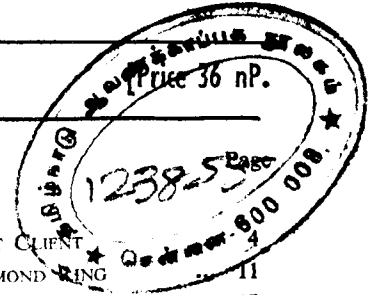


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The names of characters and places appearing in fictional stories are purely imaginary and any reference to living persons is only coincidental.
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THE NEW PICTURE

BOTH in the States and the Centre new Ministries have begun to function. Congress has captured power in most of the States. Even in Orissa it has assumed the reins of administration much to the disappointment of the right wing forces. In the office of the President and of the Vice-President, also, there will be no change.

Thus the over-all picture is encouraging enough for the Congress. But the High Command is said to be considerably exercised by certain disturbing trends. It has good reason to be. In Bigger Bombay there seems to be considerable dissatisfaction among the people. The agitation for Maha Gujarat and Samyukta Maharashtra is still smouldering. It remains to be seen how Shri Y. B. Chavan can reconcile the conflicting claims of the two regions and restore harmony. Otherwise, the whole question may have to be re-opened with all the grave implications and complications that are bound to arise and darken the political skies.

The nation will continue to hear the echoes of re-organization for long. Kerala was lost to the Congress because of this very division. When Rajaji suggested the creation of Dakshina Pradesh he had in mind the consolidation, stability and uniform progress of the South. With the merger of the Tamil taluqs of T.-C. into Madras, where Congress was predominant, the surrender of Kerala to the Communists was a foregone conclusion.

—Please see page 3

Current Comments

MUDDLE

The Naya Paisa muddle continues to vex the public and impose severe hardship and privation on the poorer sections of the people. From the postal officials down to the shopman, the hawker and the vendor exploitation is rampant. They pocket the poor man's money, thanks to the vulgar fractions which the common man does not see but feels. From the postal cover to the beedi and the match-box things are more costly. If you pass in a rupee, you don't get the balance in terms of the old coins even though you may see piles of them on the counter.

If the Naya Paisa had been introduced before the General Elections we daresay there would have been a definite swing against the Congress. As it is, inflation has come through the backdoor. The price of every commodity has gone up and we cannot thank the Finance Ministry for this post-election boon.

THE NEW PICTURE

—EDITORIAL *Continued.*

There is surprise among the general public at the winsome ways of the new Kerala Ministry although suspicion

very naturally persists. The Communists are working for a ridiculously low salary. Congressmen have apparently forgotten the days when Ministers were drawing only Rs. 500 during their advent to power in 1937. The Kerala Ministry has not only organized a drive for economy but also sponsored a campaign for rooting out corruption from all branches of the administration. Few will deny that they have begun well and we must give credit where it is due.

At the same time, we must voice the general feeling that Communists are an unreliable and detestable lot. They still swear by violence and nobody believes that the Ministry will be able to function for long within the framework of the Constitution. Most objectionable is their extraterritorial patriotism and their ultimate aim is the establishment of a Communist administration for the whole of India.

Congress will soon be faced with a crucial test. It must prove its superiority to the Communist Party and reform its method and manner of administration.

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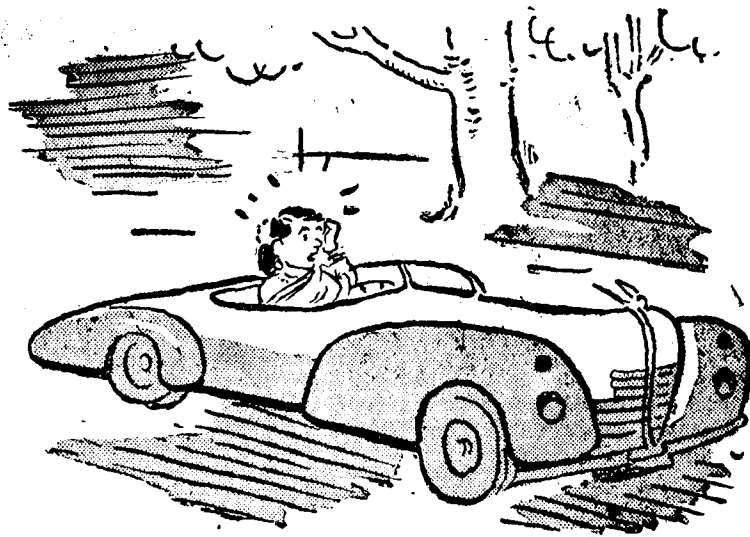
His First Client

—by SUDHA RANGANATHAN—

NALINI—she herself readily admits—is a rather poor driver, though very well up in looks. By the former statement, it does not mean that she is careless, but, to put it mildly, she is a bit nervous in traffic. That day, as luck would have it, she had to go to Mylapore in the

for Nalini, she wanted to look her best and had ordered a new blouse for the event. She had come personally to collect it.

Everything went well till she started on her return journey. She drove carefully past the girls' school, and



morning, and that too near the tank, to see her tailor. Everything was practically settled about her wedding except the formal consent of the groom. He was to come and "see" her that evening with an uncle of his. This being the first such occasion

other 'hazards'. She looked carefully to her right and left before she turned. If she gets past this point, the rest of the road was fairly uncrowded and safe (I mean for the pedestrians).

Oh blast! Did that "divine"

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daughter of the most 'divine' buffalo in a black mood have to cross just then? To avoid it, she turned into a side-lane. She did not notice the cycle 'parted' against the curb, leaning precariously on the lamp-post. The iron pole aid its best to keep the cycle in its vertical position, but it was absolutely helpless against the three and a quarter ton of iron and steel propelled against it by Nalini. It had to relinquish its support to the poor two-wheeled machine. Bereft of its only prop, the cycle collapsed, the back wheel convulsing in a heap of mangled steel and rubber.

NALINI heard the thud and snap just a bit late. She stopped the car and got down hastily. In trying to save a creature of flesh and blood, she had managed to put out of commission, a man made article, the pride of some schoolboy, no doubt. Nalini, hurriedly looked round to see if anybody had noticed the accident. There was not a single creature visible, except a solitary crow—one can safely call it a scare crow—perched precariously on the afore-mentioned lamp-post, too stunned even to caw. It looked as if it might change its mind any moment, and start screeching away for dear life. Before the conting-



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ency arose, Nalini bolted into the nearest house.

A YOUNG man, dressed impeccably in a new black coat and spotless white pants, was sitting in the front room. Oh horrors, thought Nalini, he must have been watching the accident, though heaven knows why he had not rushed out the moment it happened. Or rather, thank heavens, he did not, and attract a huge crowd to witness her discomfiture.

"Be pleased to sit down, Madam" said the young man. Nalini promptly slumped into the nearest chair.

"Now that you have relaxed, please give me the details"—said the young man.

"Well, you see...." she started, and then turned to look out of the window. A small crowd made up of people who could afford to linger in that hour were already devoting special attention to the way she had smashed up the cycle.

"Oh, you need not worry about that till the owner turns up," the young man assured her coolly, and continued. "But I think I had better wait till the other party also turns up. I don't think I should act for you without knowing how much the other party is prepared to accept." Then he smiled at her charmingly.

Though Nalini was captivated by his handsome build and clear cut features, she chose to look affronted. "I do not remember ever asking you to act for me in any capacity" she retorted hotly.

"But, Madam, if any person barges into a lawyer's office, immediately after an accident, it is natural, no doubt, for the lawyer to assume that that person has come to consult him about that particular accident" he replied blandly, a mischievous twinkle lighting up his eyes.

NALINI got scared. Only then she noticed the board with the bold letters "Ramnath and Kedari, Advocates". She recollected at once that this Mr. Ramnath was somehow connected with the young man who was to come in the evening, if he was the same Mr. Ramnath. "May I see your father?" she asked. "Probably you mean my uncle? I work under him. It is customary for the junior to fix up engagements for his senior. Now, if I knew the merits of your case I can try to convince him to take it up. Now, if you are ready...." he added. He talked smoothly, steadily. No doubt it would have impressed a judge favourably, but Nalini was in tears by that time.

They could both hear some talk in the next room. "Hey Kedari, remember from to-

day you are a full-fledged lawyer. We must be there early. At least on the first day, you must attend court in time. Are you ready?"—Talking thus, an elderly gentleman entered. Turning enquiringly to Nalini, he asked the young man, "And, who is this?"

Before Nalini could open her mouth, the young man interposed. "This is a young lady who has smashed somebody's cycle with her bad driving. I think I better testify as a witness. Probably that would be better."—here he nearly laughed. Nalini, who had recovered her voice by this time, addressed the senior gentleman. "I am Mr. Ramamurthy's daughter, Mr. Ramamurthy of Murthy & Company. I came in here to get help. I happened to dash into a cycle left carelessly on the road, while I swerved to avoid a buffalo."

Here the young man interrupted: "No, no, she is wrong. It was all parked."

JUST then a servant came rushing in shouting. "Sir, sir! Mr. Kedari's cycle has been run over by a car. We cannot find the driver at all.

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Oh, if we had caught him, we would have 'treated' him well. People who do not know how to handle a car, start driving"—and he began to elaborate on the driver's qualifications and the punishment due to him. The elder man cut him short and sent him out of the room.

NALINI was looking at Kedari accusingly. So, it was his cycle all along and he had been having fun at her expense. Kedari was dejected at seeing his first client slip out of his fingers. Ramnath who guessed what was going on in their minds, slapped Kedari on the back and laughed. "I think we better settle the matter out of court. Kedari can neither appear as the defence counsel, nor as a witness for the prosecution, as he is the plaintiff, and I think he is not eager for the last role. And anyway, my dear boy, it is getting late for us now. You go home, my girl, and keep quiet about the affair. We are scheduled to come to your house this evening, and we can discuss to find Nalini blushing furiously and Kedari blinking".

Kedari consoled himself with the thought that his first client, though not actually in his hands now, would be so very soon! X

In lighter vein :

HONESTY: Best Policy!

By Raghunath Hadkar

WHEN everybody was true and honest, no doubt, honesty was the best policy. This adage must have been born at that time only. But now the world has changed completely. The time of the old 'Ram Rajya' has vanished. You will no more find the person of the status of Rama in the present day world. In the old days ladies like Sita could face the fire ordeal; but the present day ladies, leave aside facing a fire ordeal, could not even dare to stand an accidental burn. Along with the time, the old customs and ideas of morality do change their shape and magnitude, which is but natural. It is a natural phenomenon. That is why old maxims should be changed and they are bound to be changed in course of time. But man need not be perplexed by this change.

When honesty was reigning, there was no necessity for a man to be dishonest. At that time, it was always a bad thing to tell lies or do dishonest things and people used to hate such a person.

Man is a social animal. He has to live in society. He has

therefore to mould his way according to the whims of society, if he has to live happily. He cannot always quarrel, fight and do things right the reverse way other people are doing. It would not pay him anything but on the contrary add to his distress. If one has to live happily amongst other people, it is my candid opinion, he must mix with them and behave in the same manner, as they do. There is no use boating against the tide.

I HAVE come across many instances so far which have prompted me to become pessimistic about honesty and truth. (If you look around minutely, I am sure, you might also come across many such instances). Take the case of a Casual Leave application in any office. If you give the true reason, no boss will be kind enough to grant it. (This is my experience. . . Many may have the same experience. Exceptions to this may be considered the most fortunate lot.) For getting Casual Leave sanctioned you have to find out some urgent work outside your station (of course, false) or make somebody seriously ill (this also

false). If you do not feel like going to office any day, you must report sick (though you may not be actually sick). If you tell the true reasons, the chances of getting leave are very rare.

IT has nowadays become a practice to minimise the age of a marriageable girl and increase the salary of a marriageable boy. Because if a true picture is presented (which is always gloomy) the chances of settlement of marriage are very rare. So, according to the exigencies of the case, both the parties have to do a little of addition and subtraction to their income, qualities (which are never present) age, etc. It is always wiser (a common man's view) to tell a lie and be successful in the mission than telling the truth and getting a negative reply. The people have realised this after a long time and they adjust themselves by telling lies, if the circumstances so warrant. Many fathers-in-law before the marriage—give big assurances to their sons-in-law of a handsome dowry (because their daughters are never handsome—to be more accurate, the fathers of beautiful daughters do not give dowry), property, ornaments, clothes etc. but when once the marriage is performed, they do not even care to keep up 1/20th of their promise. The only promise they keep or as a matter of fact, they have to keep, is that they give their

daughter in marriage. (Here I do not want to criticise the fathers-in-law. But I am merely presenting the facts as they are.)

It is noticed (many a time) that by honest means a man cannot even earn his living. He is unable to make both ends meet. A well qualified B.A., or M.A. clerk gets about Rs. 150/- to Rs. 200/- in hand at the end of a month after putting in hard work. But a 'Suttawalla' or a 'Bootleggar' earns the same amount (or perhaps more) in a day. You might always find him in woollen pant and silk shirt. You will only find costly cigarettes in his mouth.

A 'shetji' (a rich man) may throw an anna coin or in all probability just spit at the beggar woman trying her best to conceal her prestige in her torn clothes; and go ahead to climb the steps of a 'singing girl's' house and spread before her bundles of Rs. 100/- and lean down to obey any word of command.

IF a man comes to you and asks for a loan and if you do not wish to give him the loan, as you are sure the money given to such a person will not probably be returned, you will definitely tell him that you have no money (though you may have lots of money in your pocket). In such a case, if you do not use this much intelligence and discretion, it will defini-

tely be foolish on your part to cry afterwards, if the money is not returned. So, wise are the persons who tell lies and put off such demands.

This also reminds me of a Chinese poem "On The Birth Of His Son". I quote below some lines from it, as I am sure, they will strengthen my view point, instead of becoming irrelevant.

"Families, when a child is born,
Want it to be intelligent.
I, through intelligence,
Having wrecked my whole life,
Only hope the baby will prove
Ignorant and stupid.
Then he will crown a tranquil life,
By becoming a Cabinet Minister."

WE also see many people having become millionaires by doing nothing else except blackmarketing but we find that people working very hard for the whole day and following honest vocation are unable to make both the ends meet.

People are already aware of the fact that many political parties and political

leaders give big assurances during elections and prepare healthy plans (which never materialise) and the leaders forget them as soon as they are elected. I need not comment on this. There are several such instances. Their list will be unending. It is said: 'Honesty is the Best Policy'. But this adage must have been born at the time when everybody was true and honest. However, it has become an old saying now. In reality, I am pained to find that honesty never counts nor helps a man. (Of course, there may be some instances where honesty has succeeded, but there are many instances when dishonesty has prevailed). This is an open secret and when I say this anybody, who is a keen and minute observer, will agree with me.

IF there is no benefit by telling truth or being honest, then a question arises as to why a man should be honest? If honesty is going to help you, the man must always speak truth but in practical life it is not so. One cannot help it. This is the plain truth. That is why I feel a wise man should not be honest, (as many rich men are). He should use his discretion when to be honest and when to be dishonest. That is way I feel that the adage must be changed!

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THE DIAMOND RING

SHIVKUMAR ran over his plans once again. He had, in his pocket, a genuine cheque signed by his wife for Rs. 500/-, and a forged letter to her Bank Agent, to open the safe-deposit vault for him. The money should be more than sufficient to take him in comfort to Bombay. He knew certain jewellers in Bombay and he could easily cash the jewels and the other convertibles that Shakuntala had in her bank-vault. Yes. Shivkumar, the husband of the leading heart-throb of the millions of Indian cine fans, had decided to rob his wife and desert her. He had chosen Bombay as his resort partly because of the chances for hiding the huge sprawling city offered, or because of some sentimental reasons of his. For, it was in Bombay that he had met and entered into marriage with Shakuntala.....

Funny, is it not? Who would have thought that Shivkumar, the idol of all students of the Presidency College when he was studying there, would ever come to this pass? Not when he was the fiery orator that he was and the soul-giving organiser

of anything and everything in the college campus while he was there. Not even when he graduated out with a good second class degree and entered Edward & Co., the European firm which gave him an opening as a junior accountant. Such of the elders as had watched his academic career, and prophesied a really bright future for the handsome young man, who had class written all over his lineaments. It only remained for Shivkumar to marry into a 'big' family and rest assured of his very happy future.

