband was too little to carry her and her grown-up daughter much beyond a few months.

The mother tried desperately to marry off Kamini. Unfortunately, Kamini was not a beauty. What she lacked in good looks could not be made up in a handsome dowry. True she was not exactly ugly, but that was all that could be said of her.

All too soon, the poor widow and her daughter were faced with the problem of what is vulgarly called, 'getting on'. Even if she had the will, the widow was unfit for service in wealthy homes. She was not only old, but was afflicted with asthma. Thus Kamini had to go out into the cruel world in search of bread for her mother and herself.

Kamini was herself a songstress of sorts. She watched her father at practise and always listened to the radio, especially when celebrated woman songstresses were 'on the air'. She followed the stars of her own sex so assiduously that she successfully imitated them in the privacy of her home, to her father's great

delight and her mother's mild amusement. There was not much music in the old lady's make-up. Untutored Kamini, while she had a grasp of the fundamentals of music, lacked what is grandiloquently called 'science'. And it would seem without this 'science' nobody could step up to the footlights.

The old patrons of her father, more out of pity than to enjoy her singing, engaged Kamini's services once in a while. What the poor girl earned by this camouflaged charity just kept the pot boiling at home. A time came even this meagre custom slipped away. They were on the threshold of starvation.

Kamini was brought up in the old traditional way. That was the reason why she fought shy of the films. Necessity is no respecter of conventions. At last Kamini threw her old prejudices to the winds and interviewed the casting director of the Great India Studios, the biggest film-producing company in Bombay. The director heard her out of respect for her late father's name. He made a wry face as Kamini finished her song. Her singing lacked 'class' and no director would look twice at a girl who lacked this commodity. For the sake of the old friendship he had with Kamini's father, the director forced a 'loan' of a hundred-rupee note on her and bid her good morning.

In the days following, Kamini made a round of all the Bombay studios, with no success. Nobody would have her, even as an extra.

Kamini had grit and refused to take defeat. She bided her time.

One day, a rather flashily dressed, moustacheless, fopish young man of about twenty years, walked up the spacious grounds of the Great India Studios, gripping a small suit-case in his hand. He stopped outside the office of the great casting director and sent in his card. The card bore the legend—'Kisanchand Gowalia', and underneath that name there was a pencilled scrawl—"Offers something new."

Attracted by the familiar name, the director gave the young man an interview. Gowalia was an honoured name in local music circles.

"Well, young man," said the director when the latter had settled himself in the chair offered, "are you by any chance a relative of the late Karamchand Gowalia?"

"Yes, sir, a distant relative."

"I suppose you came here looking for work. Sorry. Just now we are full. More, we are overflowing. Have you tried the other studios? No?" The director looked keenly at the young man. "What

can you do, anyway? What is this 'something new' that you came to offer me?"

"I can sing..."

"And I can dance. Have you had any experience of acting? No? I am sorry. I can't do any....."

"Wait a minute, sir. I can reproduce the singing voices of all the celebrated songstresses of the screen and the stage."

"Ah, that is interesting," said the director. "You can imitate all the stars, can you? Can you imitate Kamala Khote? Gul Bibi? Jaddan Bai? Yes? Come on, then, let us hear you sing like Kamala Khote. Do you know her great dance song in *Krishna Leela*? Go ahead."

"Please get the accompaniments ready; and please, can I have a room privately for a few minutes?"

"What for?"

"I shall make myself up as a woman. I could sing better in the make-up."

"Oh! There, go into the second room to the left."

Ten minutes later, the young man came out of the room, dressed as a woman. The make-up was marvellous. If he had not known, the great director would not have believed that he was not a woman. He was pleased at the clever make-up, and rubbed his hands.

The instrumental players struck up the famous dance song. The young man sang the song in the perfect 'Kamala Khote' voice. The director was floored.

"That was marvellous, Kisanchand!" enthused the director. "Now give us a bit of Gul Bibi. The last song she sings in *Laila Majnu*."

With an effortless grace, the young man impersonated the voice of Gul Bibi with all the subtle tragic inflections that made Gul Bibi famous all over India.

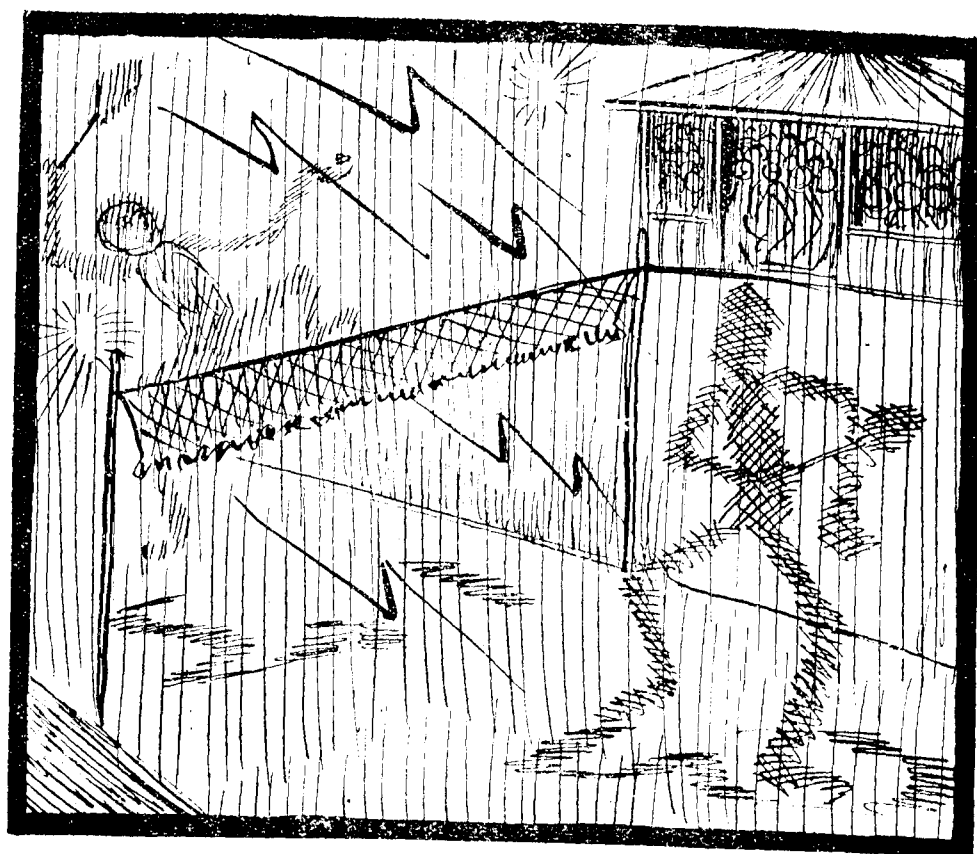
"You are a marvel, young fellow!" said the director, rushing to Kisanchand and thumping his back. "You are in."

"Kisanchand was signed up on fabulous terms over a long period."

"How odd you look with your long beautiful tresses cut close!" said the old lady half in sorrow and half in pleasure. "Kamini dear, did you really succeed in getting work?"

"Work, mother?" laughed Kamini. "I have brought you a gold mine. Mother, we must go away into a suburb where we are unknown. I must pass myself off as a man, as Kisanchand Gowalia. Don't weep, mother dear. It is a cruel world. Sexually your Kamini is dead. The world has no use for Kamini as a woman."

THE END



The Badminton Ghosts

by Thirupathi

Reading Time • About 7 Minutes

THE sky was dark as pitch. The wind was howling outside as if the lightning was whipping it into elemental fury. The rain was pouring down in torrents as if a dam had burst somewhere in the sky. It was one of the fiercest storms that blew over Melur during the last twenty-five years, so the oldest member averred. The fall of crashing trees pitchforked by the mighty wind came faintly over the wild concert that deadened every sound, even the roll of thunder.

All of us were held up at the club. To stir out was dangerous—broken bones, if not something worse. The storm began at seven in the evening when club life was at its merriest. It was gaining in fury every moment. Hungry, cold and miserable, about thirty of us in number were huddled in the hall sitting doubled up in the uncomfortable chairs to keep warm.

The doors and windows were shut. To open them meant inviting the storm indoors.

A terrible peal of thunder rang out above the storm. The building shook as if in the throes of an earthquake. A streak of lightning rent the sky from end to end, and flooded the hall with a blue-white light, through the skylight. Suddenly the electric lights went off.

There were thirty gasps. Everybody felt creepy. Somebody laughed, and it was a very disagreeable laugh.

"What the devil do you mean by laughing?" barked an unseen voice to the man who laughed. "What is there to laugh at?"

The man who laughed said: "I am not aware of any rule in this club which forbids members to laugh

on a dark stormy night. It is damn ticklish, isn't it? Ha! ha!"

There was an icy silence of censure more eloquent in its unspoken disapproval than a crescendo of collective abuse.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the morbid rascal again. It sounded really sardonic in that horrid gloom. A timid member on whom apparently the darkness within and the fury without were working havoc, struck a match to reassure himself that we were all there. The match burnt his fingers and he dropped it with a vulgar curse.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the laugher again. "I say, this must be an ideal night for ghosts to make merry, don't you think?"

"Look here, you fellow!" shouted the man who burnt his fingers. "Leave the ghosts alone. At least till the lights are on again."

"Ghosts!" sneered the club bore loftily. "Lot of moonshine. I would like to see a ghost. I will eat it alive."

Presently the talk of ghosts became general in spite of protests from at least one third of the members gathered there.

"So you don't believe in ghosts?" asked the oldest member, speaking into the direction where the club bore sat.

"Certainly not. Damned nonsense, I call it. I will never, never believe in ghosts. Produce a ghost if you can. I will punch its head for you."

"Young man, don't be too sure of the punching," laughed the oldest member. "All that high talk will vanish when you see a ghost."

"Will it?" The club bore made a very disparaging sound through his nose.

Said the oldest member sententiously: "Young men *think* that old men are fools; but old men *know* that young men are fools." He cleared his throat. "Friends," he began, "there is something which I have withheld from you all these months. I did not wish to upset you. But I think this is a proper occasion to tell you what I happen to know." He stopped dramatically.

"I say, old gentleman," wailed the timid member, "wait till we get the lights on."

"Come on, speak up, sir," said half a dozen voices from the far corners of the room. "What do you know?..."

The oldest member again cleared his throat. In measured tones he said: "This club is haunted."

"What!" howled the timid member; and twenty 'whats' supported him.

"Haunted be blown! Old liar!" muttered the bore, in what he thought was a whisper. But the whisper reached across to the oldest member.

"Liar, am I? Wait, my brave friend," the old man's voice was level. "You know Krishna Rao, the Taluq Office clerk, who died last year. You also know that he was a great badminton enthusiast in this club. Well, the ghost of that poor young man is haunting this building. As a matter of fact, there are two ghosts. I don't know who the other ghost is. Often at nights when I stayed here after all of you had left, I saw Krishna Rao's ghost with its companion ghost, playing badminton in our court. Perhaps they are playing a game even now. I would like to see our friend punching their heads."

The silence inside the hall was oppressive. The bore laughed loudly, but his braggart assurance was absent in his laugh. "All right," he said. "Show me the ghosts, I shall punch their heads."

"You may back out. Are you prepared to stake fifty rupees on that boast?" asked the oldest member.

"I am. Get your ghosts. Ha! ha!"

The bet was fixed up.

"Will somebody strike a match?" called out the old man. Somebody struck a match. In its light the old man picked his way among the ill-arranged chairs and approached the corner window which gave out on the club back-yard. Another match was struck. We saw the old man peeping out of a chink in the window.

The hall was again plunged into darkness. The old man spoke, with a tremulous accent. "The ghosts are playing. Somebody open the door."

Nobody obliged. The old man groped his way to the door and opened it wide. The storm was still raging, as fierce as ever.

"Come along, gentlemen, come and see the ghosts."

One virtue in numbers is it engenders bravery. All of us trooped out to the verandah. The old man held the hand of the bore. The two stood in front. The darkness was impenetrable. A tense minute passed. Every eye was turned and strained towards the badminton court which was laid out about fifty yards away. Suddenly the whole scene was lit up in a blinding flash of lightning.

In the badminton court two blurred figures, stark naked, were jumping about, brandishing their badminton bats. No ball was flying over the net. None-the-less

(Continued on page 15)



Auntie J.J.

On Kissing

It is the privilege of your auntie, my dears, to receive unusual letters. The one reproduced below is the most unusual I have received so far. I don't mind receiving such letters, because we are fast heading for the day when all the prevailing sex distinctions will be viewed as a nightmare endured the previous night. I was a very shy girl myself, once upon a time. Thank goodness! All that is a thing of the past. I joined a nudist colony out of curiosity. And believe me, there is nothing in nudism.

This young man writes:—

Dear Madam,

I have had experience of three courtships, subjectively I mean. I do not know what is the

Mussorie

matter with me. All the three courtship were a miserable washout. Now I am engaged to the fourth angel in my life. Last evening I kissed her for the first time. She said: "Oh, Kishore darling, I thought that kissing was a thrilling business. It is so tame, now I have experience of it."

No girl ever described my kissing as tame. I left her sorrowfully and spent a sleepless night. I wonder if my kissing technique was faulty after all. Do you think my three failures had anything to do with my kissing? Would you favour me with a few straight tips in the matter? Madam, this doubt-racked soul looks to you for solace.

Man From Mussorie

P.S.—What exactly is the place of the lips and teeth in the scheme of kissing?

You may be wondering, my chickabiddies, if I am equipped to deal with this letter. Don't wonder. I told you I have a working knowledge of nudist camps. Besides, I took a postal course in Kissing from two correspondence colleges, one American and one British. So in spite of my being a spinster, I know all there is to kissing. I have no false modesty.

Now for this poor *Man From Mussorie*.

An enquiry into the origin of kissing need not detain me longer than to say that kissing started in Eden after the advent of the Snake. It would have started earlier, only there was nobody worth kissing before Eve came along.

To beginners in the art of kissing, I would say, don't give a thought to what scribblers and screen stars say about kissing. The scribblers scribble, because what about tomorrow's breakfast? And the stars exhibit crazy kissing, because their public will be disappointed otherwise. There is no spontaneity in either case.

If you are in a garden with your girl, push her ever so gently on a bench. Take care to see that the bench has no wet paint on it. Kneel before her and bring a soulful look into your eyes. If you can't manage that look, a fishy look will do. The most asinine of you can manage a fishy look. It is impossible to tell a fishy look from a soulful look. Hold the girl's hand and kiss her wrist. (Note: Avoid her fingers as you would the devil. If you try to kiss the fingers, the girl's nails will get into your eyes.) Work your way along the fore-arm, upper-arm and so forth. Go about your job with a sort of grim determination. While kissing, don't mouth the usual inanities. Don't call her 'darling', 'sweet', 'honey' etc. Act as if your girl was solidified honey. You know what I mean? En route to her lips make little gurgling noises like a pig guzzling potatoes. This will make your girl think that you are a hell of a fellow. Look out for little pleasant noises from her. If she makes the noises, you may be sure that she is giving expression to her appreciative, though unspoken, thoughts, namely, that you are a hell of a fellow, with miles of go in you.

When you come to the ears, pretend that you are biting her ear. But don't bite them off in earnest, because, if you do, where is she to wear the ear-pendants that you will present her presently? Besides, if your girl wears spectacles, it would be rather awkward for her.

Regarding your question, *Man From Mussorie*, about the place of your lips and teeth in the scheme of kissing, don't let that worry you, my dear chap. Kissing is the call of soul to soul, and your conscience is the go-between. Let your conscience's light be your guide.

Write to me again, dear *Man From Mussorie*; you may need my help in the next stage. Good luck to you.

P.S. If you have come out successfully from three engagements, you are cleverer than I thought, you cad!

The Badminton Ghosts—(Continued from page 13)

the players were passing an imaginary ball in the most grotesque fashion imaginable. All was dark again.

"Go, friend," spoke the old man to the bore, tersely. "Punch their heads."

"Here," said the bore in frightened voice. "Let go my hand! I am—er—convinced—"

"You don't want to punch their heads?" laughed the oldest member sarcastically.

There was a flash of lightning again. Instinctively, we turned towards the badminton court. The ghosts were still playing. Their antics were really funny, though the circumstance was bizarre enough. All of us dashed back into the hall except the old man who came in leisurely.

Next day the oldest member gave us a big tea party with the fifty rupees he won off the bore. Unfortunately, the bore did not put in an appearance. While we were midway through the eatables, the old man stood up and winked at us.

"Young fellows," he began, "last night I quoted an old adage, namely, 'Young men *think* that old men are fools but old men *know* that young men are fools'. I have demonstrated the truth of that adage."

"How?" asked the timid member. "You don't mean....."

"Yes, I mean the ghosts. There are no badminton-playing ghosts in this club. It was all a joke. During the storm last night, Subbayya and Narayana Rao were sitting by my side, and when the talk turned to ghosts and when our absent friend was bragging about punching their heads, I persuaded these two young fellows to slip out of the hall and impersonate the two ghosts which I invented. I must say they have acted their parts admirably."

THE END

Fun For All

"I think it's a disgusting state of affairs when one reads of comedians earning more than Cabinet Ministers!"

"Oh, I don't know. On the whole, they are funnier."

* * *

Customer: I don't like this photo at all.

Photographer: You should have thought of that before you had it taken.

* * *

Captain of Cricket Team (to new resident): Will you join our cricket club, sir?

New Resident: Well, really, I'm afraid I know absolutely nothing about the game. I couldn't do anything except umpire.

* * *

"Congratulations! I hear you've got a rise."

"Yes, but what's the use of it? I talked in my sleep and my wife heard about it."

* * *

Discontented Wife: Several of the men whom I refused when I married you, are richer than you are now.

Husband: That's why.

* * *

Tom: How do you like to read mystery novels?

Jack: With every light in the house turned on.

* * *

A man arrived home in the small hours of the morning and, having a wholesome fear of his wife, decided to proceed with caution. Taking off his boots, he crept noiselessly upstairs, stealthily opened the bedroom door, and with the greatest care, crawled into bed. With a sigh of relief he went off to sleep.

In the morning, he looked round for his wife and suddenly remembered she had been staying with an aunt for the past fortnight.



"Are you quite sure this bus is going to Conjeevaram?"

"If it isn't, lady," said the conductor, "I am in a worse mess than you are."

* * *

"Well, the upshot of it was that it took me ten years to discover that I had absolutely no talent for writing novels!"

"You gave up?"

"Oh, no; by that time I was too well known."

* * *

Fred: Say that I'm a fool again and I'll knock your block off.

Bill: Consider it said again, then.

Fred: Consider your block knocked off.

* * *

Counsel (Cross-examining): How often do we find people searching for a gas leak with a naked light?

Witness: Just once.

* * *

Judge: You were found under a bed with a bag of tools. Why?

Burglar: Force of habit, your worship. I used to be a motorist.

* * *

Jail Visitor: And what brought you to prison, my man?

Prisoner: Competition, sir.

Visitor: Competition? I don't understand you.

Prisoner: Yes, sir, competition. I made the same sort of rupees as the Government.



Customer: Is that your new assistant?
Bookseller: No, but he keeps me company. He is reading the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Chance Of

Reading Time
About 10 Minutes

"HULLO, Happy!—And how are things?"
"Bad! Worse than they've ever been!"

"Sit down, old boy, and get it off your chest. Drink?"

"Thanks, Bobbie. I don't mind if I do."

"What'll you have—
the usual?"