YES, that was what should have happened. Probably that was what *would* have happened but for his getting transferred to Bombay and his meeting Shakuntala. She was then a very struggling artiste, trying to do her best to keep the proverbial wolf from her doors. In fact, she had come to know that to gatecrash the filmworld was not as easy as had appeared to her. She was at that time working in a short advertisement one-reel film that his firm was preparing. A chance acquaintance ripened into intimacy, and suddenly Shivkumar had

Story By R. PATTABIRAMAN

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come to discover that life in Bombay was not so uninteresting after all.

TO be fair to Shakuntala, it must be recorded that while she agreed to marry Shivkumar, it was not just for his money or for the security of the house that he offered. She had come to discover what true love was, and she was really glad when one sunny afternoon on Juhu beach, Shivkumar had opened up his heart. And their marriage had been what you would call a successful one, till recently; till very recently at that.

Reaching deep into his heart, Shivkumar discovered that one of the main reasons for the estrangement between them was her meteoric rise in the film world. As Shivkumar's wife, she had had the chance to go to the right places and come into contact with the right people, who mattered in filmdom. The ambition that had lain dormant in her heart suddenly broke all bonds, and she was determined to see that she starred in a film—and that too, in the top of the cast. Shivkumar was also thrilled with the idea of seeing his wife on the screen. He was not unaware of the fact that with an actress wife, his days in his firm, or any other firm for that matter, would be numbered. No taboo on the husband of an actress and all that, but when it comes to

actualities, those employers do seem to show a sort of preference to people whose wives stay at home and attend only the annual get-togethers and farewell parties. He knew what he was in for, and worked feverishly to get a part for her. Luck was on his side, for within one year after their return to Madras, Shakuntala's first film was released,—with her as the heroine. That film had set Shakuntala's fame on solid foundations, but at the same time, a fact not known to many outside the intimate circle, busted his. Since it was only an expected crash, he took it philosophically, and plunged into the work thrust on him as his wife's secretary, with zest.

IT took four full years for the man in Shivkumar to rankle against the rut he was falling into. It was fun to be introduced as the lucky possessor of the idol of the film-world, but too much of it bored him. As a matter of fact, it irritated him when wolfy male actors came to talk to him purely because he was Shakuntala's husband, as if he had no individuality of his own. He knew that nobody else was to blame for the predicament he was in. As the wife of an accountant, Shakuntala would have been a perfect hostess and a valuable asset. But, on the contrary, he had promoted her film career and that too, to

the complete effacement of his. And as a result, whenever he wanted anything, he had to ask her (wasn't it always a *request*?) to sign cheques. Shakuntala never made any bones about giving him what he wanted, of course. Still, it did go against his age, when he had to cringe before his wife for something. A more calculating husband would have probably persuaded his wife to hand over all the money and thus would have had direct access to the household chest. As a result, the constant daily humiliation could have been spared. But not so Shivkumar. He had even refused Shakuntala's offer to open a separate bank account in his name. After all is said and done, it was her money, was it not? Had Shivkumar known that he would come to steal from his own wife,—probably he would have preferred the other way.....

IT was just a month back Shivkumar started toying with the idea of deserting his wife. His absence would not leave her destitute, and form what he could judge of her affections, she could not be very sorry to be rid of him. If he knew her, she would only be too glad to be left alone with her—Narain. His thoughts ran wildly over the six short months when they had known Narain and how he had set up the business of destroying his domestic peace systematically. As the mati-

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nee-idol of recent fame, Narain decidedly had more to turn the balance in his favour over the now pretty useless Shivkumar. The only stumbling block in Narain's way, he knew, was the fact that as yet, divorce had not become so common an affair to the people of the Indian film-world. But how long could this continue? Go away, therefore, he must.—but once he went out, what could he do?

HE was sure that job-hunting was out of the question. Apart from his age, he was in no mood to be again servile to anybody. He could start some business on his own....Capital? Oh, yes, that was where Shakuntala's bank vault came in. He decided that it would be only a meagre return for what all he had done her if he were to take away her jewels and other things. Only his decision was hastened because of the increase in the number of people whom he owed money in Madras. Not finding happiness at home, he had sought solace in liquor and the racing track, but both the drinks and the horses had left him only heavily indebted to a great many people in Madras, but otherwise, as unhappy as he ever was....What would his creditors say when they found that Mr. Shakuntala (didn't he know that that was the name given to him by that yellow journal which everybody read) has failed to pay

up? He knew one thing of course. Shakuntala would pay, at least—was this too much a price to get rid of him?

He had told her that morning that he would be away at Calcutta on a visit to a long-forgotten relative of his. He had followed this tale up with a request for a cheque for Rs. 500/- for expenses. Of course, she did not grimace about it, when she signed the cheque, but was it not relief that he saw in her eyes? That was the last straw. The very idea that she felt relieved at his absence strengthened him in his resolve to rob her.... with all the good words thrown in, wasn't it robbery?

Things were proceeding smoothly for Shivkumar. He had no occasion to use the forged letter to the Bank Agent. For, the moment he entered the Agent's room, he was greeted effusively by the agent. "Hello, Mr. Shivkumar, we have been expecting you for some time. Your wife instructed me to open her vault for you when you come here. Would you want it now?"

To say that Shivkumar was surprised at the news is a bit of understatement. It was hardly three hours since he had parted from his wife, and from what the agent told him, it looked as though she had come to the Bank before him. On top of that were her instructions to the agent to open

the bank vault....Refusing to be confused, he put up a bold front and told the bank agent, "Ah yes. Kindly send your man with me to the vault."

THE bank clerk who accompanied him went to the vault, turned the key in, and left the room as was the bank's practice to its known customers. Shivkumar took out the letter he had intended for her and read it once again. It was just a simple letter wherein he had informed Shakuntala of his reasons for his cowardly act. He did not name her as the cause of his ruin, but had simply pointed out that the treatment could have been better for a man who had sacrificed his all in promoting her career. No. He had nothing to add to that letter. When she visited the bank next, maybe a week or fortnight later, she would know that he never proposed to return from his Calcutta trip.....

Shivkumar swung open the steel door and peered inside. No, he was *not* dreaming. The whole place was empty except for a small jewel-box on the top shelf. Opening it, he found it contained the diamond wedding ring he had presented Shakuntala at the time of marriage. The solitary ring on the top shelf could mean one thing. She had got wise to his intentions, and by a curious twist of fate, had chosen to clear her valuables from her vault that particular day. This ring proba-

bly had been left by her to remind him of his marital obligations.....

Crestfallen, Shivkumar took out the ring and stowed it carefully in his breast pocket. Closing the door, he summoned the clerk, who locked the vault in his presence.

Only when he came out of the manager's room did he remember about the cheque he had in his pocket. No harm in trying to cash it, of course. She wouldn't have dared to discredit the cheque, for the simple reason that such a thing would have developed into an enormous scandal that would affect her career. Back therefore he went to the manager's room. Within five minutes, he was handed five new hundred rupee notes. The banknotes definitely heaved him up.....

A STRANGE silence greeted him on reaching home. It was by itself not very extraordinary, and actually he would have been surprised if he had seen her. But a look at her room made him understand that some hasty packing had been done. He racked his brains but failed to remember any out-door engagement that would call upon her to travel.

Suddenly a new fear gripped his heart. Had she deserted him? The thought struck him suddenly, and out of nowhere. But once it sprang up, it developed enormously and when he opened

the bedroom, he was actually convinced of it for a fact, and he even expected a note pinned to a pincushion....the way it is done in all films. Yes, he was right for once in the day. The note was there in the small careful hand of his wife placed prominently on the dresser. Only, there was no pin-cushion, but even without it, the whole thing was ridiculously melodramatic.

The note ran as follows:

Kumar darling,

I DO not know how this will affect you. With your recently developed passion for the track and the bar, I have sufficient cause to complain to you of neglect towards me. But I must, in all fairness to you, tell this much that this act of mine was not in any way the outcome of your neglect. I have only myself to blame. You have warned me more than once about that Narain, but, in my folly, I had not paid heed to you. Everything has to be paid for, and I am not sorry to realise that this folly of mine has cost me dearly. In short, Narain's game was simple blackmail with the aid of some letters and photographs of mine which had somehow come into his possession. Didn't you use to wonder how we lost two contracts with the Shiny Films last year? It was due to Narain, and his dirty tricks. You may not know it, but before this year is out, I will be just a back-number in the film history.

And I have already paid what all I had to that fellow in a desperate effort to silence him.

This cannot go on. I must, if I value my mental peace, go far away from this cur. I have decided and I will go back to Bombay and try a new life.....some office may offer a typist's job, wouldn't it?

Much as I need it, I am not taking the ring you gave me at the time of our marriage. I am leaving it in my otherwise empty bank vault, and I am leaving instructions to the bank agent to open the vault for you. I know you are far from being sentimental, but, you may like to keep it for old times' sake.....

I AM sorry. I know I am not playing it square with you. But I am satisfied on one thing. I came with nothing to you. And, it is the honest fact that I go now with nothing from you..... The five hundred rupees I gave you this morning was all I had in my account.

Yours, Shakuntala.

She was wrong. The ring mattered to Shivkumar, much more than anything else. For a man in his position, the five hundred rupees in his possession and the few hundred that the ring fetched on sale, really mattered. In fact, it was only after he had drunk away the last rupee that he realised on the sale of the ring that Shivkumar plunged into the sea never to see the shore again..... ***

PRIDE and PRINCIPLE

By Subha

SURESH was turning the pages of the "Young Reformer Weekly" to look for a report of his speech on "Widowers and their Responsibility." He was delighted to find a fairly full summary of his address with an editorial commendation at the top: "If only society had a few more young men like Mr. Suresh, the problem of virgin widows would be solved in no time. For such zeal and devotion there can be no praise too high."

Suresh felt a thrill of pleasure on reading it over and over again. In print, however, the speech lacked the warmth and fire that he had put into it. But, even so, it was a permanent record of what he said and advocated. Surely, he would be making many more speeches like this and storm the citadel of public opinion. He was going to burn himself out in the service of society and earn a name and fame all over the country. He went on dream-

ing with the magazine lying on his lap. With his wiry figure and intelligent dark eyes, he looked handsome. He was even known in his circle as the glamour boy.

To explain it all, Suresh was the president of the Social Reform League, lately formed in the city by a band of educated young men and women, with the sole object of preventing widowers from marrying virgins. In other words, the League insisted that widowers should marry only widows. Its members had picketed marriage "pandals," too, and stopped several widower-virgin weddings in the city. The League had to face a good deal of opposition and hostility from a section of the public but it carried on with ruthless determination to solve the problem of widows. Several young men and women came forward to join the organization as life-members.



the end, the police gave him a substantial monetary reward."

THE lights in the theatre went off, the noise died down, and the show began with a news reel, comic cartoon and a documentary short. Then came the main picture, packed with drama and suspense. From their comfortable cushion seats both enjoyed the picture as well as their own company. Suresh felt the ecstasy of the hour as the whirling fan rustled and waved off the loose end of her sari against his own hand or as she bent her pretty face close towards his to whisper a passing comment on a scene or character. As her hand accidentally (or perhaps deliberately) touched his, he felt himself transported to the seventh heaven.

It was ten o'clock when they emerged from the theatre. Suresh suggested a ride home in a taxi but she preferred to walk the distance, and he readily complied. The cool of the night, the quiet, dark avenue, the young peep-

ing moon, and the innumerable stars studding the sky like so many jewels would have made any man with a lovely woman by his side excited and talkative, but Suresh was unusually grave and silent. Nalini, on the other hand, was jovial and laughed merrily as she went on talking about the topics of the day without waiting for his reply. She seemed not to notice his preoccupation.

He was deeply agitated. His mind was a tumult of conflicting emotions. He was about to unburden his mind but chose not to speak.

THE other end of the avenue was too dark. There were no municipal lights for this area. And the moon made no attempt to break through the thick foliage. Frightened, Nalini clung to Suresh like a soft creeper and he patted her arm reassuringly. "Don't fear, Nalini," he said. "Two minutes more, and we enter the lighted streets. And your bungalow is just a stone's throw from there. Perhaps, your car is on the way for



HUSBAND (shouting): "You always tell others that I quarrel and shout. Have I ever shouted, I ask you?"

you. Oh, give me your handbag. I will carry it for a while."

SHE slid up to him still closer and before he was aware, she imprinted a soft sweet kiss on his cheek. He was taken aback at what she had done. She, too, seemed to feel ashamed of her boldness and edged away. And when he thought of telling her something, there were voices in the rear, and both hurried out into light and bustle,

She was in a great hurry to reach home and felt too shy to walk with him perhaps because she had kissed him. "Suresh," she told him, "I shall go through this lane to get to my house. You know, this is the shortest cut. You need not bother to escort me hereafter. Seeing you sometime tomorrow. Good-night and pleasant dreams!"

Before he could reply she had disappeared down the lane. He stood at the turning, inhaling the subtle perfume that she had left behind. He stood like one entranced, and missed her terribly. He felt his heart pounding.

He sighed like a volcano in action. "What a wonderful girl!" he thought. Sophisticated she was; but unlike the modern girl, she did not disguise her love nor had she waited for him to take the initiative. "But how can I tell her the bitter truth?" he

asked himself. "She doesn't know I am a widower who can't by the profession of his creed marry a virgin. If I do, where do I stand, what will become of my prestige and dignity and what will happen to the League which I have built up with such a mighty effort? Won't people laugh? Won't our elders point their finger of scorn at the wayward ways of the young?"

Back in his room, he tore at his hair and cursed himself over this fantastic situation. He paced the floor up and down. He felt no appetite and told the cook that he might go home and come back in the morning. But the stillness of his room seemed to frighten him. He had never known any moments of fear. But something had gone wrong. He was amazed at this new feeling. He found his thoughts oppressive and unbearable.

SUPPOSING he told Nalini straight about his inability, and she married someone else? A pang of jealousy shot through his breast. The very thought of Nalini loving some other man was maddening. But, then, couldn't he swallow his prestige and principle and make himself happy? He shook his head and muttered to himself: "Never, never, I would rather give up the world and my wealth than the principles which I believe to be right."

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He then sat down at the table and wrote a short note: "Dear Nalini—Please forget the incident of the evening. Perhaps, you are unaware of the fact that I am widower. Six months after my marriage, my wife, who had been chosen by my parents, was only thirteen when she died of typhoid. She had not even come to our home. So it is impossible to think of you in a romantic light though my heart has already been surrendered to you. Your broken-hearted brother—Suresh."

AS he finished the letter he almost broke down and laid his head on the crook of his arm. Something hot blinded his eyes—a film of tears. How unmanly of him! How stupid? He blinked them back. Then he was aware of someone standing behind him and watching. He turned back in annoyance. It was Nalini who had so quietly entered his room. His look was one of astonishment, and he was stupidly staring at her without a word.

She then broke the awkward silence. "I came in for the handbag which I had left with you absent-mindedly. It contains father's keys and he may want them any time. But what are you brooding over and why do you look so troubled?"

His letter suddenly caught her eye. She read it and burst into loud laughter. She then threw her arms round his neck and stunned him with her secret. "You big fool. I am not a Miss or maiden as you think. I am a virgin widow. I was married to a lad when I was only ten years of age. A week later, the boy found a watery grave in a river while bathing. My father later on sent me to a convent school. And I was ashamed of owning up my widowhood. They all called me Miss Nalini—a practice which has continued till today. I even forgot about my widowhood till I joined your League. But have you ever seen me wear flowers or kumkum? Mother forbids them though she has not the heart to oppose my re-marriage. What says my darling?"

SURESH was too happy for words. After a time, he told her, "If you hadn't come in the nick of time, dear, I would have taken poison to end my life. I was seriously flirting with the idea!"

Then he gave her a long passionate kiss in return for the one she had given him on their way back. —(Copyright

A Short Story

WITH A CHARMER

~~~~~By DHARA

THE train buzzed into the station and the sudden jerk of the carriage drove me out of my reverie. I peeped out of the window to find myself in Vijayavada junction. It was nearly 10-30 in the morning and the passengers were very busy getting their morning meals. Though I was not much inclined to fill my stomach, I wanted to have a cup of that 'revitalising' coffee.

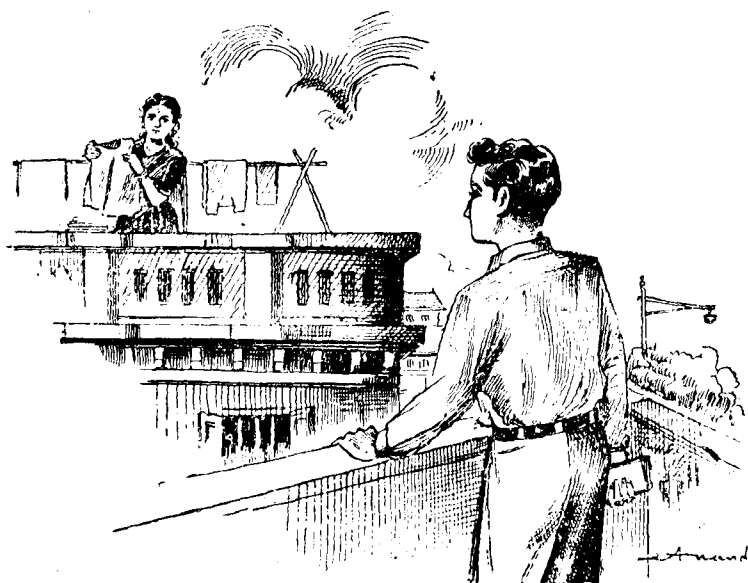
Hardly had I gone a few steps towards that refreshment room, when I accidentally met a teen-aged girl in her colourful clothes. Though so momentary, there was an entanglement not only between eyes but also of hearts. Because it was my Daya! She was a girl of about seventeen, slim and chic and to say she was just pretty was to underestimate her charms. I was almost astonished to see her there all alone. However I managed to put on a smile to greet her and posed an abnormal question, "Oh! Is that you, Daya! How are you here?"

"I am returning from my village". After a moment's pause, she thoughtfully added, "My brother has gone to get the tickets".

"Then you can accommodate yourselves in my compartment. There is space," so saying, I carried her box to my carriage being followed by her. Soon, her brother also joined us and we moved to a corner. Lest he should mistake me, I conversed with him, making enquiries about his family.

A sudden fell silence on the situation. For me, it was a dream come true and I would hardly believe my eyes—my ideal was before me in flesh and blood. I feasted my eyes on her beauty occasionally catching her eyes and giving her a friendly smile. Her eyes were darker with the reflections of her inner conflict. Then I just leaned back on the window with a story book in my hands. My thoughts galloped back to my boyhood.

I KNOW Daya, so to say, from her childhood. She comes of an Andhra family and her father, a Government officer, settled down in Madras. She has got a brother and a sister both elder to her. My house is just opposite to hers, a lane running in between. In her childhood, she used to come to my house to play with my



younger sister. She is so fond of flowers especially jasmine, that she used to water the plant in our garden which had grown up as high up to reach the second floor adorning the front-view of my house. She, with her raven sleek hair and a cheerful melting smile would somehow catch my mother's heart, in sharing the flowers equally with my sister.

**SHE** was very playful and mischievous too. An instance, when she would be ten, had become almost unforgettable in my memory. I was then studying in my high school class. In the evening, I used to play carrom with my friends. One day, while we were playing, she was there watching us. Suddenly on hearing

the screech of a car, we, leaving the game, ran out to see what it was. On returning, I saw to my anger, Daya trying her hand at the board. It was fun to watch her. Also, awesome in replaying a winning game with a mixed feeling of anger and affection. I slapped her cheeks gently. She suddenly burst out into weeping and ran to her mother, a huge woman with enormous waist, who came out. The searching look of that woman was enough to startle me. But the next moment, with a bewilderment on my brows, I saw Daya, upstairs, casting a deprecating smile with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. She had won the first round of battle against me in her life.

Days rolled on but she was child still, with her pranks. I can still remember those days when I used to go talking merrily with my sister and Daya upto their school and thence to my college. At this stage, I found some sudden change in the attitude of Daya. She was a bit indifferent towards me. After some days, I became frankly curious. I thought then that she must have seen the word 'shy' in her dictionary and it was only a result of that. Only now I come to understand that she must have attained age.

**MONTHS** passed on and she had successfully maintained her same attitude towards me. At first, her indifference broke my heart. But she never failed to turn up to my house for a chat with my mother and sister or for fetching some good drinking water from our well. In parenthesis, it may be added that I never failed to steal some looks at her from the window in my room upstairs. On many afternoons, we sat at the windows, opposite, with books in our hands. Though we had books in our hands, our thoughts were not on them. But the thing I loved best, as I sat leaning over the barricade, was to watch her on moonlit nights, strolling with her crying niece in arms, occasionally kissing her. No one took much notice of us for we could slip away unseen. I looked at her with growing anxiety but said

nothing, as speech was not my strong suit. Then only I came to understand that there was a reserve of firmness in her handling such situations. I did not know what my feelings were and I could not analyse them. She fascinated me more and more from then.

A good many summers had come and gone and we were still carefree. One afternoon, there were some sudden drizzlings and she came up to collect the clothes hung there for drying. To have appeared in her crumpled scanty attire, dishevelled struggling hair, sans make-up face bespattered with sweat and eyes overladen with sleep would have been embarrassing to her normally, but on seeing me, she smiled. It was a smile of ineffable exquisite charm. I was rather delighted and vaguely uncomfortable. The day came when I realised that an affection had matured into something more intimate and beautiful into love. The realisation had come so suddenly that I was taken completely off my feet. Life acquired a new meaning for us and lived in a world of happiness and hope.

**ONE** fine morning, I woke up and peeped out of the window as usual. She was there, and as if she was trying to find an outlet for her affection, she asked me "Time, please," with a bitter twist to her lips. These two words echo in my ears even now.

I was rather flabbergasted and did not want to give her a direct reply. But my weak-mindedness got the better of my heart and I fumbled below the layers of my conscience. My uneasiness has communicated itself in some subtle fashion and I unhesitatingly replied, "Six-five". She smiled in satisfaction and pranced about the room. Suddenly she disappeared swinging the door closed, as if disapproving of my smart reply. All that day, I thought of her more, the more I worshipped her. I knew I had begun to develop a soft corner for her in my heart.

I HAVE a close friend in Samy and he used to visit my house almost on all holidays for a chat. On one afternoon, he noticed me keen on watching the opposite window. To his own surprise, he found the girl there. And soon, he termed me romantic and all that and there had been the ground to support his superfluous arguments. I was rather only delighted with there talks.

That year, I passed out of my college as one among the innumerable graduates. I then started out in search of a job. After getting many regretful replies from the employers to my faithful applications, I got a job at last as a clerk in private firm. But I rose to a wheeze of disappointment on seeing the order for I had to leave Madras and my Daya.

I persuaded, in vain, my parents not to force on me this job by explaining the difficulties I had to undergo in staying alone in a far-off place like Vizianagaram. But they were so overjoyful at their son getting a job in less than two months' time of passing out, I was almost forced to accept this job.

My heart throbbed at the very idea of leaving Madras. Somehow I managed to pick up my heart and made preparations for my departure. I felt Daya was lost to me once and for all. I wanted to take leave of her but she was still keeping back. I thought she was not aware of my moving out till the very last day. While leaving for station that day, I had to pass by the gates of her house. I saw her there at the door-steps with a disheartened smile. Tears gathered in her wide eyes but they did not roll down her cheeks. She stood there with a down-cast eyes like a statue. Only my eyes took leave of her and I walked fast to the station to enable me to bear the pangs of separation.

THE parting had been sad and tender and we promised within ourselves that we would wait for each other till time comes to our rescue. I was left alone in the train, so that I might regain the composure and tranquility of my mind but luxuriating for a while in the darkest, most doleful of reflections. But I

wondered how I would be able to come back, for my life at the new place would be dull and completely drab. After all I had reached that new town and what a hell without all the familiar buildings, flowers and handsome Daya. It was all absurd for me there. Helplessly I attended to my office routine in my new assignment without much enthusiasm. Again and again I reflected idly on my past. In course of time, I slowly began to regain my self-possession. In the meantime I wrote a competitive examination to better by prospective life and I came out successful. All too quickly a winter passed away and one day on getting the order, I bade an optimistic farewell to my boss. I was returning home before taking up my new appointment in Delhi, when, by chance, I met Daya once more to revive my dreams.

SUDDENLY, the book fell down from my hands and I got up from my reverie. Soon I heard the giggling sound of Daya's laughter, breaking through like the gay glass bangles shining in the sun and as I noticed her, she cast a sarcastic smile and turned her face towards the window. A prolonged silence overshadowed us with continuing inner conflicts reflected on our faces. X

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# RAILWAY TRAVELLERS

By R. BANGARUSWAMI

**T**HOUGH Railway travellers are departmentally compartmentalised into first, second and third class, according to the amount of 'liquidity preference' they shell out from their or other people's pockets for fares. They—the travellers—exhibit such a variety and exude so many vagaries that it is worth while studying them a bit.

We may sub-classify the First classers into Regulars and Casuals. Regulars are those who don't travel by any other class but the first. All their lives they have travelled first and, God willing, they would travel first all their remaining lives. If they don't succeed in booking their seats in first class then they simply wait till they could do so and then travel. Like the proverbial bell ushering the elephant their mountainous luggage comes one hour in advance of them and announces that they have exchanged a state of rest at home for that of a state of motion towards the direction of the station. Boarding the train just a few minutes before it starts they seat themselves comfortably in

all their amplitude echoing perhaps the feelings of the poet when he says: 'I am the monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute'. Now and then you come across some First-classers who may be described as all-rounders, as circumferential as they are vertical, with loose and baggy dress on their bodies. If it happens to be a well-matched couple of such physical dimensions immediately you exclaim 'This is a sight for the gods to see' or 'Marriages are indeed made in Heaven.'

**CASUALS** among first-classers take to first-classing either out of necessity or by chance. They appear not to fit into the picture at all, looking like oblong people thrust into oval holes. They are usually found squeezing in a corner, occupying a fraction of a seat and with all their things hidden somewhere under the seats, out of sight, out of mind. A vacuum surrounds the casual first-classer. Compared with the inveterate Regulars with their pomp and

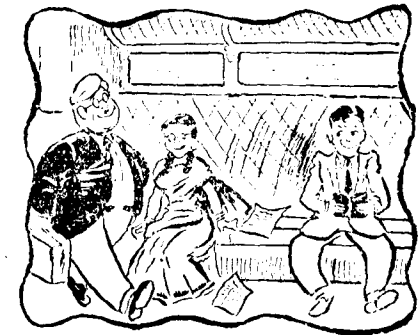
and paraphernalia, their spread-out beds and things and baskets of fruits and heaps of flowers and such like the Casual looks like an ascetic who has strayed into another world. If the casual also happens to be a little sick or worried or both, my God, there is no word to describe him.

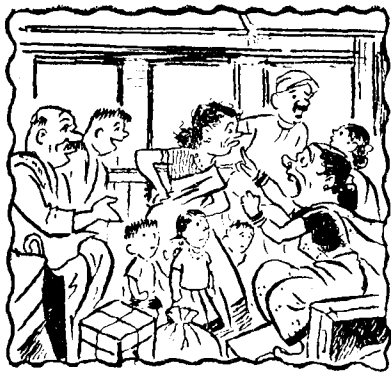
**THE** Second-classer, whether a Regular or a Casual, is a sort of Trisanku swinging midway between Heaven and Earth, willing to enjoy the cosy comforts reserved for the upper class and at the same time afraid to pay for the same. Choosing an easy middle course he finds that it has only paved the way for much uneasiness, for a good deal of grumbling and letting; out spleen and especially so when the carriage happens to get overcrowded when he mutters and mumbles that it is worse than third class. Sometimes he is seen making quick gymnastic tricks, little feats of jerky motion when he is suddenly assaulted by the tiny permanent inhabitants who have their habitation in the cushions provided for the passengers. Really these gentle beings by the bugs are their manner of asking 'How do you do?' The Second-classers, most of them, are birds of passage who either get themselves

promoted as First-classers or demoted into Third-classers.

The Third-classer is the real traveller who forgets not the train in sunny or cloudy weather, in rosy or thorny circumstances. The Third class is the class for the class for the common man and the countryman, the big man and the business man, the student and the scholar, the philosopher and the politician, the poet and the pot-bellied individual. Its ubiquitousness is its supreme merit. And of the types of passengers found therein—Oh, one finds so many!

**THE** book-worm type is there buried in a ponderous volume, the spectacled eyes gobbling the printed matter, at terrible velocity unmindful of all the commotions and conflagrations taking place before his very spectacled





nose. Even if there is no space for him to sit, why, even if there is no sufficient standing space he is still found reading, reading in twilight, in sunlight, or under the shadow of the carriage light. 'Open thine eyes and see the sea of human heads before thee,' says a bold co-passenger. But they fall on deaf ears.

The fashionable newspaper reader with his bundle of newspapers and magazines is another type, ever and anon one sees his eyes straying in the direction of the pretty girls travelling along with him in the compartment. The magazines serve the purpose of shields to screen his motives.

THE old rustic with his kit and kaboodle, his long stick and his big turban, his hair

like moss and his mouth like purse, bent in age but unbroken in spirit egging his way into the very centre of the carriage with soft words and softer gestures is rather a familiar sight. Somehow he manages to evoke popular sympathy and gets a cosy corner.

HIS polaric contrary comes in the shape of a gargantuan giant of a woman in her thirties with a lot of luggage lumbering about her, some on her head, some on her hands, and some tugged tight in her armpits, with a child clasping her neck and clinging somehow to her, to boot. No cries of the inmates of the compartment deter her for she boards the train pouring out a cascade of words, some utterable and some unutterable and all alike unmeaning, storming her way with success and scattering her things down on the floor and up on the berth, till at last she closes the first scene of the first act by sitting aplomb on the laps of two passengers in an intentional effort to wedge between them by squeezing them out. And as for her child there is no need to say that it belongs to

that squealing brood of infant humanity ushering in hell by a million miles nearer with every squeal.

RETIRED Railway employees in the role of Railway travellers are easily recognised by the first ten words that come out of them, always speaking in superlative terms of the Halycon days when everything was punctual, days when they were in active service, suggesting as if they ran the entire railway administration.

There is then the orthodox widow feeling queasy and quixotic all over; a man sitting on the berth himself looking queer in that attitude but thinking how others are queerer; the young mother anxious and ever-anxious about her baby in her hands and the bigger baby that is clutching her sari, neither sitting nor standing nor sleeping, always fidgeting about and offering affronts to her respectability; there is the wrong passenger you may even call him the right passenger in the wrong train—learning the mistake looks at you inquiringly and then departs without notice; the ticketless traveller who smells

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the examiner as the dog smells the stranger at a distance. There is the nomadic group, men, women, children, shouting, gesticulating and coming from nowhere in a wayside station and disappearing into nowhere in another wayside station. There is the marriage group eating, eating all the way, and talking talking all that they have to say. Also one should not forget the groups of students who simply give creeps and more creeps to all those who come into unsympathetic contact with them.

But enough of these samples. For more one must look for oneself! \* \*

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EVA Croy stepped into the street, thrust her key into her bag, and snapped the fastener.

She wished she could as easily thrust away her twinges of uneasy conscience. Of course little Bobby and Helen were as safe as houses, and fast asleep. Didn't she take care to see the fire-screen was in place, windows closed, and the back door locked? Things had been so different in the golden far-away days when she and Dick had often gone dining and dancing together, knowing the children were cared for by a kindly neigh-

she not, well, feel a bit upset? She was no longer the sunny-eyed girl Dick had married. Years and months of heart-sick loneliness had left their mark, set small hard lines about her mouth. Joy-starved and pleasure-thirsty, she had fallen into the way of snatching whatever diversion offered.

"WHY, I believe I would be almost sorry! How awful!" she had once thought in a moment of horrified but honest self-examination. And now too there was Claude! He had started to hint lately that she might want to remarry

## One Woman to Another By Vera Clacton

bour. But the kindly neighbour had left the district long since, and as for Dick—at that memory her expression grew oddly troubled. Dick, with his laughing eyes and clear-cut features, he had been declared missing, presumed killed, fighting in the fever jungles of the East.

As she swung along she resolutely quelled a thought that for months now had haunted her: suppose the unexpected should happen, suppose she should hear he was alive—would she still be ardently, vividly happy as once she would have been? Would