"No, not milk and soda, Bobbie." He glanced over his shoulder involuntarily. "Make it a stiff brandy," he said.

An impish Fate had caused the breakdown of two separate glandular systems in order to perpetrate a double-joke on my friend "Happy" Power.

The first phase of the joke began some forty years ago.

Responding to an S. Q. S. from Happy's parents, the Stork presented them with a magnificent twelvepounder. This prodigy of size threw so rapidly that his god-parents named him Hercules Atlas.

Alas! The growing youth belied all early promises of spectacular development. Due, he claims, to a too early and too thorough indulgence in tobacco, a gland went wrong. And H. A. Power ("Hap" or "Happy" to his friends) emerged to manhood a pathetically diminutive and ineffective figure.

The second phase of the joke was initiated when Happy fell in love with a tall but very slender girl of nineteen.

She answered to the simple name of "Polly." And she answered to Happy's proposal of marriage with the simple word "Yes."

She made a docile and charming wife. It was a delightful experience for my little friend to be the lord and master of one so adoring and so adorable. His every wish was gratified. His every word was law. He dwelt in a paradise of contentment for one or two years, attaining almost to the status of a Dictator.



Polly

Then Fate put a searing finger on another gland. This time it was one of Polly's. And the second phase of the double-joke rushed to its conclusion.

Polly rapidly developed *embonpoint*. Frantic recourse to obesity-cures and gland specialists was unavailing. Polly's expansion went on apace...

This metamorphosis from mouse to mammoth, so to speak, brought two-fold sorrow to poor Happy. For the more colossal she grew, the less tractable she became.

Until finally, at the time

this story opens, we find Happy abdicated from his Dictatorship and irrevocably established as the completely Henpecked Husband.

Of the harrowing time that Happy went through when Polly joined a nudist colony—which she insisted on his joining also—I have already told the reader.*

That time of tribulation, I gathered, was the most nightmarish of his career. Impossible, I'd always felt, that a worse experience could befall him. Yet here was Happy himself telling me of just such an experience...

"Look at my nerves, Bobbie!" He held up a twitching hand. "I'm as jumpy as a cat since she started those damned seances—"

* "The Nudistracted Husband"—The Merry, 26-10-'35.

A Lifetime

Written & Illustrated by Albert A. Roland

"Here, Happy," I said, "have another brandy. Spirits will do you good—"

"Spirits!" He started violently and turned pale. "Good heavens—Oh, I see—the brandy..."

I replenished his glass and he quickly lowered the level of its contents. Then he proceeded to explain.

"Polly," he said, wiping some errant brandy-and-soda from his droopy moustache, "Polly has gone in for Occultism."

"Wholeheartedly?" I enquired.

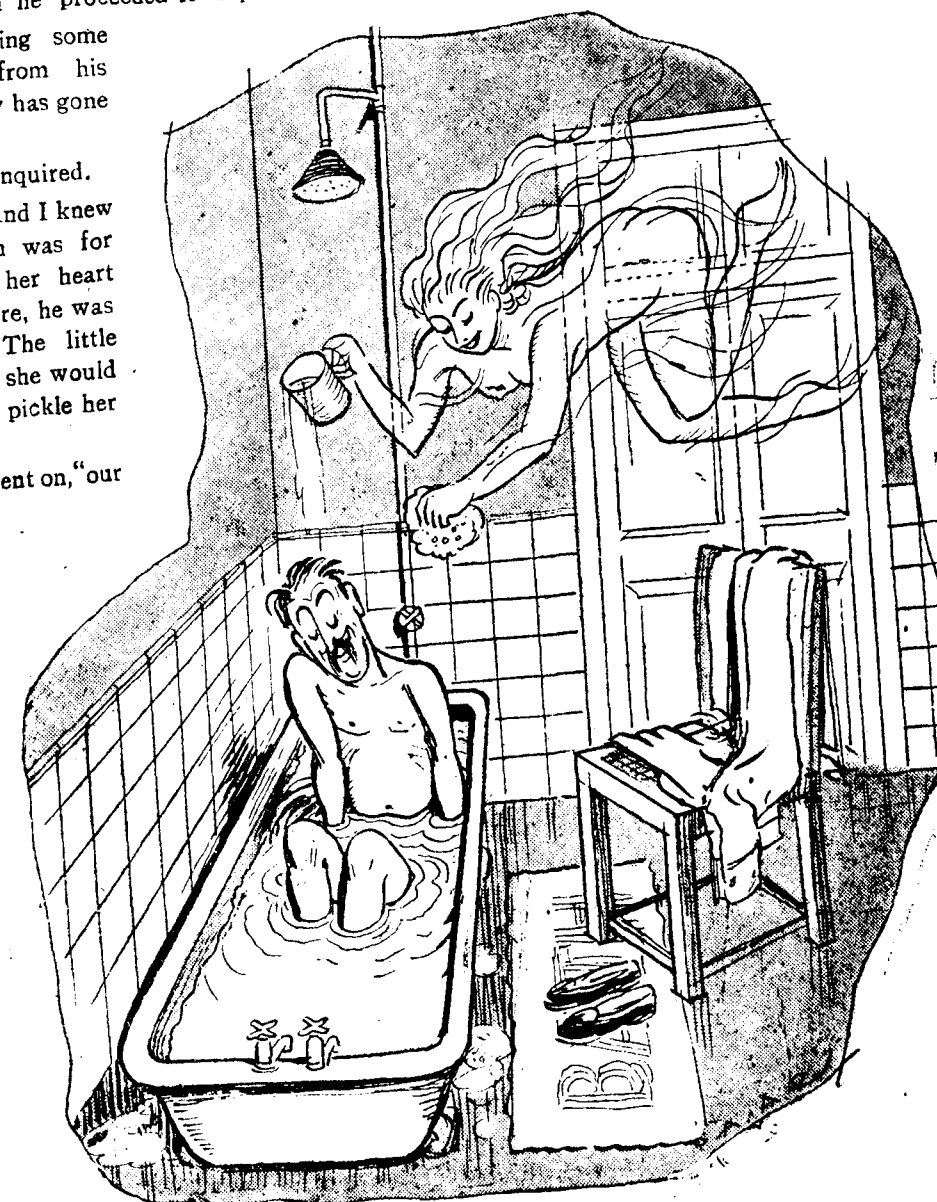
He nodded dumbly. And I knew how desperate the situation was for Happy. When Polly put her heart and soul into any venture, he was always on tenterhooks. The little man could never tell what she would do next, or in what new pickle her zeal would land him.

"At night, Bobbie," he went on, "our house gets full of ghosts. Sometimes they're so numerous they trip over one another's feet—those that have feet. There's at least one spook to every room. The Ghost of the Library, for instance—a Shakespearian looking blighter who's always moaning about the prices editors pay in India. The Ghost of the Bed-room—a nasty-looking spook with a nasty mind. Perpetually telling me Mae West stories in ghostly whispers. The Ghost of the Bath-room—"

He brightened up suddenly, a dreamy look in his eyes.

"She's the one bright spot in it all. And Polly doesn't know about *her*."

"A motherly-looking old ghost, Happy?"



I was most embarrassed at first...

"A beautiful young girl who *insists* on bathing me. Just as though I were a little child." He sighed rapturously. "I was most embarrassed at first, but it's amazing how one can accustom oneself to anything like that!"

I looked quizzically at the little man. Had Polly succeeded in turning his brain, or was it the effects of the unaccustomed liquor that made him talk in that way?

He presently assumed an extremely fierce expression and thumped his fist on the table with a violence that made the glasses jump.

"But I *will not* put up with Rama any longer! Spooks and spirits I can tolerate, at a pinch—but that man who calls himself a *Yogi*—he'll get what's coming to him before very long!"

"Who's Rama?"

"A cheap magician, in my opinion. A common snake-charmer who's aspiring to greater things. He claims to be able to emulate the *Yogis*. Polly believes he's a kind of God. He's got her absolutely eating out of his hand, the—the—"

He snapped out an adjective and a noun; both picturesque, both unprintable.

"To-night, Bobbie," he said after a while, "Rama is giving a private demonstration of *Yoga* and magic at our place. A few guests have been invited, and I'm commanded to attend. Now, that's what I really came to see you about, old man. Will you come too?—*Please!*"

The entreaty in his voice touched me. Ordinarily, I should have walked a mile to avoid meeting Polly, who was markedly hostile towards Happy's friends and allies. But his pleading decided me.

"I'll be there, old chap," I told him, and he fell on my neck.

"It's only fair to warn you—there'll be spooks a-plenty, materialising at the demonstration. How that rat Rama does it I can't imagine. You'll be scared stiff, Bobbie."

"Boloney! Nothing but illusions! They shan't worry me. And you mustn't let 'em worry you, old boy, or your nerves—"

"I won't, if you're standing by. And besides," he added, "I'm coming *armed*."

"Armed with what?" I demanded uneasily.

"A revolver I bought this morning. Here it is; a beauty. Just the thing to dispel ghosts and give the others a scare they'll never forget."

"Blank cartridges?" I asked.

He nodded sheepishly.

"Let me see!" I demanded, and he reluctantly handed over the weapon. I broke it open. The chambers contained live ammunition.

The demonstration was in progress.

As I sat beside Happy in the dimly-lighted drawing-room, a curious sense of unreality possessed me. Though I'd taken an instant dislike to Rama, there was no doubt about the fellow's cleverness. A genius, I felt myself admitting, as he put over one brilliant illusion after another.

Card-tricks and parlor magic were as child's play to him. Walking on glowing embers, eating glass and poisonous snakes seemed almost as simple. Even the Rope Trick was accomplished with fluent ease.

Followed a series of weird spirit-manifestations that gave me the creeps. My sympathies went out to the trembling man beside me. I gripped his hand by way of reassuring him—and was surprised to find he was clutching the revolver in it!

"Now, now, Happy!" I whispered, "put that away—you promised you wouldn't bring it here. Give it to me!"