one of these days. It was for his fastidious approval that she had donned the little gold lace evening frock to-night. They were to spend the evening at the Bar of Silver, one of the super grand night resorts where floor show and band were famous. Captain Claude Rayham had been marvellous. It was only since she had known him that she had roused herself from her early blank-eyed grief. He had taken her out of herself, reminded her that she owed a duty to society in the matter of keeping her pretty looks.

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She saw him waiting for her, trim, suave and well-groomed, and hailed him with the casual gaiety which concealed a beating heart. A taxi whirled them to the entrance of the Bar of Silver and they went inside. She glanced round admiring the glittering roof of frosty silver, the severely modern pillars of green marble, the flowers and decorations. Once she would have thought wistfully:

"I WISH Dick could have been here!" But to-night she turned eyes of luminous pansy blue on her escort, handsome and sleekly dark-haired. After a wonderful little supper, they danced to the heady whirl and beat of swing music. They drank hot sweet coffee in the cool fragrance of the palm-court. They danced again.

It was long past midnight when the taxi turned into the quiet street where Eva lived. The machine drew up some doors away and the driver thrust in a bushy, disapproving head.

"Can't get any nearer. Seems to be some sort of rum-pus. I can hear a kid screaming!"

"A child?" Her voice rose in swift panic. In that first ghastly second she thought she would die. Next instant she was out of the taxi and running, running. . . . She

pushed against jostling shoulders.

"Oh, what is it? What has happened?" she asked in a queer senseless monotone.

"Here, Miss, don't get all excited," said a rough voice. She glimpsed the outline of a constable's helmet. "It's a couple of kids locked in and left alone by some fly-brained mother, I suppose. The poor little blighters waked and started yelling; one fell down-stairs. We heard the din and got the door open and got them out, and a lady at the end of the street is going to keep an eye them!"

A piteous wail of "Mummy" interrupted the terse explanation. Eva, a wild-eyed figure with blown hair and crushed dress was down in the dust of the gutter and sobbing herself as she poured out comfort.

"It's all right, Bobby; don't cry, Helen. Mother's here!"

"A FINE sort of Mummy," remarked the astonished constable, and he turned to exchange views with the taxi-driver, but Claude had withdrawn discreetly and the taxi had gone.

It was late when Eva woke next morning. She sat up and looked around her. She had not bothered to undress, and when at last she had got Bobby and Helen calmed and back to bed, she had simply

thrown herself on the sofa and fallen into a dull stupefied sleep after almost an hour's crying. Her eyes were still heavy and hot; her head ached.

Through the morning her

Grim reality had reached out and shaken her from a silly day-dream. Never again, after last night, could she think of leaving Bobby and Helen alone, to go out for an evening's pleasure. She thought



tired mind toiled with the problems that faced her. Her real world of love and hope had gone when Dick went, and now her make-shift world of cheap tinsel was in ruins.

shudderingly of the risks she had run so lightly. She would have to tell Claude, and she paused to wonder what had happened to him! She had completely forgotten him in

the confusion. She sighed. She was still so young in years, and life often seemed so very difficult.

THE following day Claude wrote to her. He knew she had no telephone. Later, she rang him up from a call box to answer.

"Do make a date," he urged. "What about Saturday? A trip into the country? It would do you good!"

She hesitated. "All right—if I can bring the children?" She had never made that stipulation before. Half a minute's silence followed, then he answered with slightly forced heartiness:

"Of course, that would be perfect!"

It was when Eva was ironing Helen's little frock on Friday night, that she decided to say 'yes' to Claude if, as she believed he would, he should ask her to marry him. Why not, she thought, he had been very good and he would love the children once he was used to them. "And I do like him a lot!"

Saturday was all that pleasure seekers could ask. By train or bus even a big town can be left quickly behind, and fields and woods can soon replace streets and houses. From the first, however, chance played an unkind game.

Bobby somehow managed to run a wild rose thorn into his hand and roared himself purple in the face. Then Helen, who had been deafening in her clamour to be allowed to carry some chocolate biscuits, found these rare delicacies melting in her hot grasp and threw them down in the dust. Claude laughed suddenly and most unsympathetically, but there was a faintly disgusted expression on his face.

"Never saw anything like kids for messing themselves," he exclaimed pettishly. Bobby gave a yell of delight as some chickens strayed on to the road and he had to be forcibly restrained from catching one. He was not pleased, and stamped and cried.

In the middle of this excitement, Helen, who had been exploring a particularly wet and unpleasant ditch, tripped and rolled down into a nest of nettles.

The man ran his fingers through his hair and said rather sharply:

"Look here, Eva, haven't you any control over them? I know if they were mine, I'd belt them soundly!"

EVA strove for patience. "Well, they don't often get an outing, dear little lambs," she excused them wistfully.

He snorted, and picking up the tea hamper walked on without a word.

She no longer felt a streamlined modern girl escorted by a handsome admirer who intended to ask her to marry him. She was just a hot, dishevelled woman trying to cope with a couple of restless children and a thoroughly selfish man.

"Please," she said rather desperately after ten minutes in which, for a wonder, nothing untoward had occurred, "just dust off Helen, and I'll try to keep Bobby good and quiet."

HE flicked gingerly at the child's soiled frock and Helen, delighted at the attention, reached up small sticky paws to his face, smearing his collar and tie in the process.

"Oh, Helen, don't!" Eva cried too late.

"When women become mothers," Claude stated rather savagely, "they and their offspring ought to be kept picturesquely in paddocks like cows and calves, not left running around loose!"

Her cheeks flamed. "What a horrid thing to say!" she cried angrily.

He saw that he had gone too far and began trying to laugh it off.

"Well, you know, dear, it is you I want—not your brats!"

She could hardly believe her ears. "Then you can't

have me—or my brats!" she flashed stormily. So that was what he was like! A sense of fierce disillusionment swept her. She never wanted to see him or hear his voice again. She called Bobby and Helen to her. Over her shoulder she said coldly:

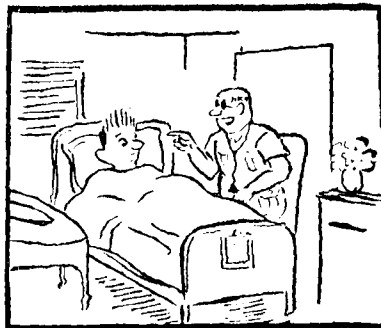
"I am going straight home."

He stood back and thrust his hands in his pockets. "Under the circumstances, my dear," he drawled, "that is the most sensible thing you could do!"

The return journey was a nightmare. A bus connection was missed by seconds and the following five-mile tramp made eternity appear a fleeting dream. It was a dragged and exhausted Eva who unlocked the front door and sank into a chair. Then suddenly like a vision out of the past came the memory of Dick. Dick who never grew cross, never snapped hastily at her, who was such a master at playing bears with the hearthrug.

"AND I was nearly forgetting, oh my darling, my darling!" Her hands were tightly clasped and writhing together. Memory after memory crowded upon her: that first evening when he whispered he loved her and a big moon had glowed behind a tracery of silver birch, and then the day of sunshine, white roses and wind-blown tulle—their

wedding-day, then the golden morning when he had stooped above Bobby's cot and said: "Well, sonny, how do?" Lastly, the memory of the rain darkened station where she and he said good-bye! A tense and yet dream-like atmosphere



DOCTOR: "Don't worry. Even if the worst comes to the worst, we are determined to find out the cause of your illness!"

gathered in the room. The two children who had been peeping, slipped away subdued. They had never seen their mother look like that before.

LATER, Eva rose and began to move listlessly about the house. She gathered up the letters which had come by the last post and lay upon the mat. The bills, a note from the local library, and a letter. She stared at it. A foreign postmark and a handwriting she did not know! So Dick was dead, it must be that. She could see the whole scene. Her Dick, splashed with blood, and dying, and asking some chance comrade to write home when opportunity offered.

"Dick's dead, Dick's dead," ticked the clock.

"Dick's dead," hissed the kettle as it boiled over. A big

wasp beat out the same theme endlessly as it threshed against the window.

"DON'T!" Eva cried wildly. "or I shall go mad!" She tore at the envelope with strained, clumsy fingers, and read:

"Dear Mrs. Croy, My pard, what's called Dick Croy, asked me to write his missus and tell her he's alive but too badly hurt to write himself. We been through hell him and me. They rescued us a week ago and brought us down here and he's just gorn to orspital. The doc says he'll be sent home, but they'll notify you all right, Mrs. Croy but still he asked me to write. Yours respectful, Bill Hawkins."

For a few moments she could not comprehend the truth. Then realisation came in a flood of joy. She pressed her hands together and a tremulous laugh shook her.

"Oh, Helen, as one woman to another, you've just saved me. I'm so glad you smudged his collar!" \*\*

INDIA MAGAZINE



IT was a lovely bull - perfectly white and smooth as alabaster, with a kunkum mark on its wide forehead. Tiny bells jingled around its graceful neck and coloured tassels adorned its shining horns. Over its big hump-like back hung two silk saris, a dhoti, and some cotton printed material acquired at various houses during the day's round. The man leading the bull was wearing some sort of a cKabuli-wallah pyjamas, and a thread-bare coat, (must have belonged to some schoolmaster once) and had a huge turban tied carelessly around his head.

With a drum on his hand, he etched out a wailing sound, now rising with a sudden savage tempo "Boom-Boom boom, boom...." and then dying into a whispering sough - nevertheless attracting all the wayfarers and collecting a huge crowd. Pedestrians stopped. Even cyclists, bullock-cart drivers and rickshaw pullers halted, or at least paused on their way to have a glimpse of the man and his bull. Only the cars and buses

rushed past—too modernised, to stop, and stare at all this tomfoolery.

As I emerged out of the market, the man and his bull, seemed to be having a sort of tete-a-tete.

"Will you come with me?" he asked the bull. It nodded its head upwards and downwards in assent, and walked behind him. "You must obey your mother-in-law, and be at peace with her," he admonished.

"No, no...." it vigorously shook its head left to right, surprisingly rebellious.

"[SEE, you won't, eh?" he demanded. "you need some rough handling, I presume". With his bare palm he slapped its back once, twice, and thrice resoundingly. It just looked up at him, contemptuously and moved aside, flicking its tail as a girl swishing her long pigtail jauntily, and trotted past chin high in the air. "Well, if you don't go with me what else could you do?" he queried, derisively. The bull just

stared at him coldly lifting an eye-brow in sheer scorn and brushing him aside, swaggered across, with an arrogant toss and a proud tilt of its head.

"OH, you would go to your mother's home, eh?" he quizzed, and it nodded. Yes, ostentatiously, moving its head solemnly up and down.... Then swaying and swelling up its flanks haughtily it trudged past, for a few yards and paused. The man seemed to be genuinely disconcerted. Hastening to it he stroked its face lovingly and pleaded, "No, my beloved, please come home with me... I'll get you anything you fancy."

"Would you like a silver anklet?"

It just shook its head sullenly and stood immobile.

"Or a bracelet of gold?" he inquired solicitously.

"No, No..." it spurned his offer with a vehemence. But, after repudiating him, it appeared so coy and demure and then so sad, and even hurt, fluttering its eyelids over those big luminous eyes, that it was as if about to weep!

The man too acted his part superbly, running to the bull, clasping its neck tenderly, caressing it and mumbling breathlessly into its quivering ear. The beast, in turn, nestled close, pressing its

nozzle to his face, whispered back something....

"Alright, I shall definitely get you that diamond nose-ring," he assured aloud and added peremptorily, "Come on, my love, let us dance our way home."

With the drum blaring a discordant and jarring boom, boom... he jigged about and, strange to say, the bull, too, pranced along gaily, dancing on three feet actually with more of a dancer's grace and natural abandon than any quadrupad. There was an immediate applause and quite a lot of people threw out nickels to him. The man stooped down and began to collect and count the coins laboriously.

ALL of a sudden the cow leaped forwards, and swooped down a basket of plantains on the steps of the bazaar, and tried to devour a full big bunch in one mouthful. A frowzy churlish woman came yelling and running and attempted to pull at least a couple of fruits from the animal's under-lip, but all in vain.... A regular brawl followed—between the plantain owner and the bull owner. She with her foul words and evil curses, so provoked him, that he in a sudden vent of anger, lashed out, whipped the bull, just once with his drum-stick. The beast gave out an unearthly

cry and stood still, turning its trembling back to him.

THE crowd that had been dispersing, gathered again to watch the new, unexpected trend in the game. Two of those interested spectators were obviously Western tourists, for they looked on with that peculiar smirk and an amused aloofness.... I could almost imagine them return-

kers withdrew one by one each back to his duty or her task. Only the worried bull-owner stayed, hovering about, hopefully trying to soothe it with honeyed words and caressing touches. But it would not respond and continued its solitary penance of standing vigil at the corner opposite to the market.

A constable ambled over,



ing to their home-country with vivid tales and graphic details of "Man's unscrupulousness, and Beast's callousness way there in the Orient...."

The minutes dragged into hours. Yet the bull stood there, mute eyes downcast, head bent and back stooped—heedless of all the people shuffling about. The on-look-

there and curtly ordered the man to remove it by force. But short of carrying it home what could that poor man do? He did try to drag it along, but for once it looked up at him so appealingly, (its limpid eyes misty with unshed tears) that he just could not proceed and the bull dropped its beseeching glance and stood its ground firmly. So

he left it at that hoping to give it a little time to get over its sulk by itself.

THE night became chilly. Enveloped by a thin soothing mist, the town slept like a fretful baby put to slumber within a gauzy swaddling cloth. At last relieving the bull of its burden of the old clothes, the man tramped home alone to a hovel near by. He had a morsel of food and a fitful sleep; with his meagre cash bought a moiety of gram, cotton-seed and some plantains for his petulant pet. But the bull would neither eat nor drink, not even move-sunk in a sort of satyagraha! Whoever heard of a bull so obstinate? But there

it was statue-like, unflinching and undaunted, just stood unassailable, deaf to all pleas and threats for two full nights and one more day at the end of which it fell down dead with a thud.

A VETERINARY doctor did come and diagnose it to be a sudden stroke of paralysis peculiar to the four-footed herbivorous animals. But the man believed it to be a crime done by him, and undertook its full blame and penance. At the very spot it fell, he built up a mound of earth faintly resembling a bull and sits by its side even today - a way-side beggar atoning for his sin! \*\*

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## PREMA'S FOLLY

AS Ramdas, proprietor of Modern Publishing Company, was about to enter his bungalow on the outskirts of the city, he was amazed to see a man in rags being pursued by a small crowd of boys. The urchins were shouting and whistling at the man, and a hail of stones and brick-bats flew about their victim and almost knocked the huge bundle of papers and books from his head. Brushing past Ramdas, the man ran like a hare and took refuge in the latter's compound. At the sight of Ramdas, the boys came to a dead stop on the road and glared at him like hounds robbed of their prey. "Get the hell out of here!" thundered Ramdas, "and if I see you playing the same game again I will call the police. Go back all of you."

The urchins slunk back in a sullen mood but Ramdas had great difficulty in pulling back his Alsatian who was tearing at the madman's shirt. Pretending not to notice the shabby condition of the wretch who was seeking shelter in his bungalow, Ramdas gave him a friendly smile and welcome. "It is ten years since we met last,

Mr. Haran. I wrote to you several times but got no reply. The moment I saw your famous spectacles, I recognized you. Come in, please, and make yourself comfortable."

The servants were astonished at the sight of a bearded fellow, staggering under a bundle of odds and ends, to whom their master was speaking with such courtesy and reverence. Concealing their dislike and disgust, they came forward to relieve the visitor of his bundle but when he glared at them, they quietly fell back and let him accompany their master into the drawing room.

"Rest yourself on this sofa, Mr. Haran. Take some refreshments first before we begin to talk of the good old times," said Ramdas.

HARAN deposited his bundle on the sofa next to himself and was stroking his beard thoughtfully when the cook placed a number of cakes, fruits and two cups of steaming tea before the guest. Ramdas watched him with sympathy as he began to munch the cakes. And he recalled the good old days

A Short Story: By VENKAT NARAYAN

when Haran and himself had studied together in college....

**THOUGH** Haran was a student of Mathematics, he had all-round knowledge. His mastery of literature amazed even his professors. Even before he secured his M.A. degree, Haran used to write verses and short stories that sparkled with humour. They appeared in the country's leading magazines and newspapers, that gave him all possible encouragement.

When his college course was completed Haran accepted the post of lecturer in the new college that had just been established in the city and became very popular with the students.