"It was absent-mindedness, Bobbie. I'm sorry. I'll put it away—you can trust me." There was a queer, eager note in his low voice.

I tried to take the weapon from him, but he evaded my grasp. An acid-featured woman on my right was showing signs of annoyance at our whispering, so I desisted, and was relieved to see him return the gun to his pocket in the semi-darkness.

And then Polly rose and there was a click as the lights came on. She proceeded to announce the *piece de resistance* of the demonstration. In the glare of the lights, and in full view of the spectators, she declared, Rama would show them an amazing example of *de-materialisation*.

She, Polly, had undertaken to be his subject. He would simply pass a table-cloth between her and the spectators—and she would *vanish into thin air!*

I smiled sceptically, and settled back in my chair to watch the experiment fail. Polly—the gigantic, the gargantuan, the most material body there—to vanish! I looked forward with amusement to Rama's discomfiture....

But Rama *did not fail!* As the table-cloth uncovered the chair in which Polly had sat, we gasped in unison. The chair was empty! Rama folded up the cloth and threw it on the floor. It was uncanny to think that Polly was either still sitting on the chair, utterly invisible to our eyes—or else, reduced to the size of a kitten, crouching under that folded table-cloth.

Then came the biggest surprise of the evening. Rama showed himself in his true colours. The man was a genuine villain....

"Ladies and gentlemen, and Mr. Power especially!" he cried, in a ringing voice vibrant with cruelty and menace. "Our large and ardent friend is no more! This is not mass-hypnotism. She has actually disintegrated and vanished into atmosphere. It is a secret which only I have learned—from the Great Yogi of the Himalayas. None of you can ever learn that secret. You are at my mercy. *Unless* you give me one thousand rupees—along with a written note that you do so of your own free will, as a gift to charity—you will never see Mrs. Power again!"

There were cries of dismay from Polly's friends, and everyone looked at Happy. That little man staggered to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"You scoundrel!" he yelled. "You can't mean this!"

"I do not jest, Sahib. I speak in deadly earnest."

"You tell us in all seriousness that my poor wife"—his voice broke—"doesn't exist? That only you can make her flesh and blood again?"

"It is the truth; I swear it."

"Then—" shrielled Happy, and swiftly drew his revolver, "then take *that*—and *that*—and *that*!" Three times the weapon spat flame and Rama fell writhing to the floor.

Above the shrieks and groans of the gathering, rose Happy's triumphant laughter...

I sat beside Happy in the hospital.

His face was honey-combed with sticking-plaster. He peered at me from half-closed, blackened eyes. He asked wearily: "Where am I? What happened?"

I told him about the demonstration. How, after Rama fell, I brought the shrieking crowd to its senses by calling out that the whole thing was just a joke, that the cartridges were blanks. How I pulled Rama, who had only *imagined* he was wounded, to his feet, and threatened that

I would thrash him within an inch of his life unless he brought Polly back immediately. How he had done so, and then departed from the house with all possible speed. And how Polly, who declared that she had witnessed Happy's perfidy from the spirit world, had exacted retribution on the spot.

He tried to sit up in bed, but fell back groaning.

"And I thought you were my friend, Bobbie—"

"A friend wouldn't see you hanged for *murder*, Happy," I said soothingly. "Before you left my place this evening, I took the live cartridges from your gun and—"

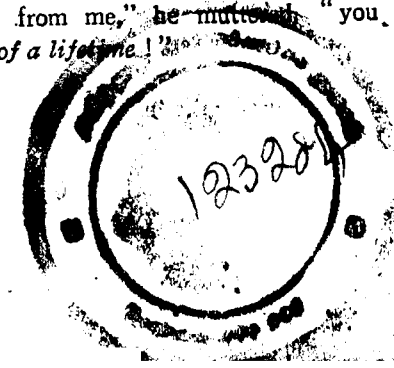
He looked at me reproachfully.

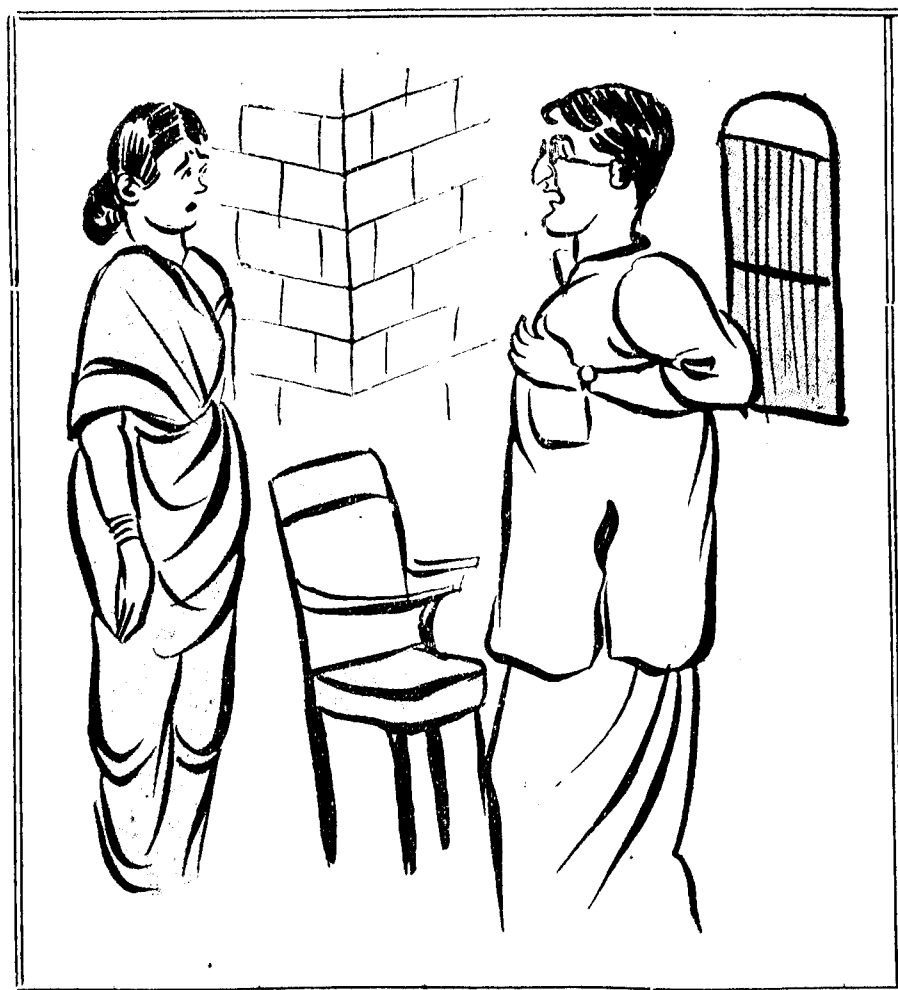
"And from me," he muttered, "you took the *chance of a lifetime!*"

THE END



Happy





The Sequel

by Jayalakshmi Varadachar

Reading Time • About 7 Minutes

I had just passed a University examination, and the day the results were announced I faithfully set out to fulfil my promises of cocoanuts and camphor to the gods duly concerned. The next day the unemployment-demon caught possession of me, and pathetic appeals to the authorities to entertain me in service had left them unmoved!

The stores necessary for the afternoon meal were precariously elusive, and I sat with my head between my hands, thinking hard—the image of despair. So

the Government had decided that they would have none of me!

How do those lucky people who win big prizes in Crossword Competitions manage the affair? I wondered. If I had the wherewithal to send in the usual entry fee, why, my food for four days was assured! Was there any good in taking a course of postal tuition on 'How to make money'? Or, should I buy one of those 'Sweep' tickets that leave a man richer by a few lakhs—or bereft of his last fiver?

Hunger did not improve either my prospects or my temper. Imagine having to face life without your usual cup of morning coffee! The milk-woman had struck, because her payment was in arrears for the past six months. It worked to Rs. 30/-, calculated at Rs. 5/- a month, and in place of the usual three *ollocks* of milk, a lawyer's notice threatened me. It was no good expecting the neighbours to do anything for me. I still owed them several seers of rice, many spoonful of coffee powder, quite some cups of ghee, to say nothing of loose change borrowed on several occasions.

Just then my husband arrived home. Why was his gait peculiar? He walked with shuffling feet whenever he felt guilty. And he always wore that pair of cooling glasses whenever he did not want to look me straight in the face.

He handed me a comb made of sandalwood, designed to assist me in my hair-dressing, and accosted me with the usual question. Was there anything to eat, he was feeling so hungry? And I gave him the usual answer that there was nothing to eat, and now that I come to think of it, he did not look very hungry then. Instead, a peculiar whiff emanated from him. It was, what dealers in Mills' would call a "subtle fragrance, because they were blended better, and they were Mills'!"

In true Hindu fashion, I caught hold of the loose end of my sari and wept profusely into it. "Oh, how could you afford to waste so much money on cigarettes, when we have scarcely anything to eat at home?" I sobbed.

But my husband is one of those who will not easily walk into a trap. He stoutly maintained that he had not touched a cigarette ever since he had solemnly pledged his word to me that he would not smoke.

But was I to be so easily deceived either? I took his hand and smelt it. Yes—there it was—unmistakably Mills', although he had carefully handled a few combs made of sandalwood in the local market to hide the smell.

Then, as a further proof of his innocence, he opened his mouth wide like a Gargantua and asked me whether he smelt of smoke there! It is bad taste, I know, to sniff a man's mouth, but there was no alternative for me. The sniff revealed another whiff of Mills', and not only that. A conglomerate fragrance of 'masal dosai', 'badam halva', 'vulundu vadai' and coffee besieged my nostrils.

I looked at my husband, and my husband looked at me. Then, in a spirit of bravado, he burst forth

vehemently: "I have not smoked, Janaki. You do me an injustice there. The last time I broke my word, I was guilty and so I was nervous. But this time, I haven't touched a cigarette. And I am not guilty. Nor do I feel nervous. You know Ranganathan? He had appeared for the Honors, and he got a first. He thought he should celebrate it, and the result was that I emerged out of Anna Bhavan with him, after a course of 'masal dosai', 'badam halva', 'vulundu vadai' and a cup of excellent coffee. But Mills' had no place in this scheme of things."

"And you wanted me to believe that you were hungry after that feast?" I moaned helplessly. I resorted to the usual futile device of making him swear that he had not smoked.

With alacrity he lay his hand on his breast, and carefully hiding with his large palm the pocket of his shirt which contained a few more cigarettes, he called on all the thirty three crores of Hindu gods to bear witness to his innocence.

That seemed to convince me, and assuming my tenderest 'tone of voice', I told him that I must have been a veritable wretch to have suspected him and begged his forgiveness. He forgave me readily enough. I must then have taken his hand off the pocket which it hid and hold it lovingly for a few seconds. Then I coaxed him to go in for his bath. He was assured. There would be no more uncomfortable queries, he thought, and unsuspectingly he went into the bathroom.

I then put my hand into the pocket of his shirt and took out of his pocket a green packet. There were six cigarettes nestling inside—enough to last for half a day. There was no use placing faith in human nature, I decided, and carefully replaced the packet where I had found it.

After my husband left home for his afternoon work, I sat, dejected, cheerless. An English magazine lay before me. I took it up idly and turned over its pages. But in place of the print there, I seemed to be staring into vacancy. Suddenly a sentence arrested my attention.

Grand New Offer!

£250 for the most ingenious advertisement of Mills' Moonshine Cigarettes. Open to all readers the world over. Cut the coupon here, fill it, sign over the dotted line, and send it Now—To-Day!

I had an idea. This, no doubt, was an international affair, and the competition would be a keen one. I

might not stand the ghost of a chance, but £250 is enticing lucre, enough for a poor unemployed graduate of this University, whose one visitor—knocking at the door—is a quadruped, the wolf.

So I took out a sheet of foolscap paper and wrote. What I wrote was short and to the point: "You may sneak into Anna Bhavan and in hushed whispers ask for a Moonshine. After you have smoked it, you

may eat one or several 'masal dosais' with special orders that they should have a generous quantity of onions. This might be followed by several plates of 'badam halva' spiced with saffron; and a couple of 'ulundu vadais' preceding two strong cups of coffee, and a *beeda* with extra cloves and cardamoms to boot. The sin of the hotel bill might be on the head of a poor successful candidate in a university examination, and of a sudden you may remember that your wife hasn't had a decent comb to dress her

hair with for several years and walk into a shop of sandal-ware. On the pretext of inspecting several combs of sandalwood, you may finger them lovingly in the fond hope that the last, lingering whiff of Mills' will disappear.

When you return home and present your wife with the comb which she has been asking for ever since you married her, and that must have been at least sixteen years ago, the subtle fragrance of Mills'

"because they are blended better" will assail your home, and should there be a little domestic unhinging because you have a Xanthippe for a wife, "buy Mills'—they are blended better"!

I cut out the coupon, filled it, entered into a contract with the editor that I would agree with his decision as final and legally binding, and that I would not enter into correspondence with him after that,

and signed on the dotted line and sent on my effort. By the way, there was no entrance fee!

The results were to be announced in the next month's issue, and imagine my surprise when exactly thirty days later, several newspapermen lay siege to my house announcing their desire to "snap" me! I could not understand this greatness being thrust on me until the post arrived, with a free copy of the English monthly, bearing my name in large block letters on the outer wrapper as the winner of the

£250, which translated into Indian money roughly means Rs. 3,500/—

Big enterprising firms dealing in Mills' Moonshine cigarettes with all their phosphorescent paraphernalia of advertisement had failed where I had won!

Now, I don't know whether this £250 or Rs. 3,500 will go to solve my problem of living, or help my husband settle his account with his cigarette dealer.

THE END



The Lawyer and the Moneylender

by Louisa Dyer

Reading Time • About 4 Minutes

SHAMLALL wanted to become a lawyer, but had not the necessary funds. He went to Ram Dass, the moneylender. Ram Dass, after consideration, drew up an agreement. The moneylender agreed to provide a monthly maintenance-allowance, sufficient to cover the expenses of the young man. The allowance would be regarded as an accumulating loan, which would be repayable when Shamlall won his first suit at law. Shamlall signed the agreement.

Shamlall was a smart young man, who should eventually earn a handsome income at the bar. But, calculated Ram Dass, the young lawyer would certainly be unable to repay the whole of his debt at the time of winning his first suit at law. There would have to be a fresh agreement, and the moneylender would impose terms that would make the able Shamlall his milch-cow for many years. To be levying heavy tribute on the earnings of a reliable milch-cow is the dream of all moneylenders.

Up to a point, the moneylender's anticipations came to pass. Shamlall graduated with honours, and soon became a prominent member of the Bar. But he was always the 'devil', never the principal. He never pleaded in person, so he never won a law-suit. As an unpractised lawyer, he continued to draw his maintenance-allowance from Ram Dass.

The moneylender protested. He announced he was going to discontinue the allowance. The young lawyer replied that Ram Dass was under agreement to pay the allowance until he won his first suit at law. If Ram Dass stopped paying the allowance, the

contract was voided, and the borrower's obligation at an end.

The angry moneylender took the case to an advocate. "It is perfectly simple," observed the learned man. "All you have to do is to institute a case against Shamlall. Pray for a declaration that the maintenance-allowance is now terminable, and the sums advanced are due for repayment. It does not matter whether you win or lose. If you win the case, Shamlall will have to accept the liability, by reason of the decision of the court. If you are unsuccessful, Shamlall will become liable for the debt just the same, because he will have won his first suit at law."

Now the moneylender, out of a vast and painful experience of the law, had adopted a wise but unusual habit. If he contemplated starting a case, and the issue seemed to be at all in doubt, he would ascertain the strength of his opponent's case, before filing

the suit. In this instance, he went to a learned advocate in another town, and stated the circumstances, representing himself to be the friend of Shamlall.

"Your young friend has nothing to fear," decided the barrister. "Let the moneylender bring his suit. If the moneylender loses his case, the young man will not have to pay, of course. If the moneylender wins his case, the young man will still not have to pay, because, as stated in the contract, he has not gained his first suit in law."

And the moneylender is still wondering what he ought to do.



THE END

Never More A Novelist



by V. Subramanian

Reading Time

About 7 Minutes

MR. Chidoor Chinnaswami Ayyangar the author of *Jagathjala Jambunatha Paradesiar* and other famous novels, is an intimate friend of mine. After our college-days we never met. I was in Ceylon furthering my trade, and he in Madras, writing novels. But last week I sought his help in writing an advertisement for my CHITTHA BRAMAI SOHUSANANDA LEHYAM. I was surprised to learn that he had abandoned authorship. He explained the reason in the following manner.

The fault (he wrote to me) was mine, so I blame nobody. I made my characters too life-like. That was the trouble! I made them live, and some of them were very nasty over it. It seems that mine is a vitalising pen—one that endows the most subordinate characters with life, and after what happened one

night last year about this season, I see that I shall have to confine its use to diaries and correspondence.

I was writing at home rather late and I had just put aside my half-completed novel to outline a fancy trifle—a little by-product—which had come into my mind. This dealt with an imaginary green-room, to be provided by authors for the use of their puppets when off duty. In a light-hearted, yet scholarly vein, I was making good capital out of the way in which, during the production of a novel, the characters of the page might amuse themselves, when something very disquieting happened.

I have just now said, how my pen gives life to my characters. Well, in describing places, it had an equally graphic and animating touch, and before I quite knew what was taking place, it had become an actuality with a membership drawn entirely from the characters of my novel! I found myself entrenched behind

my writing table in a corner of my study and as I was not immediately observed, I had the listener's usual luck of hearing myself freely discussed.

Radha, my heroine's bosom friend, came by, talking in animated tones to Indumathi my heroine's younger sister.

"Candidly, Indu, how do I strike you? I don't feel a bit well drawn."

"Why, you are just sweet!" said Indumathi and my heart went out to her. "But look at me! The stupid man has given me a Karnataka Sungudi saree and the last century jewels which are now out of fashion. I do wish male novelists would talk about things they understand." (My heart came back from her.)

"They both suit you admirably," said Radha, "and there are worse troubles than dress. Do you know, I am going to be paired off with that silly noodle Bakthavathsalu, just because he is a friend of the hero and has come twice or thrice on my way and simpered and babbled? Mr. Iyengar has such a craze for tidying up in the last chapter."

Tidying up the last chapter! Good God! Why! My last chapters are little masterpieces! Even reviewers relax their severity when they come to their last chapters.

"Well," said Indumathi, "I am supposed to be too playful a girl. I am denied a brave lover with serious acting. In what way am I inferior to my sister? Really my mirror tells me I am prettier than she. Foolish man! He cannot appreciate beauty."

"But the idiot Bakthavathsalu is a real nuisance!" continued Radha. "Why! See, there he is! He pesters me even now when we are off duty. But perhaps the time is come for another of our silly dialogue interludes. Our talks are intended for the readers to laugh. Why should they laugh at our expense? Why not Mr. Iyengar put on the clown's dress and make the readers laugh! It is time. I must go."

There was a slight commotion near the door and Rajamani, the hero, strode down the room. He had scratches all over his face, and his dress was besmeared with mud.

"It is more than human nerves can stand," he cried. "This old idea that one hero can rout half a dozen hooligans must go! Of course I know I have muscles like steel bands and a compelling personality and a way to outwit all; but it is not going to act always. Things are getting worse. I am sick of it. If things do not cool off in the next chapter—and I know they won't—I shall walk out of this fellow's novel, never to return."