Then came the call of matrimony. He had fallen in love with Prema, who was a brilliant M.A., like himself. She was slender and graceful and had a winsome smile which never deserted her face. She was the only daughter of very poor parents who were both infirm and crippled by illness. Prema had been supporting them even in her college days by giving private lessons to girl students in the lower classes.

But marriage choked off this source of income. Haran's salary was hardly adequate to make both ends meet but his literary work brought in a steady stream of money which assured them of creature comforts. He was

writing his first novel which a prominent publisher had offered to publish and pay for liberally.

In the first flush of his pride as a writer of established repute, he forbade his wife to work as a private tutoress. She went to her pupils' homes morning and evening, and returned late. At times, too tired to cook, she would throw herself on the bed and go to sleep. And Haran, too, had often to retire to bed, hungry and vexed. Both being hypersensitive, they had temperamental clashes now and then and hurled hot words and accusations against each other. Of course, at the end of each quarrel, they embraced and took a pledge of eternal love and devotion. To make for greater domestic harmony as a first step, Haran persuaded his wife to give up the tuition job and promised to set apart a small slice of his income every month for her parents. But it proved to be too little, just a tenth of what Prema had been able to earn.

**PREMA**, however, could not bear the sight of her parents suffering. She thought hard of other ways and means to help them. Suddenly, one fine morning, she hit upon a plan. In a neglected corner of her husband's study, she came across a number of his unfinished manuscripts. They were stories that had been written by him in a flashy

mood but left incomplete towards the end, for better attention and treatment on a later occasion. He was always particular about the finishing touches to any story over which he would spend hours.

**WHEN** Prema saw these manuscripts, which her husband had not taken up for nearly two years, she decided to touch them up herself and sell them. Her parents were starving for fifteen days in the month and she should not let them die. She had the stories typed and took them to a publisher who was a friend of both husband and wife. There were twenty stories in all and, passing them off as her own, she asked Ramdas—the publisher—to bring them out in book form under the name "Prema." She insisted on

the matter being kept secret until the moment of publication and Ramdas good-humouredly agreed. And he gave her Rs. 500/- for the forthcoming publication. Prema didn't tell her husband about the deal. Her silence and secrecy proved to be the most tragic mistake of her life. And she passed on the money to her delighted parents.

**THEY** say that there is only a thin line dividing genius from madness. When Haran saw the book of stories that Ramdas had sent him, he realised the trick that his wife had played on him. He began to suspect this woman



of all sorts of treachery, double crossing, shady conduct and worse, and pointed his his accusing finger at her in the bitterest quarrel that ensued. He loved his literary works better than his own wife and pushed her out of the flat. And he warned her not to return.

THE next day the college authorities discovered that Haran had disappeared from the town. They searched for him in the neighbouring towns and published his photo in the papers with promises of reward for information about him but all their efforts were futile.

The truth was that Haran had gathered all his manuscripts and tied them up into a huge bundle. He didn't even leave a scrap of paper in his home for fear that his wife would make use of any idea that might be contained in it. He wandered from place to place, slept on the road-side under the trees but the sight of any young fashionable-looking woman would send him scampering. He was afraid that it might be some deputy or messenger sent by his wife to grab hold of his manuscripts. If any passer-by took pity on him and offered food, he would quietly accept it. But urchins gave him no peace wherever he went. And one evening, after ten years, when he strayed back into the very

city where he had worked, Ramdas rescued him from the little rowdies and led him in...

When Haran ate his fill, he lifted his bundle and rose to go. Ramdas held up his hand and requested him to stay for a while. "Haran, I have long been wanting to apologise to you direct for the mistake I made. I accept responsibility for wrongly publishing your book under your wife's name but I shall pay you the money I gave her. Won't you forgive me and your wife now? I shall double that amount if you want. Here are ten hundred-rupee notes. Accept them, won't you?"

Smilingly, Haran took the wad of notes from the publisher and stared at them. "Well," he said, "that helps to settle an old score."

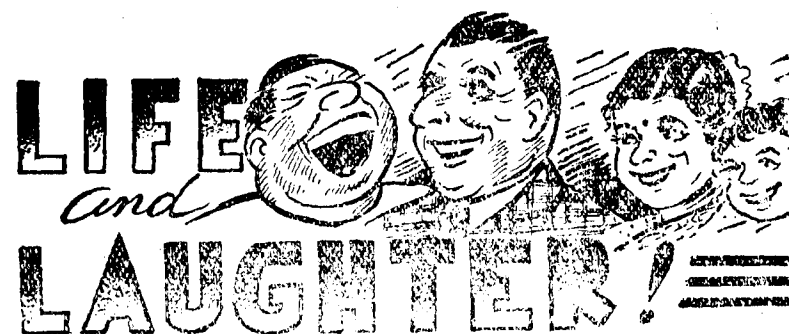
RAMDAS was delighted at the effect of his move. "Now, Mr. Haran, have you any manuscripts in that bundle that I can make use of? Of course, I will pay you at higher rates now."

"Have you got a match-box?" asked Haran, evasively.

"Here is one. Ah! I forgot that you are a smoker. Wait a minute. I shall bring you a packet of 'Gold Flakes'." Ramdas gave him the match-

—Please see page 56

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"I WAS in love. Everything was just wonderful—the flowers were blooming, the birds were singing, the bees were buzzing, and Mother was having a fit.

"I told Mother not to worry, that we were still going to live with her.

"She said, 'That's what I'm worrying about.'"

**BOLDER!**

A young sailor, suffering from a toothache, finally got up enough nerve to get to the dentist's surgery. By the time he was seated in the chair, he lost his courage again.

"Here, this will make you feel better," said the sympathetic dentist, handing him a shot of whisky. The seaman gulped it down, then another and another.

"How about it," the dentist asked briskly, when half the bottle had disappeared. "aren't you feeling braver now?"

"Yeah," snarled the sailor, "and I'd like to see anybody try to touch my teeth!"

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WALKING up to the ticket window at the racket station, the man asked for a seat to the moon.

"Sorry, sir," said the attendant, "but all flights have been cancelled for a couple of days."

"I was afraid of that. What's wrong? Bad weather?"

"No, the moon is full right now."

**IN KIND!**

Mr. Doolan caught the bartender at Moriarty's saloon in an unguarded moment and begged, "Mike, my mother-in-law gone to her just reward, and it's £1 I'm needin' for a wreath to uphold the Doolan standards. Can ye advance me one?"

The bartender emptied his pockets and the cash register but the total came to only 10s. 6d.

"That'll do," said Doolan hastily, "I'll take the other 9s. 6d. in drinks."

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**S**AID the lecturer on law, "If you have the facts on your side, hammer them into the jury, and if you have the law on your side, hammer it into the judge."

"But if you have neither the facts nor the law?" asked a student.

"Then hammer on the table," answered the professor.

### WHAT TO DO?

He was a fast-talking, fast-working wolf, and as he embraced the girl he murmured, "Let's have a companionate marriage. We'll live together for a while, and then, if we discover we've made a mistake, why, we can always separate."

The girl wriggled out of his arms, the wisdom of the ages in her eyes. Smiling her Mona Lisa smile at him, she answered, "Sounds fine the way you say it. But what'll we do with the mistake?"

### CERTAINTY

"Let's see," said the weatherman to his assistant. "You'd better put down rain as positive this afternoon."

"What makes you so certain?" asked the assistant.

"It's a certainty," answered the weatherman. "I've lost my umbrella, my kids are going on a picnic, I've got a ticket to a football match, and my wife is going to the church garden party."

**A**N anxious mother was heard screaming because she had caught her ugly little son halfway up a big oak tree.

She shouted: "Heathcote, come down from that tree, before you break both legs! Mummy's warning you, Heathcote! Either you come now, or when you fall and break both legs, don't think you can come running to mama."

### MOTTO GONE

The beggar clutched at the sleeve of a passer-by. "Twopence, sir, for a cup of coffee?" he whined.

The other turned and surveyed him. "Why should I give you twopence?" he asked. "What brought you to this plight?"

"A terrible catastrophe, sir," the beggar replied. "Two years ago I, like you, enjoyed business prosperity.... worked industriously. On the wall above my desk was my motto: 'Think Constructively. Act Decisively.' Wealth poured my way. And then—and then——"

"Yes, and then?"

The beggar's frame shook convulsively. "The charlady burned my motto," he sobbed.

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**I**'VE heard the question so often I'm sick of it. A couple comes down the church steps Mr. and Mrs. for the first time, they shake a hundred hands, weather the usual bouquets of 'wishes, absorb the confetti down their backs and the poetry and garbage on their car, and all the other friendly gesture of our beaming culture. Then, the minute they are out of hearing, you'll hear it. Every time a passably handsome man marries a girl who is impossibly plain comes the question.

"A lovely wedding. Such wonderful taste!" Then, in a more discreet key and head bent in the most sisterly of secrecies, "But really now, it's not that I don't like the girl—but why did he pick her?"

So here's an answer from one guy the nice people at the church were wondering so hard about one day. It's an answer that has been steaming away in me for a long time. And don't get sore if you happen to be a beautiful woman, or if you married one. I'm not going to say there is no hope for you.

**I**N my last year at high school, there were two women in my life. Penny was neither of them. Arbutus Kilroy was a small, blonde, full of life. Her father was a banker in town, her mother almost as pretty as her daughter. Nothing wrong with her that I could see. Her clothes were always in perfect taste. And she was not spoiled.

She was the one I took to the Senior Prom and didn't

take home until 4 next morning. I thought that would put its brand on me the rest of my life. She was in love with me. At least, she told me so, with tears in her eyes.

BUT I was only 19. It was easy to love more than one girl. In fact, a fellow almost owed it to himself to scout around before his mind got set. So there was Bernice, tall and dark. Good-looking, too, and a whiz at studies. In mathematics you simply couldn't beat her, which was a little embarrassing sometimes. Bernice was the only child of the big hardware man

Arbutus was beautiful. He had nothing at all against beauty. Bernice was clever. And he had nothing against brains. What was it, then, that made him choose Penny?

in town—and, like myself, she loved sports. She could play the coolest game of basketball I ever saw a woman play anywhere. Sometimes, when our school visited another school, we'd find ourselves drifting away after the game by ourselves. We'd talk over pie and coffee in some back street lunchery, and often got so completely lost we gave up trying to find the others and went to a dance hall instead.

Those were the times I discovered women who excel in mathematics aren't always as cold as they think.

"We could go a long way together," Bernice told me. "We'd make a pretty successful team." Which could mean she knew she had brains. Myself, I wasn't so smart as my mother thought.

I felt a little guilty that year, stringing two women along. A mistake, that. I now know the kind of love which leaves any mark always has conscience pangs attached.

And Penny? She was the happy chore girl of the class and that's about all you could say. Unless you wanted to talk about the thing that fen-

ced romance away from her, and folks in our town had pretty well got over talking about that.

SHE was the one in the wings prompting glamour-stricken girls who took bows up front. She did the typing and editing of those articles which later looked so bright under someone else's name in the school magazine. She was the one who master-minded the ticket selling for the prom and cut out the paper moons we hung from the ceiling, but she never danced.

"It's nice she can be so  
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happy doing things like that," we used to think. "Awfully decent sort."

THOSE were the three women in my life that great year when I first laid claim to manhood. Only I really didn't know the last one counted.

I was of that generation which didn't have much time to enjoy coming of age. One week we were the rapscallions disturbing midnight slumbers of the town with old cars and motorcycles. The next we were potential saviours of democracy. We were in khaki before we knew what it was all about.

I remember the night we left for our first camp. The band was there, and the old town hall was draped with resurrected flags. Women who used to keep their daughters locked away from us were there with smiles, coloured cakes and a boiler of coffee. The mayor made a speech. Women were crying all over the place. I was glad my own folks had enough sense to say good-byes at home.

The three girls were there. I caught Bernice when she ducked into the little kitchen where they were brewing the coffee and pulled her behind the door and kissed her till she nearly smothered. "I'm sorry I never got the time to make up my mind about that team you used to talk of," I said. "But I'll be thinking about it."

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"Take care of yourself," she said. "And save your money."

When I got around to Arbie I didn't bother to get behind any door. We hung together till the bus driver pulled us apart. "I'll always love you!" she told me. "Always! Always!"

She said it with tears again, and the guarantee seemed beyond any breaking. When the bus finally began rolling, I couldn't help feeling guilty about Bernice again. Arbie had always been first, and I figured the only right I had to keep the fires burning for Benice was as a sort of insurance in case Arbie changed her mind.

IT wasn't until I started digging into my grip for the sandwiches that I saw Penny had been in the good-byes, too. On top of the grip was a book she had slipped there.

I remembered she had been in the hall. She had been busy with the cake and coffee women. And I had said hello to her and she had wished me luck the same as the rest. But now I saw she must have been hoping for a minute of my heroic time for a word of her own. I had been too busy, so here was the book.

I smiled at first because it was poetry. Then I saw the price—\$2.50. And the notes she had scribbled in the margins when she read the

verses. She had thought a lot of that book. That's why she had given it to me.

THE note was stuck in the back pages, almost as if she hadn't dared. "In case you ever get lonely," it read. The title was "When I Walk Alone."

I didn't think I'd ever read it. I tried a page or two and it didn't stick and I tucked it away with the Bible my mother had supplied and a pair of hand-knit woollen mitts. It was going to be the most exciting time of my life. Not a time for being lonely.

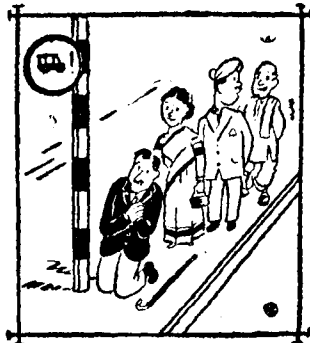
How wrong I was! Within a week I was so lonely I could have cried. The army wasn't what I had expected. I had thought it would be one round of flags waving, and saluting, and bands playing with a little rifle sport thrown in for recess. Instead it was marching, marching, marching left turn, right turn, about turn, make your beds tight, shine your shoes bright and mind that you always say "sir."

I was lonely. Every day had but one bright spot now—mail call. And my girl friends

all wrote me as they said they would.

Arbie wrote about college and the wonderful times they had, and how much she wished I could have been there, too. They really needed players for the football team.

Bernice wrote, too. She had stayed at home to help her father with the business. "A good man is almost impossible to get now," she said. "And father is too old to get around like he should.... Do take care of yourself."



"Do you think the conductor will ignore his appeal?"

But when Penny wrote, it was different. I saved that letter till the last because what she had to say took a little thinking. "I was out in Spencer's woods today," she would

say. "I took a magnifying glass. I always find a magnifying glass rather comforting.... When you're lonely, it helps if you can only get interested in something smaller than yourself. Have you ever seen moss under a lens?"

LETTERS from Arbie and Bernice were wonderful events. You slipped them under your pillow at night, sniffed at the perfume they always seemed to carry, and

looked at the snaps till the lights went out. But when it was dark, it was what Penny said that kept turning over in your head.

THEN there was the matter of my pup. I figured she was the best thing I ever owned all by myself. I had papers for her and knew I could sell her progeny.

"Don't worry," my old man said. "We'll do right by her?"

But one day comes this letter from him. "Your mother would die before she'd tell you this," he says, "but she's got an allergy. When that dog comes in the house she gets sick enough to die sometimes. Couldn't we do something about it?"

I wrote Arbie first. Arbie took her for a few days, then wrote me she wanted to give up. "She was cute at first," she said. "And then—well, it is a sort of bother for mother, and I keep forgetting. Or maybe I'm gadding around somewhere. And she sheds hairs, too, a lot of them...."

Bernice gave it more thought. "It just wouldn't do to have her around the store," she said. "Besides, I think you better get over that crazy idea of raising dogs some day. It just doesn't pay...."

So I wrote my old man to tie the dog up in the woodshed till I came back on leave. When I arrived the dog wasn't in the woodshed. Pen-

ny had him. "I thought you wouldn't mind," she said. "We get along fine."

I got along fine with Arbie and Bernice those few days. Between times, in the mornings mainly before the other two were recovered from the night before, I'd go over to see Penny and the dog. She was town librarian now and had her mornings free.

Just as it was with the letters, it was what she said that kept me with her. And I'd keep thinking long after I left. By the time the leave was up, there wasn't a day I didn't spend the morning with her.