"Dear Leela," began the Swamiar in a corner of the room, "won't you come for a walk in the garden? I would rather be the villain as in the last novel, than wear this mask of holiness, and remain with you alone on the stage, but can't speak loving words. This self-restraint cannot last long. I have a good mind to rebel in the middle of the novel."

"I know I am tired of being swathed in the conventional shawls," began the invalid father of the hero. "Two pages ago, I was left at home from the river picnic. They say the dishes were delicious."

"But your health—diabetes—" began a sympathiser.

"Health! Why, if I had not that constitution of an old bandicoot, do you think I could have survived through all these years of cheap fiction?"

Here a little band of people moved towards me, its motive power, and centre of attention Hemalatha, my regal and imperious heroine. Her eyes were flashing and her ringing tones were charged with anger and scorn.

"Who is this petty scribbler?" cried she. "Should we all debase ourselves before him? Why rush to do his slightest bidding? Sisters, and brothers, for LIBERTY, strike..."

Am I to succumb under the hands of this female creature of my own imagination? No! With a mighty blow, I struck her on the face.

Lo! With open eyes and with pen in hand, have I mused and day-dreamed. In that moment of frenzy, I had struck my wife who had come with my milk. How could I convince her of my actions?...She extracted an oath from me never more to write novels.

THE END



The Renegade—

by Emkay

Reading Time • About 4 Minutes

THE tough, wooden Micky melted and changed. I don't mean his marriage. It is a bit late in the day. I shall only pass it by, with this, that when the dyed-in-the-wool sort of bachelor changed with a chameleonic suddenness into pray-let-me-follow-you-dear sort of devoted dog, we, his friends, stood dumb and gasped. He told me privately, however, that he couldn't resist—(how could he, poor boy?)—the hypnotic charm of Yasodha's eyes, eyes that gleamed, and gleaming, wove a magic web that glued Micky to her feet. In short it was a love and a surrender at first sight, a sort of 'he saw, she conquered' episode. But as I told you, I don't mean his marriage. Nor did he, as the unwary might jump to the wrong conclusion, become a Miss overnight. The thing is

happening these days. A hefty Miss goes to bed as a Miss and wakes up as a Mr. with a lovely moustache!

When I said the tough Micky moved, I meant his heart softened and sentimentalised.

Soon after his honeymoon with Yasodha, and as the memory of beautiful Kashmere began to fade ever so slightly, Micky's mist-covered vision cleared a little as clears the snow at the sight of sun. Doubt just cast a shadow of a shadow on him whether he had not, all said and done, bartered his liberty for a pair of mischievous eyes. His conscience that till then lay prostrate said: "You have, darn you!"

"Have I?"

"Surely you have."

Micky sighed and asked: "What is the remedy?"

Said his truthful conscience: "Dear Micky, don't tighten the bonds: resist."

"Thanks," said Micky and with a determination (that did credit to two or even six Mickys) resolved to resist and never to tighten the bonds of affection between them. He felt they were tight enough—I mean the bonds of love. His heart grew resolute, tough and wooden.

Slowly he developed into a mono-maniac. At the sight of children, he would say to himself: "I, Micky, shall resist." He did. There blew a waft of wind from the west. He took it up and filled his bag-pipe, "Birth-Control!" he cried, "control your birth!"

It was then we parted. Micky became the President of the 'Anti-Child League'. He mobilised his forces against those of nature. Five years elapsed.

In the meanwhile, the number on the roll of members went gradually down—first slowly and steadily, and then a bit fast. It touched almost zero. Micky and I met again. We wished to move into the same house. I left it to the wisdom of Micky, to choose.

He made a selection and took me to the place.

"This will be our common drawing-room," he said.

"Yes."

"Yes, and this our dining-hall."

"But isn't it a bit too large?"

"No. We'll require it; and this room is for me. This one for you and those two for Yasodha and Susila."

"Very good."

"And then that last one is the nursery."

"What do you want a nursery for?" I protested.

"You don't want an ayah to lull you to sleep, do you?"

"No, no. We want it," he said, a little delicately.

"But Micky, you don't mean to say you want a nursery?"

"I mean to say that and I shall say that," he asserted.

"Micky!"

"Yes: twins and I bet fifty, you cannot make out the one from the other."

I felt faint. He caught hold of me.

"What about the Chairmanship then?"

"I kicked it up, my boy, and do you know why?"

"Ask me another. You surprise me."

"You know my uncle Panju?"

"Yes."

"That eccentric bloke willed his fortune to my son in case I had one at the time of my death and..."

"And you got twins: you are a gem, Micky—you are!" I congratulated him.

"But the fortune is yet to come," he whined.

"Sounds fishy, what?"

"No. The twins were girls—I have to have a son."

"Wish you luck, Micky and this time triplets, my boy," I wished.

"Oh, thanks," he said. Responsibility weighed heavily upon his brow.



THE END

Home-Feuds

by S. M. Thiruvengadam

Reading Time • About 5 Minutes

ONE day last month Junior Shankar knocked a tennis ball through the window of Dr. Kothari's house, and then had the audacity to venture into his compound to retrieve it. Dr. Kothari caught him, spanked him and sent him home without the ball.

Next day Mr. Shankar made a formal call on the doctor, to request the return of his son's property.

"I don't mind your spanking my son," he said. "No doubt he deserved punishment for being so careless. But I must ask you to give me back his ball. After all, it doesn't belong to you."

"Nor does my window belong to you," replied Dr. Kothari coldly. "I intend to keep this ball until you replace the broken window pane."

"Is that so?" Mr. Shankar retorted. "I'll give you a pain in the neck, that's what I'll do!"

This speech stirred the fighting blood lying dormant within Dr. Kothari. Seizing Mr. Shankar by the shoulder he propelled him forcibly through the front door. But at the door-step, Mr. Shankar tripped him adroitly and the two men rolled down together. The impact stunned both of them momentarily. Then Dr. Kothari disentangled himself, rose up, and looked down at his adversary. "I wouldn't hit a man when he is down," he remarked scornfully as he turned on his heel and went inside his house.

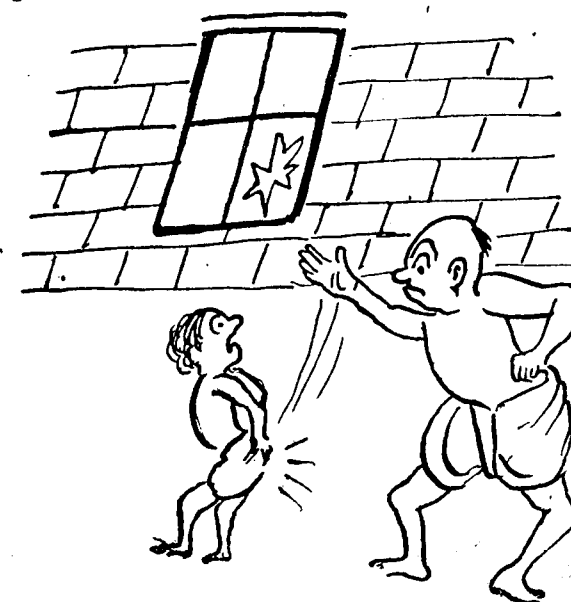
"You'll hear from my lawyer to-morrow," Mr. Shankar shouted after him, limping away. "I'll make you pay for this, if it is the last thing I ever do."

That was the beginning of the famous Shankar-Kothari feud. Much was expected of it. Everyone in the neighbourhood waited with bated breath for further developments. And three days later, the two principals were seen arm-in-arm at the bar of the National Hotel, singing *Evani Mata*. That was the end of the Shankar-Kothari feud.

If it had happened a century ago, the dispute might have continued for several generations. Grudge-nursing was no idle pastime in the good old days: it was a career in itself. Grievances were handed down from father to son, along with the family jewels.

But the present generation seems to lack the capacity for sustained indignation. There are few women to-day with the strength of character, of my aunt Kuppamma, who didn't speak to her husband for forty-two years. When she and uncle attended the Park-Fair in 1894, he chanced to describe a mechanical toy to an inquisitive dame. And Aunt Kuppamma never forgave him for it. Then and there, she took a vow of silence as far as her husband was concerned, and kept it to her dying day.

Though she continued to live with him as a dutiful and devoted wife, she never



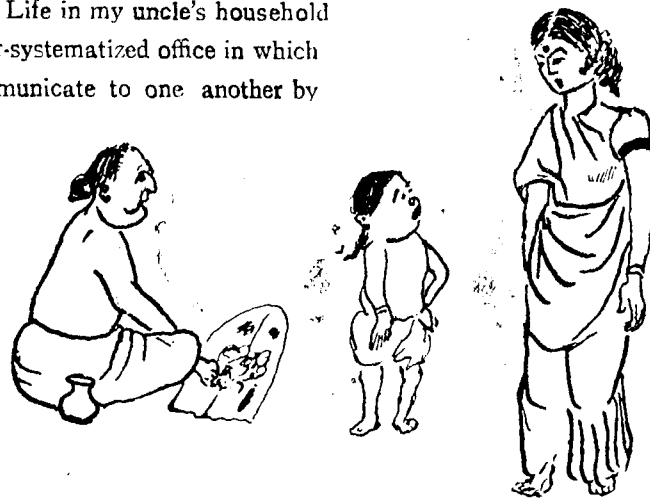
addressed him directly. Life in my uncle's household resembled that of a super-systematized office in which the busy executives communicate to one another by means of 'memos'.

Aunt Kuppamma would say to one of the children: "Ask your father if your mother may help him to some more *sambar* and rice," and uncle would reply: "Tell your mother that your father would like some more rice and *sambar* provided he could have some more pickles."

The situation was recognised by all their relatives and at family unions or important functions, messages were constantly relayed between them on slips of paper. Once on a cold night, Aunt Kuppamma burst in upon the family next door breathless and apologetic. "I hate to trouble you," she gasped, "but my husband went to sleep while he was smoking a cigar, and now his *dhuti* is on fire! Will you please run over and tell him?" However, by the time people ran to his rescue uncle had made the discovery for himself and was sitting in a tub of water, trying to cool himself.