"So you've been lonely," she said one day. "Did you ever read my book?"

I told her I had started it. I didn't tell her I started it four or five times.

"HAVE you ever tried studying something smaller than yourself, then?" she asked.

When she said that I looked at her in a way I never had before. I thought of all the lonely years of her own life and how she had learned to conquer them. Years that were lonely because the Creator had chanced to make her on a day when His mood was gray or there wasn't quite enough light for the job.

I went out with her that day, watched her chase

around the local quarry and in the woods beyond with butterfly net and magnifying glass. It was one of the shortest afternoons I ever spent. When it was time to go, I kissed her.

That night, it was Arbie again.

WHEN I left, there were the three of them again, Penny well back in the shadows and me not having the common decency to do anything about it.

When I found another of Penny's books tucked into my barracks bag along with an enlargement of a snap she had taken of my pup, I thought, "It sure doesn't look as if I'll have much chance to read this one either, little girl." There would be too many places to see, too many things to do.

So I went overseas. I did the things I would talk about for the rest of my life. An army gap-toothed boat threw me up on some forgotten shore of Italy one hot day. For eight months we crawled in search of the enemy. Or trying to get away.

There were days I thought my ears would never hear again, nights with eyes so blinded by flame I was sure my dreams would be on fire a year afterwards. If I lived that long and ever found time to sleep again. I lived through the rains and then

mud that would swallow a pig. I saw hungry babies and kids dying who had only begun to live.

But the army knew what letters could mean to men in a mess like that and it moved heaven and earth to get the mail through to us. Arbie and Bernice did their best to take my mind off the trouble Arbie might miss a week or two, but she would make up for it by sending letters in bunches. She always seemed to be floating in bubbles.

"If you only were here!" she'd say. She'd tell me about the marvellous times she was having at college.

Bernice wrote regularly Sunday nights. Business was never so good, but quotas were so hard to outwit! She told me a dozen times the government was getting a fund ready to help veterans start in business when they came back.

AT first Penny wrote only when she had a letter of mine to answer. Later, when the going got tough, they started to come more often. It seemed as if she had some way of predicting when I'd need a letter most. Like the day Harry Klenman was killed right beside me. I'd known him over a year, a long time by army standards. It was a rough day everywhere and when the mail got through there was precious little of it, but there was Penny's letter.

I don't remember too much about what she said now. But I remember I put it under my cheek and cried on it that night.

AFTER that, I opened her letters first. I couldn't have told you why then. I think I know now. Because I know now loneliness doesn't come from being stuck in places too wide, too dark, or too quiet. It doesn't even come from being alone. It comes from aching too much with the big, silent questions that have no answers, and having no one to talk to about them in your own language.

Penny didn't try to answer the questions. She just wondered with me. "Why do we have to kill?" I asked her once. "Why? Why? Why?"

She said, "I don't know. I ask myself the same thing every time I eat meat." And then she went on to talk about some yellow hollyhocks a German woman was growing. And the pup was going to have pups of her own now.

You'll think it wasn't much to offer a guy groping for straws in a whirlpool. But can you imagine Arbie coming down out of her bubbles long enough to talk over such a thing? Or Bernice thinking that it mattered?

And after a while the statesmen called it peace.

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When my ship got back, my three women were still waiting. I had hoped Arbie would have bubbled off with one of her marvellous college men by now. But the fruit salad of decorations I had on my chest must have swung her mind towards me because her kiss was as full of fever as ever.

She was dressed in orchid that first night, with a new hair-do. "Just for you," she said. "Do you like it?"

I said it was beautiful, and I thought of all the other years I could have her beauty all for my own. Thirty years from now I could still see her changing her hair-do for me, asking the same question: "Do you like it?"

But I thought it would be a little wearisome by then.

BERNICE talked about the new loan veterans could get. You had to talk business first with Bernice. A sort of payment for any romance you were allowed. Thirty years from now the price might seem a little high.

So I went to see Penny and the dogs. I kissed her a little differently this time, told her what she had meant to me. "You're the one I want to stand beside, if you'll have me," I said.

When her arms went around me I thought of how beautiful her red hair was. She had let it grow long. And her shoulders. I wondered why God hadn't pointed them out to me before instead of always making me think of that part of her that wasn't right.

WHAT was it? I hear you asking now, just as the good people at the church asked that other question the day I married her. Was she lame? A birthmark perhaps? A cast in her eye? Or is she just—well, just very plain?

You shouldn't ask that. The point is, it doesn't matter. I'm surer than ever now. (Copyright.)

## PREMA'S FOLLY

—Continued from Page 46

box first and went upstairs to his bedroom to get the cigarettes.

WHEN he came down after five minutes, he was appalled at the sight that met him. The madman had used the matches to set fire to his bundle of manuscripts and the ten hundred-rupee notes that he had handed him. "So, Ramdas, you thought of helping my wife again by stealing the manuscripts? You can't do anything now, you scoundrell!" he shrieked in fury and ran out of the bungalow. Poor Ramdas! he had to call for buckets of water to put out the fire which had already damaged his sofas and the carpet on the floor. But he didn't mind the loss. His heart went out to the friend who had lost his head. \*\*

IN the New Service Cafe, the room reserved for "Ladies and Families Only" was very neat and tidy. The electric fan was whirling above. Manohar leaned back in a cosy chair and stretched his legs on the round table of polished ebony. He seemed absorbed in thought. Only when the blue-coloured pencil that he had stuck up behind his ear fell down on the marble floor did he get up with a sigh. And when he stooped to pick it up, another object caught his eye.

## TWO HEADS

"H'm!" he exclaimed to himself. "It is a fountain-pen this time. I wonder what she will be leaving behind next. Such an absent-minded girl!"

But as he looked at the fountain-pen he couldn't help sighing again. Indeed, how could he help when this mystery girl who haunted his table every evening spent half an hour over her cup of coffee and chatted with him on the sly? His heart went pit-a-pat; he had swept his mind clean of all thoughts but hers. Sometimes she came with friends but she tantalized him nevertheless with her smiles and the speechless messages of her eyes.

There were moments, though, when thoughts of his

lowly position sobered him. "She must be the daughter of some rich bloke. She is on Himalayan heights; I am down below in a valley. Where is the chance?" he would ask himself.

Manohar set his white cap aright and looked in the large mirror that was facing the entrance.

"Stop this monkey business and look about yourself, young man!" snarled a burly fellow from behind.

Manohar was scared stiff and turned round to face up to the manager and his wigging.

## ARE BETTER..!

"I.....I.....I.....," he tried to say something in defence but the bull-dog expression on the face of the manager froze him into confused silence and shame.

By PRAKASH

"LOOK, you fool! And look at the fan that is racing like a mad horse. How many times have I warned you not to use it when there is none to wait upon?"

"Only two minutes ago I switched it on, sir," said the

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young man in faltering tones, "It was so sultry here."

"No excuses, you are fined one rupee. And that has reduced your pay for last month to zero."

And the stout man swung himself out of the room.

"Silly ass!" muttered Manohar to himself, shaking his clenched fist at the receding figure. "I will settle my account with you one of these days."

**BUT** Manohar was as much to blame for this mess. At the sight of Radha, his dream the girl, he broke on average two china plates a day and two glass tumblers. Radha, when she was alone, would take him to task and offer to replace the broken wares, but pride stood in his way and he would shake his head to denote refusal.

He feared the manager would give him the sack but Sundara Rao didn't. He placed greater value upon Manohar's tips for the races than he was aware. An hour later Manohar sat on the chair again and began dreaming when bull-dog Rao stalked up to him with a purple face and thumped the table so hard that the china cup thereon flew to the ground and broke into smithereens. Manohar stood transfixed in terror. Behind Sundara Rao was standing a middle-aged woman in specs, with a pinched

face and a greying head. Manohar recognised her as a college lecturer who had taken her coffee at his table a few minutes ago.

"You are ruining my reputation, you blackguard," shouted Rao. "Out you go now, or I will thrash the life out of your body! How dare you insult the lady like this?"

And he flung a small bill at his face. "Read what nonsense you have written on the back of that bill!"

"It is an outrage!" shrieked out the woman. "I will have you whipped for this, you hooligan!"

**MANOHAR** picked up the bill and looked at the back of it. "Sweetest sweetie! Queen of my Heart!" he read.

"Don't you see you have spoiled my business?" demanded the infuriated manager. "You have insulted the most respectable lady in the city."

"I am glad I escaped the clutches of this villain. I would swear he was gazing at me all along. Thank God, I am safe!" said the lady drawing herself to her full height and adjusting her spectacles.

"Mr. Manager," said Manohar, "would you mind stepping up to the corner of the room? I want to have a word

with you. Meanwhile, lady, don't you be flattering yourself so?"

**HE** tugged at Sundara Rao's shirt sleeve and dragged him out of the woman's ear-shot. "Don't lose your balance, Mr. Rao. Whoever would fall in love with such a hag as that? They are the tips for you, names of the dead 'certs' for Saturday's races."

Sundara Rao opened his eyes wide, and grinned. "Is that so? Good of you to give me the tips, boy. I am putting all my money on the horses tomorrow. What do you say to bracketing? And what chances do you hold out for Moonbeam and Sunny Side? Come on, sit down?"

Manohar pulled him up. "Mr. Rao, you seem to have forgotten the origin of this dispute and let yourself go away with the horses. Pacify the lady and send her away first."

"Yes, yes, boy, you are right," agreed Rao and approached the complainant. "I apologize to you, lady, for the incident. I am dinning some sense into that young ass. I assure you there won't be any recurrence of the trouble."

"Thank you," said the lady and made her exit, glowering at Manohar all the time.

Sundara Rao turned back to discuss horses with Manohar, but when some other lady patron came in he discreetly

returned to his seat. Manohar heaved a sigh of relief. "That girl is driving me mad. I had intended those terms of endearment to catch Radha's eye. What a misplaced bill of love," he muttered.

Within a fortnight after meeting Radha, he had wasted leaf after leaf of his bill book placing them under her dishes. But Radha had a fine sense of humour and was always equal to the occasion.

**A CLEARING** house would make an interesting study of these little notes:

"I am always dreaming of you."

"Don't eat too much. Over-eating leads to dreaming!"

"I haven't touched food for a week."



**LANDLORD** (to prospective tenants): "Latest form of kerosene lighting, water from the nearest well! Can you get a better house in the locality?"

"You are using a spoon, evidently?"

"SINCE you are too highly educated, why don't you marry someone who can run the household for you?"

"I am more interested in running a hotel and making a fortune. You can be chief cook if you like!"

"Then why not run this hotel?"

"Will you buy it for me?"

"I am dying. You alone can give me life. What shall I do?"

"Don't be silly. My father was wrung my promise to marry a fellow I don't know."

"I will murder him. Who shall he?"

"I will stop coming if you make threats like this."

From that day Manohar was behaving himself. And next evening when she came and called for coffee, his conduct was impeccable. He handed her the fountain-pen. "Miss Radha, you are becoming more and more absent-minded. Three days back it was your brooch. Then it was your kerchief. Now it is your pen. What next?"

She smiled. "What have I to worry about when you are here?"

"Radha, please, haven't you changed your mind?"

"No!" she said, rather curtly. "Let us have no illusions on the subject. Good-day. I shall drop in tomorrow."

Manohar was not listening. He was actually dreaming with his eyes open! So when he woke up from his reverie and discovered that his angel had disappeared, he stared at the chair which held her, and gasped in amazement. The charmer had left behind her bulging handbag! He took it, felt it, hugged it, and then out of curiosity opened it to have a peep. A loud exclamation escaped his lips—an exclamation of horror, surprise and even terror. The handbag was bursting with wads of currency notes—none of them below the denomination of a hundred!

HE was thrilled and frightened at the sight of so much of cash. How did the girl come by this fortune? She appeared rich enough, but what need had she for such a large sum? And why had she left it behind? He counted Rs. 5,000 in all. He was seized with fear at the same time. Supposing somebody found him in possession of all the money and suspected his bona fides? Was it stolen money after all? Fear alternated with hope and thrill.

Sundara Rao was now suddenly roaring out Manohar's name from behind the cash counter. The lad ran up with the handbag still in his hand. "You fool! you have ruined me and my business with your misleading tips!" the manager said in a husky voice. There were tears in his eyes. "I bet my last rupee and returned home crestfallen. I am absolutely broke!"

IT was a pathetic sight to see the dour-faced man break down in such agony and moan. One of the waiters went up to the manager. "Disappear quick. Pedda Chettiar has come here to attach your property." The message had an electric effect on Rao. He pushed Manohar into his seat, ducked inside the hotel and vanished into a by-lane behind.

Some unaccountable mad-cap impulse possessed Manohar who was nothing if not enterprising. He took two thousand rupees out of Radha's handbag and cleared Sundara Rao's debt to Pedda Chettiar in a trice. He then called in the entire staff of the hotel, gave them their salaries due and dismissed them all with the invitation to report for duty after a week. By 8 p. m. there was not a soul in the hotel except a couple of cats. Manohar put up a small placard in front of the hotel: "Closed for a week for Repairs." He then locked

the front door of the building and sallied out.

As he walked through the broad streets of the city hoping against hope that he would stumble upon Radha, he grew apprehensive. Supposing she didn't approve his use of her money? Which modern girl would dream of buying a hotel, and that, too, a sinking concern? She must have said it all in fun rather than in earnest. And how foolish he must have been! Feeling a revulsion at what he had done and fearing the wrath of this fair stranger, he turned back towards his hotel and reached it an hour before midnight.

HE was startled to see an unshaded electric light streaming from the kitchen. Some thief was evidently ransacking the hotel. "Poor fellow!" thought Manohar, "he must go away a disappointed man if he came in the hope of knocking away some cash. He went on tiptoe holding his breath. Creeping up to the outer wall, he got on a small stool and peeped through a big aperture that opened on to the kitchen. The sight that greeted his eye sent his heart pounding. Of all the little thieves! Why, it was Raha!

Even a couple of able-bodied burglars couldn't have done what she did in such a short time. Alone and unaided, she had removed the brick slabs on the floor round the big

oven and scooped out the earth. And on the rim of the hole stood a big uncovered jar that held sovereigns and a wide variety of sparkling jewels. Radha was checking up the contents with a list in her hand.

SLOWLY he stepped into the room, unable to make of it all. He couldn't disguise his contempt for the sneaky way she was doing it. "So, you little hussy! you wanted me to buy this hotel and steal a hidden treasure? With whose permission are you taking this?"

Radha looked up. But she was not timid. "Well, Manohar, whose hotel? It is my uncle's and this jar belongs to him."

"Your uncle's? I don't follow you. I understand only this much. Am I not your dupe and accomplice?"

"Listen, Manohar. This mystery requires a little light. I am neither the thief you imagine me to be nor is this hotel Sundara Rao's. It belongs to my father's brother, Narayana Rao. This hotel fetched him a fortune. But he was an unhappy man. His wife died early. Himself having no child, he brought me up and provided for my education. He loved me better than my father.

"But last year—the fourth year of the Second World War—when the city was evacuated because war clouds were

threatening to burst upon it he was faced with a crisis in his business. The entire staff had run away, and his business was ruined. But the authorities wouldn't let him close down the hotel. So one night he gathered up all his savings in this jar and buried it here.

"Then came the scare of Jap bombing. My uncle was not noted for his courage. And I was near Madura at the time. He was most eager to see me and be by my side. So one night he closed the hotel and suddenly ran away, leaving this fortune behind. Fear had led him into this ruinous step.

"But he didn't survive the disaster. When he heard that his hotel had been taken over by someone else under orders from the authorities, he gave up his money for lost. That broke his heart, and he lay dying. I assured him that I would try all means to recover the fortune. So he borrowed from his family doctor five thousand rupees and gave it to me for purchasing this hotel back. He died that day itself.

"ALAS! you know the rest of the story in a way. But for you I couldn't have got back the treasure. I would have surrendered my heart to you had not my uncle exacted a promise from me that I should marry the doctor's son. But I would suggest a way out. We both shall go to

the doctor's son though I have not set my eyes on him. I shall offer him this fortune if he releases me from this vow, so that I can marry you!"

MANOHAR shook his head gravely. "Radha, having seen you, he is not likely to release you," he said.

Radha cast an enquiring glance at her lover. "What do you mean? Having seen me? I don't know who that bloke is or what he is like. He is residing somewhere in the city. I have his address. Why not we go now and have done with it?"

"But, Radha, why didn't you tell me you were Narayana Rao's niece?"

"Why?" she asked, in surprise.

"Only yesterday I wrote to my father at Madura I would not marry Narayana Rao's niece!"

Radha clapped her hands in joy. "You don't tell me you

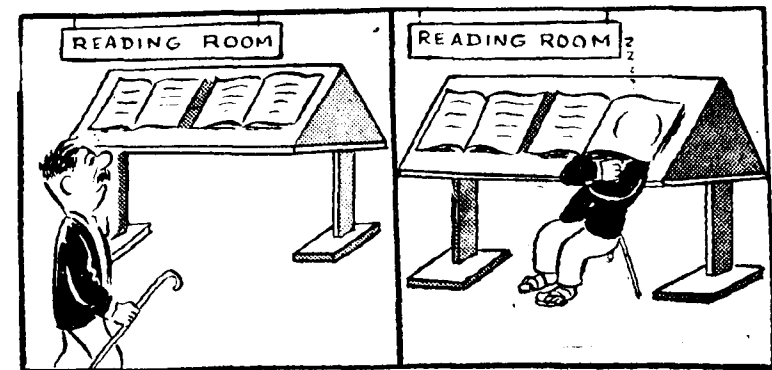
are Hariharan, Dr. Varada Rao's son?"

"I am, dearest Radha!"

They hugged each other in a burst of happiness. "But, darling, I can't understand why you gave up your studies to become a waiter," she asked.

"Just for the fun and pleasure of waiting on a charmer. The first day I saw you in a cinema house I fell in love with you. Then I watched your movements and observed that you regularly visited this hotel. The rest you know... But, Radha, how did you know I had bought the hotel?"

SHE laughed. "I knew of Sundara Rao's difficulties and I had studied your psychology also. I didn't quit the hotel after I left my handbag deliberately on my chair. I came through the back door and hid myself in the room reserved for the ladies!"



In Lighter Vein:

## At The Barber's!

By PABHAT VAIDYA

FOR the best part of a decade now I have been a regular patron of Muriel Hair Dressing Saloon, a little barbershop off Dhobi Talao. Come wind come rain, periodic hair-cuts being a necessary evil of modern civilisation, you will find me in that shop every fifth Sunday—although it used to be first Sunday each month before the Barbers' Union decided to put up the prices from six to ten annas ago. And so, as you might expect, I am pretty well acquainted with the faces, the fashions and the foibles in that joint.

Of the three tables in the "saloon" the one nearest the entrance is presided over by the proprietor himself. The table has a marble top and a Belgian mirror, both of which the shop boy polishes assiduously every half-hour or so. An old picture of Nehru and a new picture of Nargis hang on either side of the mirror. The drawer on the right of the customer's knees houses the "galla"—the day's takings, the roll sheet, a note book for expenses. The drawer on the left contains stocks of oils, powder, a spare pair of scissors and a new comb.

The proprietor himself deigns to take on a head or a chin only if the shop is too crowded for his underlings to deal with or when regulars like me put in an appearance. Most of the time he spends leaning against his counter drinking tea or smoking endless "bidis" reprimanding the boy, totting up the cash, or exchanging pleasantries with the more important customers.

AT the second table, in the middle of the shopography, works the proprietor's assistant, the mainstay of the labour force of this establishment. For the rest, the table is not so new, the glass is cracked, the drawers are full of used sheets and soiled towels, broken combs and empty tins and bottles. In short, a thoroughly nondescript sort of seat where the run of the customers get the average value for their money from an unpretentious craftsman, one of the million similar seats all over Greater Bombay.

Travelling further afield, one alights upon the third table, the step-table of the family, so to say. The mirror almost is of the distorting

type, the table itself has almost no top. Of the artisan, little can be said with authority, because I have seldom seen the same man at that outpost twice running. The table seems to be reserved for birds of passage—or, maybe, the barber to whose lot this table falls soon becomes disgruntled. To let you into a secret, I have had the experience of being handled by the *ad hoc* incumbent of this far-from-coveted office during the days I first began to take my custom to Muriel Saloon. (N.B.—This table has holes for drawers, but the drawers are both missing.)

So much for the personnel: the material is no less variegated or engrossing.

NEEDLESS to say, the proprietor monopolised the best tools. Shining scissors and gleaming clippers, complete combs and real fluffy powder puffs—all these are to be found only at his table. Last year when he experimented with a new-fangled electric brush and an automatic massage instrument (a short-lived experiment, alas! which had to be abandoned when customers began experiencing electric shocks and nobody could be found to repair the gadgets), the socket for their three-prong plugs was fitted near the proprietor's table and the flex was not long enough to reach the second table.

lacks in chromium plating and foreign-sounding machines is made up by the quiet efficiency of the wielder of the tools. Not that the tools are as bad as one would be led to imagine—what matter if the comb has lost a few teeth (it can bite all the better for that) or the scissors have a screw loose (no brain-work is entrusted to them, anyway) or the powder puff is baldish (all the best film stars have taken to hairless puffs now)?

THIS, however, is no consolation to the unfortunate soul who has delivered himself—or rather, has been inveigled—into the corner chair. The scissors here are in such shape that they have to be gripped in two hands if they are to function at all, and then they work on the principle that it is quicker to pluck tufts off your cranium than to do the job the outmoded snip-snap way. Naturally, the barber has no hand free to hold the comb; and it is doubtful if the comb attached to this desk would serve any purpose at all except swatting cockroaches (to which use it obviously has been often put), for even the proprietor has to look twice before he can find any teeth in it. And as for the "machine", it leaves V-shaped scars all over the neck where it has nipped you. The less said about it the better.

When discussing moods at the Muriel, therefore, we will

But what the second table

leave out the classy proprietor and his shiny new gimmicks; we will also pass over Table III with its ever changing men and never changing machines.

THE assistant at the centre-of-the-shop table then, if memory of the days when I was not such an old and valued patron serves me right, is a man of moods more than of machines. One day, for instance, you might find him in an expansive, ebullient, almost effervescent, mood. He would narrate to you his success story, how he rose to head assistant hair-dresser in this temple of tonorial art although he began humbly as a pavement artist at one anna "per capita". That would be when *Shree 420* or *Jagte Raho* of last night is still fresh in his mind. Or you might have to assume the role of a spectator while he distributed largesse in the form of a single "cha's" to his boss as well as to the two other members of the staff, with the air of one who would have done the honours with a chilled bottle of champagne were it put within his power to do so. And it would be anybody's guess that the long-promised Diwali Bonus had at last materialised.

On the other hand, there might be occasions when your admonitions and instructions alike are met with a vicious jab of the scissors, when the beast in him has come

to the forefront. The reason probably has been that he has had a quarrel on the home front, if, that is, he has a home front to have a quarrel on. Almost similar results, to wit, a bloodthirsty propensity in the otherwise smoothly operating clippers, might emerge from another cause. The shaky hand is the result of a nervous condition for which fashionable doctors would doubtless have a six-syllable name if the patient were a temperamental film-actress or a jaded business executive, but is caused in our subject by a sleepless night on the pavement.

THERE might also be moments when he might unconsciously be remiss in his duties and be the unintentional source of annoyance to you. The time gave you an unsolicited massage, for example, and rubbed you till the skin tingled, the hair bristled and the eyes watered—was the enthusiasm due to the cup of stamina the latest new hand had ordered out, or the promise given by the salesman of a hair-restorer firm to give him a cut in his commission? And the time he finished off your chin with just one quick razoring—was the haste the result of the realisation that the first race at Mahalaxmi was scheduled to be "off" in an hour's time, or of a tickling off from the proprietor because customers were turning away from the door unserved and unshorn? \*\*\*

INDIA MAGAZINE

## CONTEMPORARY OPINION

### RED KERALA

Assumption of power by the Communists in Kerala is significant primarily for two reasons. First, one State in India at least disagrees with the view of the rest of the country that the Congress party alone can deliver the goods. Secondly, Communist Party for the first time in this country will have an opportunity of putting its socialist professions to the test of practice. The success or failure of this new experiment in Kerala will have repercussions far beyond the frontiers of the smallest State in India. Its success will strengthen the demand for an alternative government in several States, notably in West Bengal; its failure will make the position of the Congress virtually impregnable for years to come all over the country. In the General Elections this year the Communists have emerged as the second biggest national party—though they are a poor second to the Congress. Their stocks will rise further if they can promote the good of the people of the only State which has given them the mandate to govern. To the extent that the Congress is able to redeem its pledges to the people by improving their living stand-

ards the gains of the Communists will be offset. There is, however, little doubt that their record in Kerala will considerably influence their fortunes at the polls during the next General Elections.

It will be idle to expect that the Communists can make a clean sweep of everything before them in Kerala and lead people on to an era of limitless prosperity as if through a miracle. It is going to be a hard job to make a modest improvement in the living conditions now prevailing in that State and the Communists themselves are aware of the arduous nature of the task they have undertaken.—*Hindusthan Standard*.

### NAYA PAISA FROLIC

Stories of skirmishing on the introduction of the Naya Paisa system of coinage are fewer than we anticipated, but that there is a wave of acute unrest and distrust cannot be disputed. It is at the same time no good saying that the experiment should be discontinued, since its long-term value has been certified by experts. Gains and losses in the exchange of money rest on particular deals, and it may be argued that on the average, nothing is lost. The

oligarchs who transact their business in cheques do not have an iota to lose, but Mr. Chaudhuri, a statistician, is firm that lower-income groups who handle change are on the whole sufferers in the daily routine of life. Denominations like halves and quarters are safe to handle, but there are fractions of a vulgar nature in more senses than one. Another authority tells us that in reality, the cost of living, already high, must have, by the cumulative effect of the bazaar-manipulations, developed an increase by 5 per cent. on a flat calculation.

We admit that, in the totality, the Indian nation considered as a family loses nothing by market alterations. We doubt if the fortune made by money-changers would actually be liable to income-tax. Nevertheless, the handling of the smallest coin is a nuisance and we have the complaint already that the coins are becoming black and unsightly. By way of relief, one of the first steps to be taken is to shorten the period of co-existence between the old tokens and the Naya Paisa coins with which they are in jostle. The period of three years seems to be too long, and an effort should be made to flood the country with the new type of coin, calling back all the old stuff except for deals as in payment of revenue or the buying of postal rate ought to be always in favour of the public (deprived

long ago of the poor man's postcard) whenever split *paisas* are involved. It is absurd that 13 Naye Paise should be charged for a letter instead of 12 as seen in ready reckoners. On that subject of official profiteering through P. & T. counters, we are bound to hear more protests. Anyway, let more coins be issued and the old denominations recalled so that the agony may be over by the end of the year.

—*Deccan Herald*.

#### PRINTERS' TRADE

The All-India Printers' conference, which was opened in New Delhi, by Sardar Swaran Singh has brought into prominence some of the industry's problems. Two of these seem to require early attention. The Delhi conference urged on the Government to relax restrictions on the import of printing machinery so that presses could replenish their equipment. The existence of old and out-dated machinery not only acts as a drag on the industry but is also calculated to affect adversely the desirable standards of quality. It is significant that Mr. Govardhan Kapur referred, in his presidential address, to the indiscriminate import of second-hand machines with the result that the quality of production had suffered. How far, therefore, suitable replenishment of equipment can be achieved expeditiously both by judi-

cious imports and indigenous manufacture, wherever possible, requires urgent consideration. Equally important is the training and absorption of the requisite types of technicians. The conference drew attention to the shortage of trained workers. Even though the inadequacy of training facilities in modern printing technology has for long been acknowledged in many States, efforts to correct this deficiency have been incredibly slow and unsatisfactory. The Joshi Committee of Bombay, for instance, referred, as early as 1949, to a scheme prepared by the Printing Panel for starting a model school of printing. It also recommended that suitable courses for students of printing technology in outlying areas and small towns should be provided at the larger and properly equipped schools of printing which should be started at appropriate centres. Yet, such an ambition seems to remain largely on paper.

—*Bombay Chronicle*.

#### CONGRESS LOOKS AT ITSELF

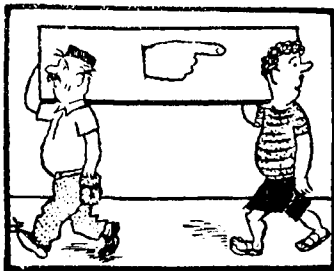
It is not unusual for a political organisation to take a look at itself, particularly after a general election. More than other parties in India,

the Congress is given to frequent stock-taking. More than others in the party, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru is given, freely, to expressing himself on loss of ground and tracing them to weaknesses both inherent and acquired. He is himself quite outspoken in his criticisms but if they are taken up in other quarters, he is not above retorting that there is nothing wrong with the Congress but that ill-intention or sensation-mongering, generally on the part of the Press, has magnified certain local weaknesses or defects. It is a natural reaction. No one who is setting about to put his house in order, relishes the idea of the passer-by chiming in with advice which may or may not be relevant. Political parties are no exception to this general rule, even if they realise that those who seek public approbation must not only suffer public criticism in patience but also see whether it is relevant to their purpose of regaining lost ground or reinforcing their strength. There is the long term and the short term approach, the overall and the local, the question of election tactics or strategy as against the fundamental approach.

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What one may call the short term, local, tactical or strategic approach derives from a close-up estimate of losses in each region. Such estimates lead one to remedies which deal with symptoms without going into root causes. For example, it may be quite correct to say that some Congress candidates failed because of lack of funds and resources which were available to the successful candidate in the constituency next door, or that, in certain areas, the Congress candidate was swept off in the strong current of reaction to the reorganisation of the state in question, or yet again that candidate and constituency were ill-matched, or that the candidate and his workers were too complacent. All such estimates may be good as far as they go and it is possible that more money spent, a



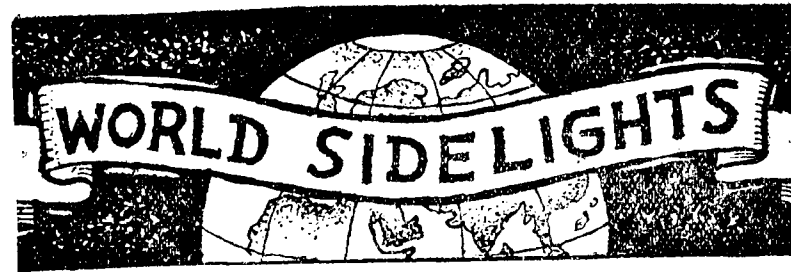
"What is there that it want some to see!"

different plan of state reorganisation, more careful placing of candidates and refusal to give way to complacency may have, in each case, made all the difference between success and failure. But it is pertinent to consider whether even use of party-cum-private funds, the reaction to reorganisation, the choice of candidate, and complacency are not, in fact, related to the loss of the seat as twin effects deriving from a more deep-seated cause. In looking for the underlying causes of the nature and extent of the losses sustained by the Congress, Mr. Nehru's analysis is more helpful because it goes straight to the root of the matter.

The contrast between Mr. Nehru's approach and the approach of other Congressmen who participated in the recent party discussions is itself a fundamental factor. Policy-making and implementation at the State level, Mr. Nehru is reported to have said, had caused dissatisfaction. He went on to say that the administration especially at the lower levels was not based on constant contact with the feelings of the people, or it was based on incorrect understanding of their interests. The remedy prescribed by Mr. Nehru was "effective co-ordination between the organisational and governmental wings of the party."

—The Tribune.

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## THE SAHARA WOMEN

THE wives of the nomads of the Sahara Desert are among the least-known women in the world. Despite modern means of transport there are still immense regions of the great Sahara that are difficult of access, from roads and tracks.

Many hundreds of miles separate one group of dwellings from another and yet, according to the needs of each season, there is a continual coming and going between them.

The nomadic and semi-nomadic tribe of the Chambaa are great connoisseurs of riding-camels; their domain extends from the foot of the Atlas Mountains to the frontiers of Mauretania.