Inconvenient though it was, this conversational remoteness was charming. When aunt died last year, uncle was genuinely sorry. He found that he missed her unspoken chit-chat as much as he missed her cooking. Within a month he pined away and followed his wife.

The most enthusiastic haters are people well past middle-age. They know that hating raises the blood pressure, impedes the digestion and disorganises the endocrine system, but they don't care.



"Ask your father....."

when they do get mad enough to fight, it is usually over some vague issue which affects them but in directly.

• An elderly revolutionary is an anomaly. You seldom see grey haired terrorists, for the old people have their own immediate grievances, which include the gramophone next door, the inattention of post-office clerks when they go to buy a post-card, the noise of the children next door, the *sambar* that had too much salt in it etc.

There is a lesson here. If world peace is to be a reality and not merely an excuse for holding meetings and conferences, then its proponents must realise the importance of counter irritants. People with plenty

of minor troubles at home are not likely to become embroiled in major troubles abroad. The best way to promote international amity is to keep home fires burning, and make spleen-venting a healthy pastime.

Indignation is emotional exercise and if you indulge in it systematically, you can keep it up indefinitely. To get the full benefit of hearty hatred, you should ignore the larger issues and concentrate on your now pet peeves. Any grievance will do so long as it is immediate and individual.



Trying to cool himself

When one has lived with a grudge for years and years, it becomes indispensable like drink or tobacco. The 'splenetic old gentleman' is a stock character in literature, but I have yet to hear of a splenetic young gentleman. The young require speeches, parades and big black headlines to work them up to a state of bitterness, and



Jones: How is your son getting on at college?

Smith: He must be doing pretty well in languages I just paid for three courses—\$10 for Latin, \$10 for Greek, and \$100 for Scotch.

—Wall Street Journal, New York

This pathetic story I found on a tear-stained piece of paper that was lying in the American market. Estimated population of the United States, 124,000,000. Subject to old-age pensions under the Townsend plan, 50,000,000. Balance, 74,000,000. Minors ineligible to work under the Child Labor Laws, 60,000,000. Balance, 14,000,000. Number of unemployed according to Father Coughlin, 13,999,998. Leaving the number to produce the country's requirements, 2. Just you and me. And I'm tired.

—"Autolycus," Financial Times, London

Reports from the West are that the wheat looks fire as it goes flying past.

—Topeka State Journal, U.S.A.

A man who owned a dilapidated motor-car took it to a garage for the night. He was shocked to be told the fee would be a pound.

"Why a pound?" he asked. "I shall come for it in the morning!"

"Ah," said the garage proprietor, "that's just it. Will you come?"

—Pearson's Weekly.

An Irishman who had been celebrating, was on his way home. It was after midnight, and as he crossed a bridge, he saw a reflection of the moon on the water.

He stopped, and was gazing into the water when a policeman approached from the opposite direction. The Irishman, addressing the policeman, said:

"Phwat's the matter down there?"

"Why, that's the moon!" replied the policeman.

"Well, how the deuce did I get up here?"

—Tit-Bits

A little boy had been reported to his father for stealing apples from the stall outside a fruiterer's shop and the father was pointing out the evils of theft.

"My boy," he said, "you must have known it is dishonest to steal. And, in any case, didn't your conscience tell you the man was watching?"

—Boston Transcript

Typist: I think I deserve an increase in salary, sir.

Boss: I can't afford it, but you may call yourself my private secretary instead of a typist.

—Pastime Scrapbook

Young Golfer (in a hurry): Please get a move on. Try to be a little quicker, if you won't let us through.

Elderly Player (Turning up): Young man, we don't want any advice from you. I expect we were playing this game before you were born.

Young Golfer: Quite probable, but please try to finish before lunch.

—Montreal Star



This Flies Nuisance

by Omega

Reading Time • About 4 Minutes

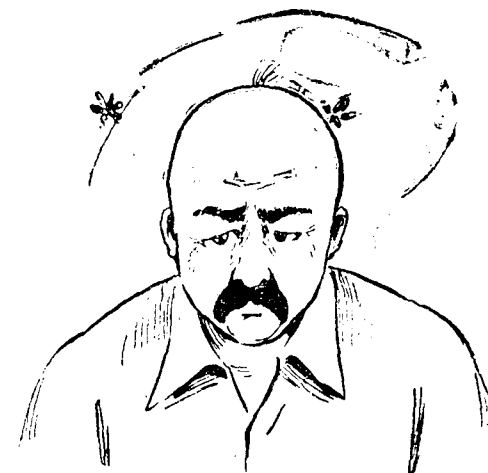
BUZZ-buzz-buzz. Oh! I am disgusted with these flies. They are such a nasty lot. Why do they multiply in such alarming numbers? Look at their prolific growth in utter defiance of all birth-control propaganda. If they cannot follow the self-restraint formula of Mahatma Gandhi, can they not adopt some of the contraceptive appliances that science has invented? Were it that Mrs. Sanger whispered some of her invaluable advice into the ears of this buzzing tribe!

I am an essentially peaceful fellow. I don't believe in violent methods. But the mischievous ways of these flies will, I am afraid, make me forswear my life-principles. I am very wroth to-day. I wish I

had a little of poison gas and liquid fire—which Mussolini used with such success against Ethiopia—to destroy this pest. You can't take things lying down for long. What business have these flies to disturb me, ever and anon! Henceforward I am their sworn enemy.

Hear, all you can, that I denounce these flies as the most pernicious and abominable clan of the animal kingdom. They are a disgrace to the whole animal tribe. Leave out some of the important beasts—the horse, the cow—and all these illustrious members for a moment. How good and helpful they are! I am not going to compare great things with small. Just look at the buzzing fraternity. The wasp—you will say it

is a dangerous thing. I agree but I appreciate its attitude. It comes, bites you (if it has a grouse) and then leaves you severely alone. That's fairplay. I



am told wasps never bite unless they have some old account to settle. They don't molest you—buzzing into your ears hour in and hour out. Either they don't sit on your body or if they do, they leave a mark which will make you writhe with pain for some time. But these mean and despicable creatures—flies! They have not the capacity to bite. They can't do any potential harm to our skin but their very existence is a nuisance. They cannot, with all their might, give you the slightest bruise; but they will make your life a hell within an hour of their presence.

It is in this part of the year that flies make their appearance in their full strength. I wonder where they hibernate in winter. I am disposed to think that flies are even more wicked than mosquitoes. You will say that a mosquito is a malaria-monger and disturbs the sleep of the night. True, but there are safe-guards. You can use a mosquito net which is an effective protection. But these flies get about their business all the live-long day, and you cannot always keep on sitting or moving under the entrenched walls of a net. Then, while mosquitoes give you only malaria, flies give you all the diseases under the sun. Their plans are most nefarious. Medical men have brought a heavy charge-sheet against flies. They are the greatest 'germ-carriers'. Most infectious diseases are caused through their 'good offices'. Indiscriminately they sit on all sorts of

stuff: good, bad and indifferent. They steal germs from the sputum and the faces of diseased people and transplant them into your food. What a horrible thing to do!

Flies are ubiquitous beings. They are here, there and everywhere. A friend with whom I have great sympathy told me his bitter experience the other day. He went to the market and purchased an anna worth of milk. The confectioner gave him half a glassful but lo and behold, there was also an inevitable fly—floating on the surface of the milk—a dead carcass infecting the whole fluid. Naturally my friend protested to the confectioner. But in his gruff voice, the milk-seller said: "Well, Babu, what else did you expect in one anna worth of milk? Did you expect a horse or an elephant?" Such waggish drollery is adding insult to injury.

My thoughts are ripe for destruction. I must annihilate this pest, root and branch. Yet I must confess my impotence in dealing with my enemy. During the last half an hour I have not killed more than half a dozen flies. It is not even a drop in the ocean. They



are humming about me in reinforced numbers. And what skilful dodgers! I wish Mussolini could lend me a bit of his poison gas, in the interests of 'humanity and civilization'.

THE END



Love In A Hospital

by Ram Saran

Reading Time • About 4 Minutes

Br.....r.....f.....crash!

"Ah, oooh.....!"

A crowd gathered at the spot. The car stopped and an elderly gentleman came over.

Mahavir lay smeared with blood and mud. The terrific accident had thrown him unconscious to all pain and surroundings.

Somebody felt his heart and looked up.

"He lives, he should be rushed to the hospital."

Slowly the inert form was lifted into the car and driven off to the hospital.

Mahavir opened his eyes, closed them and opened again.

They, the eyes, looked alive. The dead, lifeless look disappeared. He was suffering terrible pain. It had been a nasty accident and he was bandaged all over.

Mahavir smiled weakly as the nurse bent over him solicitously.

The nurse, Martha, was a sweet, angelic creature of about twenty years. She had lovely eyes, lovely cheeks with a lovelier dimple and the loveliest smile, that Mahavir had ever seen.

In all she was too lovely not to have affected Mahavir.

"Feeling better?" she asked, bending over him.

The nearness of her face filled his nostrils with a sweet fragrance.

"Who would not?" Mahavir responded, and then he blushed all over.

Martha smiled and fussed about him.

Thus time passed. Day by day, Mahavir was getting deeper and deeper in love with her (if, indeed, his first plunge had not been complete submersion). He lay listening for the familiar tread, and the familiar face.

Martha liked him, as she confessed to herself and showed in more ways than one. What a pity! What a nasty accident!

The tale went round the nurses that Martha had a fresh admirer in the casualty ward.

"How is your new darling, Martha?" her friends would ask her.

"Jolly fine," she would smile and go about her work.

One day, when Mahavir was better, he made up his mind to do the manly thing.