Eternal travellers, they cross the desert in every direction with their flocks of sheep, goats, chickens, pigeons, degs, and camels. Their tents of goats' hair, their blankets and cooking-pots are all piled on to the backs of the precious camels.

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The women and children follow, very often on foot, writes Colette Martin in London's Geographical Magazine.

It is difficult to say how many miles a woman of the Chambaa tribe travels in her lifetime. I have certainly never seen a fat women among them, and their diet is to be recommended for preserving the figure: a handful of dried dates, three glasses of tea, cereals occasionally, and meat only very rarely.

### Life In Tent

It is difficult to understand how human beings can live on so little food without their health being affected in some way. The total lack of hygiene makes the infant mortality rate very high. In this way Nature eliminates those that are too weak for the hard life of a nomad.

The eyes suffer most of all, due to a shortage of vegetables, as well as to the smoke in their tents, and above all

to the powerful glare of the African sun and its reflection on the sand.

Very often, out on the desert tracks, I found myself suddenly, on rounding a high sand-dune, in the middle of a nomad encampment. There had been nothing to betray its presence; no noise, no singing not a trace of it anywhere.

Putting on my brightest smile I would approach. As always, the children were to the fore, crowding around me, staring at the strangely dressed woman with the blue eyes. The sign-language began.

I looked at and touched the women's clothes which are mostly dark and bordered with two brilliantly coloured stripes. They are nearly always of European material, except for an over-garment made of wool and woven by hand, a large piece of material that serves both as a cloak and a blanket for the night.

#### Visitor Examined

The women use a charming gesture when draping it around themselves. Their jewelry is usually of copper or often of silver, but gold jewelry is too expensive for them.

With strands of wool of striking colours they adorn themselves with a kind of necklace ornamented with

big round pom-poms which gave a very pleasing effect. They also wear very large ear-rings (I have seen them as much as five inches in diameter) hanging from each ear and shining like the sun. Sometimes the weight is taken by a strand of wool over the head.

We got to know each other. I too was examined closely and no detail of my equipment escaped them. My nail-varnish, being so brilliant, was the thing that interested them most.

My sandals were passed from hand to hand, and the women knew at once that I had got them from the Touaregs. A finger immediately explained to me, drawing with light gestures in the sand, that they were made from buffalo skin.

#### Universal Method

So here was a universal method of conversation: drawing. For hours we drew in the sand and I learned many things. Drawing from right to left with the index finger and the ring finger they told me by signs all the details of their simple existence.

Water is an enormous problem for them. Each drop is indispensable. The rare wells, where brackish water collects, are the stopping-places at which the nomads camp.

To give water to the camels is the work of the women.

The wells are always very deep, varying from forty-five to as much as nine hundred feet, according to the locality. They spend hours drawing up the water by rope and bucket, since to slake the thirst of each camel takes 125 pints!

Not that the camel likes to drink this much water: they force him to drink it. They make him lie down and force-feed him with bucket after of water necessary for his existence.

In the Sahara the time of day has no importance. Breakfast, dinner, and supper are terms without meaning. Time is measured by the sun, and meals are taken according to the possibilities that present themselves.

#### Time For Meals

I had some sugar and tea in my pocket and entered their tent (*zeriba*). In no time at all they lit a small fire, sacrificing a bit of wood and some dried roots pulled out of the sand.

The blue enamel kettle ("Made in England") was soon sending out jets of steam. The sugar, highly appreciated, was parsimoniously distributed. They smiled: we understand each other. Today we shall not be hungry, they seemed to say.

The tents of the nomads are quickly erected. Some stakes are driven into the ground, over which is placed

a dark brown covering of woven goat-hair. Sometimes, if there is a palm-grove near by, the women make a sort of circular fore-court which is surrounded by a hedge of interlaced palm leaves.

This protects them a little against the wind and sand which, when it starts to blow, will cover in a few seconds everyone and everything in the tent.

They set out the primitive crockery on the sand and with graceful movements embed the glasses of hot tea in it; there must be no risk of their falling over. They sit in a squatting position, very still, while they eat, as any movement covers tea, glasses, and fire with sand. I cannot imagine our rowdy children in a nomad's tent. It would be disastrous.

#### The Women Sing

I softly hummed a tune so that the women would understand that I should like to hear them sing, and quickly the tom-toms, always near at hand, started to beat. Their slow chants are rhythmical with very little modulation. Only their cheerful or dreamy looks told me whether the song was gay or sad.

The sharp report of a gun suddenly made me start, then two more shots, then a dozen. What on earth was going on? I looked at the women's faces. They laughed and made me understand that a marriage

was about to take place. This was a piece of real luck.

We went out and walked as quickly as we could over the difficult ground towards a high dune which we rounded to find another nomad encampment. The gunshots stopped and I was taken into the tent.

I was assailed by a crowd of women dressed in their most beautiful clothes. They had done themselves proud. The gunshots, the tom-toms, and the clapping of hands began again.

### The Bride

But where is the bride, I wondered? Completely enveloped in a large piece of white material, she was sitting on the sand. I went up to her and thought she could see me in spite of her thick veil. I smiled at her and took her hand, thinking that though I could not see her face I might be able to guess her age by the feel of it. The arm and hand that came out from beneath all her clothes were strongly dyed with henna. It was not a very young hand.

I could see the edge of a dress of an apple-green artificial satin, and then a foot also dyed deep red. I thought I saw a very black eye burning behind her veil.

A young girl-friend of the bride's, with a Biblical face like that of a Mary Magda-

lene, knew a little French because she had spent a year with the nuns, so I asked her if the Chambaa women have special dances to celebrate a marriage. "Of course," she said, "and you shall soon see them." This spectacle was to take place outside as it needed room, and the men had permission to take part.

### Ecstasy Of Dance

First of all they did what is called the "Dance of the Hair." There was no music, except for the tom-toms. With heads uncovered, their long hair flowing in the wind, five women advanced on their knees with eyes closed. Only the head moved in this strange sacred dance. It was a slow, stiff, circular movement. Their heads swayed from back to front, then from side to side, then forward, turning all the time, making their long hair fly out in all directions.

At a given moment a spectator approached one of the dancers and poured the contents of a small bottle of scent on to her head. It was an offer of marriage. I am sure she did not know what had happened, caught in the ecstasy of the strange dance.

It was not long before she fell fainting on to the sand and was carried feet first into the tent, to be replaced in the dance by another woman. Finally, all the dancers fell as if wounded, to the ground.

A little water was sprinkled on their faces and they got up dizzily, replacing their heavy veils and returning, as if nothing had happened, to the bride.

How their hearts must have pounded! I was distressed to see their fatigue, but the young woman who knew some French said that in an hour's time they would be ready to start again. The marriage celebrations would last six days, and it would not do to be tired yet.

The men danced also, but without doing themselves as much damage as the women. They did warrior dances, a sort of stamping accompanied by gunshots.

### Beautiful Night

Darkness came quickly. The sky ranged the whole spectrum from yellow to violet, cut through with enormous stripes of light green.

I slowly guided myself across the dunes, retracing my tracks in the sand.

What a beautiful night it was! I could no longer hear the gunshots from the marriage feast. How vast the world is, I thought. I sat down to admire the immense celestial dome above. What stars!

There was the Great Bear, the Plough; and there, less

brilliant than the rest, the Pole Star. Stretching out an arm and squinting my eye I measured the direction along the tip of my thumb. Down there I would find Switzerland, my overpeopled country, where my friends are. I was a long way away....

Like the nomad women I scraped a hole in the sand, unrolled my coarse warm hooded cloak, and went to sleep as they do. Tomorrow is another day. I thought, and the sun will wake me up.



DOCTOR: "The cheque you gave me was returned. How is that?"

PATIENT: "The headache you cured has also returned. How is that?"



## PIN-UP GIRLS HAVE IT TOUGH!

SAILORS dream of her, soldiers whistle at her picture, airmen take her likeness aloft. Who? Why, the current "Miss Pin-up" of course—the girl whose shapely form is splashed over all the papers—for a while.

There's the rub. Because with most of the lovelies you see clad in scanty suits and beaming smiles, their spell of glory is brief. Scores of pretty starlets in British film studios have figures and faces alluring enough to earn them a film contract and plenty of publicity—but that doesn't mean you'll see much of them on the screen, writes John K. Newnham in "Glamour."

Maybe you're film-struck—long for lovely clothes to wear, all the glamour and excitement of being seen at first nights, and seeing your photo in every paper you open?

Believe me, more often than not you'd be heading for heartbreak. You stand more chance of film success if you've a face like a peke, and a figure like a table leg...if you can act.

### Faded Away

I've made many friends among these glamour girls. If they're still my friends, that is! I have had the job of boosting a lot of them. The press cuttings have rolled in. Then the girls have quietly faded away, only to be replaced by others with similar figures, similar photographic attractions.

One name stands out. Of all the erstwhile starlets, Diana Dors has beaten the pin-up bogey. It very nearly beat her, though. Let's face it—and Diana herself did—no one thought she had anything except a voluptuous figure.

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She looked stunning in borrowed furs and costly clothes, provided by the studio for one night appearances only. No one cared that she was so broke that she couldn't pay the rent.

### Fought Back

No girl was more widely photographed. You couldn't get away from her. Her figure leapt out at you from nearly all the magazines you saw.

But when Diana pleaded: "Give me some real acting to do," the movie people just smiled politely, and let her go on being an adornment on the screen and a publicity pin-up.

In the end, her contract was dropped. The cynics said she was through, and so she might have been if she hadn't possessed a tremendous amount of courage. She fought back. She went on the stage and flopped. But she still went on fighting back, reformed her act and tried again, this time with greater success.

She got into a West End show, and surprised critics agreed that she showed signs of talent. She was televised. She still went after all the publicity she could get, but she also went on learning her job.

She won parts, purely as a freelance, several films and put up performances of a standard no one ever expected her to give. Almost reluctant-

ly, film producers and directors came to admit that she had more than glamour. She had personality, and she could act.

Her moment of triumph came when the Rank Organisation, which had dropped her contract only a few years before, asked her to sign up again. She parried—and then did sign, on her own terms. Big-time starring terms!

### Shining Hope

Diana Dors is the shining hope of all the pin-ups. She has shown that it is possible to be glamorous and to become a star, just as Marilyn Monroe and scores of others have done in Hollywood, but so few have achieved in England.

The latest girl with the battle on her hands is Shirley Eaton, who shot into the news in a big way when it was announced that Sir Alexander Korda had given her a £40,000 contract.

And Shirley is only eighteen. When she signed her contract she had to her credit a quickly-earned reputation on television, sound radio, in pantomime and a handful of smallish film parts.

The photographers soon descended on her. She was young and attractive, with a curvaceous figure. Just what was wanted in the glamour stakes.

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I watched one of her picture sessions. "Plenty of leg, Shirley," the photographer requested, and Shirley gave him a long look.

"Must you?" she asked. "I don't want to be a pin-up. I'm not that type."

He grinned.

"You are, you know," he assured her. And we've got to give our readers what they want. So let's see your legs, honey!"

Shirley was obedient. She didn't like it, but she knew it was part of her job. At this stage of her career, she was not in a position to argue. She was in the process of being built up, and where a pretty girl is concerned, pin-up pictures are part of that process.

#### Too Much Glamour

"I know jolly well," she told me, "that I've got to prove myself as an actress before I can get away from this sort of publicity. But it's an ironical business, isn't it? The more glamour-girl publicity I get, the more difficult it is to persuade people that I can be a dramatic actress."

Since then, she has had a good part with Max Bygraves in his first major starring film, *Charley Moon* (Max chose her for the part after she had appeared at the London Palladium with him in *Mother Goose*).

She has also talked her way into a very dramatic part in a television play, *The Dance Dress*. The play itself was not well received, but it did show that she had real possibilities as an actress.

Moira Lister is another star who had too much glamour... Studios relied on that alone, not giving her a chance to act—it wasn't until the theatre gave her the opportunity to prove herself to be an actress on the stage that the film people woke up. In her latest picture, *The Deep Blue Sea*, she'll surprise you!

#### Big Hit

The same thing happened to Googie Withers in her early days. Film directors were interested in her provocative figure and her sex-appeal, and Googie couldn't get away from sultry roles and comedy parts. Then, in one part, there was just a five-minute sequence which gave her the chance to be dramatic. Googie put all she'd got into it. "Afterwards," she told me, "the director Michael Powell, promised me: One day, you'll be able to play a big dramatic part, and I'll direct you."

That was enough for Googie. First thing she did was to tell her studio she'd had enough of being a phoney blonde, and she allowed her hair to revert to its own natural shade. From now on she was determined to succeed on

her merits as an actress. She got the script of *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* to read.

"Think you can do it?" asked Powell, and at her instant "yes" he nodded. "So do I—but we're the only two people who do!"

The sceptics were wrong. Googie made a big hit in the picture, and she has been recognised as a dramatic actress since then—and, of course, still a glamorous one as well.

#### HERE & THERE

Melody queen Noor Jehan is working hard on "Parde-san." Aslam Parvez plays the leading role opposite her.

Hazeen Qadri, who has written the story and the dialogues, is directing the picture. Akhtar Hussain is to write the music.

A.V.M. Productions are now speeding up their plans to launch their latest Hindi film, an adaptation of the Tamil "Kula Deivam."

Directors Krishnan and Panchu, who have been assigned to direct this picture, have arrived in Bombay.

It is likely that Ashok Kumar, Kishore Kumar, Shyama, Anwar Hussain and Durga Khote will be in the cast.

Basant pictures' Geva color film "Hatim Tai" will soon be released in Viet Nam.

Based on the seven adventures of the legendary Hatim Tai, the film had a successful run all over Asia and Africa.

A picturesque village on the banks of the Padma river will form the background of director Satyajit Ray's new film "Jalshaghar."

This almost unknown Bengali village provides a made-to-order background for the story.

It has the same huge palace, now gradually crumbling, bearing the lost glory of a decadent feudal culture as described in the story.

Ray and his unit leave for the location site soon.

Three more Punjabi pictures are in the making in Lahore. "Pulkan" is fast progressing under the direction of Amin Malik at the Shahnoor Studios, replete with laugh-loaded sequences.

Comedian Zarif plays an important role. Mussarat Nazir, Aslam Parvez and Ilyas Kashmiri are among the other members of the cast.

"Hullarey," now under production, stars Mussarat Nazir and Sudhir. Yasmin.



Bina Rai & Premnath in "Changez Khan "

Ilyas Kashmiri, Nazar, Nadira and M. Ismail are in the supporting cast.

"Mullah Do Piyaza" is the third, and is expected to go on the floors soon.

#### " RAGINI "

Director Rakhan begins a new phase in the 'shooting' of Ashok Pictures' "Ragini" when Padmini, the talented South Indian actress arrives in Bombay to take up her assignment in the film in which she is featured opposite Ashok Kumar. A ten-day programme has been drawn up and will begin in Bombay.

During this period, a number of important scenes and one dance number will go into the cans. Apart from Ashok Kumar and Padmini, Kishore Kumar, Amir Banoo, Sunder and others will also be working on these sets. Also featured in "Ragini" are Jabeen Jalil in the title role. Nasir Hussain, Achala Sachdev, Leela Vinod, Jamal and Iftekar. The story of Ragini is written by director Rakhan himself and he has the further responsibility of writing the dialogue. The musical score will be by O.P. Nayyar. Six songs have already been recorded.