He lay waiting. Martha came along on her routine visit.

"How are you to-day?" she asked.

The music of her voice went to his head and intoxicated him. His heart thumped, making speech difficult. He whispered: "Sit down please, will you?"

Martha sat down by his side.

He tried to look at her bewitching eyes, but could not. Was it not at the most crucial moment of his life? Was it not a crisis?

He held her hand.

"Martha, please," he stammered. "Will you, please—er—is it possible—will you marry me?"

He felt relieved now that he had done it and he looked nervously, hopefully at her.

She smiled at him sweetly, and this gave him courage.

"Will you, dear?"

Martha looked soulfully at Mahavir, a look that sent thrills down his spine. She murmured:

"Yes, why not, you are a darling."

Mahavir tried to drag her to him but found the attempt too painful. She understood him and bent down and kissed him.

He wanted the kiss to last till eternity but she got up, patted him and left.

Mahavir lay in ecstasy, hardly believing in his good luck.

He progressed swiftly, basking in Martha's love and smiles, till one day he was fit to leave.

He left the hospital without seeing Martha, because there were friends and others come to take him. He decided to see her in the evening when she would be off-duty and maybe, he mused softly, able to go to pictures.

So, in the evening he came to Martha.

She came to him smiling and said:

"Hullo, how do you do?"

"Martha, darling," Mahavir laughed gaily. "I have come to remind you of your promise."

"What promise?" Martha asked mischievously.

"Why," said Mahavir suddenly sobered. "Of your promise to marry me."

"Oh, that," said Martha lightly, "but that's impossible."

The colour left Mahavir's face. It stabbed his heart.

"Why?" he asked trembling. "What has happened.....?"

"Nothing," Martha laughed her silvery laugh. "I never change my mind. Whenever a patient falls in love with me and proposes, I always say 'Yes'. You see it makes them get better. Indeed, even serious cases get better under my 'Yes'. The poor dears!"

THE END





A Letter to Auntie

Reading Time • About 3 Minutes

the patient, described the symptoms, and hung around with all the solicitude of a mother, while the young M. D. (M. can stand for mechanics as well as medicine) poked and prodded, just as it has been done to me a hundred times. Then he did something, somewhere, and the little invalid was a cure. But what made it all so human was that, when I asked anxiously: "What is the trouble?" (I think I said 'Doctor') he looked grave and said: "It was the lever."

What was still more human was when the baby proved extravagant, I simply disowned him and cut down my 'Medical' bills.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. KAMALA.



[I don't agree with the last paragraph of your interesting letter, dear niece. Babies *will* be babies (though I say it who should not). If he proves extravagant, give him the age old treatment—spank him. If he doesn't reform, give him away gratis to a baby-less mother. Or you can send him on to me. I shall be a mother to him.

—Auntie J. J.]

Dear Auntie,

I was for long having a doubt which to you, now, on communication, may appear fantastic or funny. I am setting it forth not in the anticipation of clearing it or expecting a reply, but in the fond hope that the *history* I have woven around it will be interesting and not go unappreciated. You may wonder why I am still tarrying without coming to the point, and I don't blame you if you are tempted to infer that this circumlocution is the patented monopoly of the fair sex.

Now for the subject proper.

Are typewriters people? Typists are, I know! When my little portable typewriter first came to me, it was like adopting a baby. He weighed just 11 or 12 lbs.; he had to have his little mat to play on, he must be carefully covered, he needed new ribbons, he came down with childish disorders. It used to seem to me sometimes that he needed everything but a bottle and a go-cart—as it was, I carried him. He has been doing very badly lately, and one day he grew worse and worse, so there was nothing for it but to telephone to the Service Office. In an hour or two a cycle came up and a young man, with a bag, alighted and walked briskly to my door. I introduced

Merry's Filmfolio

PATTINATHAR (Tamil)

Producers: Vel Pictures Studio

Pattinathar is a 'purified' cinematic version of the life-story of the great Tamil Saint. The story has been cleared up, most of its devastating sentiment expurgated, and the result is a film that will certainly rank as the best fifth Tamil picture, the other four being *Bhaktha Kuchela*, *Sita Kalyanam*, *Menaka* and *Garuda Garva Bangam*.

The essential drama and the elevating pathos have been retained. Full of realistic character drawing, it has strong spiritual interest. It tells of the ruin of the physical, mortal self of a Chettiar and the attainment of Immortality. In early life, he is a wealthy pampered youth.

In between a hopeful, though dismal beginning and the spiritual reunion of the Chettiar and his wife in *Samadhi*, are touching, pathetic scenes of a brave struggle, hard won success in fighting down the low 'self'. The picture is of absorbing interest, and in many places arrestingly life-like. Dandapani Desigar plays the important role of *Pattinathar*. His is a first-rate performance, unassuming, yet truthful and realistic and streets ahead of the other performances. He sings some of the songs of *Pattinathar* in a manner which reveals a charm and originality all his own. He has the power of gaining tremendous effects and his characterisation marks him out as a truly great actor. He plunges into the ecstasy



of introspective tragedy effortlessly and without sounding a false note.

Miss D. R. Muthulakshmi and Master V. N. Sundaram have parts precisely of equal value and one is a perfect foil to the other. An otherwise good actress, Muthulakshmi fails to connect in the emotional acting which the part of the Saint's renounced wife calls for. She has to endure life alone until her reunion with her Lord and Master in the astral sphere.

Marudavanan, the son who flits in and out of the life of *Pattinathar* after delivering his message, is a fine character study. It is a subtle role.

Vel Pictures Studio puts itself right on the map with the introduction of Master Sundaram for this part. Sundaram is temperamentally suited for it. There is a fine command in his

presence, a ring in his voice, vivid joy or telling sadness in his mobile features. He has a promising future.

Some of the scenes and sets show increased technical resources and longer experience. Sound recording and Photography are passable but to praise this picture unreservedly is not to show a slighting regard for the directors who pay greater attention to detail and selection of subordinate cast.

On the whole *Pattinathar* is a picture worth seeing.

Film Topics

Film Critic League, Coimbatore,

Office: 14/147, Karuppagownden Street, Coimbatore.

The Assistant Honorary Secretary. Film Critic League sends us the following:

There is a feeling on the part of the educated public that unhealthy competition on the part of the Producers of Tamil pictures has resulted in the deterioration of artistic standard and stranded us in an unenviable position in the sphere of art. A thorough revision has to be made with regard to the manner of producing Tamil pictures before they could claim equal rank with those of Hindi and other languages. This could be achieved to a great extent by giving out well-levelled criticism of the pictures in the press and the platform. This, it is hoped, might have the desired effect in directing the future producers to a careful study of them and its adaptability to the screen, choice and selection of artistes and their suitability to the casts. It is especially to raise such criticisms for the betterment of the Tamil screen that the above League is started.

To fulfil this aim, the League intends to equip itself with a Library, and a reading room with all literatures pertaining to the subject of Cinematography. Authors of books and editors of magazines are requested to supply the League free copies of their publications as an encouragement in the early stages of its growth.

The League welcomes constructive criticism of pictures from the public and from similar Leagues and will be glad to receive suggestions from the public to the best functioning of the League and answer enquiries relating thereto.

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Harry Bannister, the actor-writer and Ann Harding, the filmstar, were married in 1926 and a daughter was born to them. In 1932, they were divorced and an unending litigation followed. Ann refused her ex-husband permission to see his and her daughter, but the court thought better of it and let him see Jane Bannister Harding at intervals.

Now Harry wants his ex-wife arrested for the abduction of their eight-year-old daughter. Ann and Jane are in England now. How they boarded the Trans-atlantic liner in America is an amusing story.

Ann went from Montreal to Quebec and boarded by special tender, the Duchess of Atholl. Bannister flew from Hollywood to Montreal with his lawyer and arrived two hours too late. For by then the mother and daughter had left. Again he flew on, now to Quebec and was actually in a room (his) in the same hotel as Ann when again she outwitted him and left by a back entrance for boarding, the Duchess of Atholl. Ann says, "He has been a confounded nuisance to me everywhere and I have nothing to fear nor anything to hide. I shall be back in December and am going to fight him tooth and nail if he starts anything. I am armed with all legal papers necessary."



Freddie Bartholomew

Freddie's 50,000 a year trust.

No less interesting is the case of the parents of the boy-actor Freddie Bartholomew. His mother came down to Hollywood for the custody of her 'darling' son Freddie and for sometime her whereabouts were unknown. One fine morning, she made her appearance and announced her intention to take steps to get her son back to herself. Now, Cecil Bartholomew, London Civil Servant and father of Freddie, has sold his home, left his two daughters in school and has come down to Hollywood, determined to stay by his son's side, if the court will let him that is, and make sure his welfare does not suffer. Meanwhile Millicent Bartholomew, Freddie's aunt, has been granted custody of the boy. The father has declared his intention to take his sister's side in any legal fight for the custody of his son as against his wife! The latest news about Freddie Bartholomew is that he is to share his present salary of 100,000 dollars a year per new M. G. M. contract as follows: 50,000 for Freddie Trust Fund. 200 0 for Father and Mother. 20,000 for Millicent. 10,000 his agent's ten per cent. Also 100 a week to Millicent for being Secretary and Guardian to him paid separately by M. G. M.

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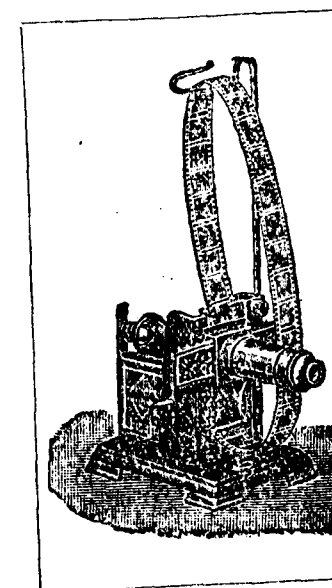
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