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# INDIA MAGAZINE

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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. The Editor does not accept responsibility for the views expressed by contributors.



# India Magazine

THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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## GIVE UP THIS NONSENSE

TO a Communist leader is attributed the remark that the Reds can seize power by means of civil war and commotion. It reflects great daring in thought and conception. From his lofty heights the Prime Minister can talk of co-existence. How often in the past he has expressed his admiration of Communist ideology is common knowledge.

Having sown the wind, it is but natural that we are reaping the whirlwind. Recently the country was treated to a convincing demonstration of the effective Communist hold on the masses. The trouble fomented, first in Jamshedpur and then in Madras, would speak volumes and pinpoint this truth.

Congress must revise its policy and method if it wishes to regain its popularity. It must give up the nonsense of co-existence at least in so far as the administration of States is concerned. A special body of Congressmen must make a thorough study of the cunning strategy of the Communists and their two-faced policy of peace and violence. And before the next general elections come off the Communists as well as the Communalists must be shown their real place.

In the correspondence columns of a leading daily a reader has listed the follies of Congress which could well have been avoided—partition of the country, the Kashmir dispute, the linguistic reorganisation which has led to parochialism, and the official language problem. Last but not least comes the question of co-existence with the Reds. It is time we started re-thinking on this vital issue.

# Current Comments

## UNHEEDED

India's resolution that no nuclear or thermo-nuclear tests should be held in the Trust territories (in the Pacific islands) has gone unheeded. While Russia has suspended the test explosions, the United States and Britain are going on merrily. Talk of the clean bomb tests is not sincere and the hazards of radiation are increasing day by day. But why should not these two countries conduct their tests in the Atlantic instead of the Pacific? One wonders whether the extraordinary and unprecedented heat wave in the different parts of India is not a result of the radioactive fall-out. What else could have sent the mercury up to 120 degrees and above in some places?

## MENACE TO UNITY

On the issue of the official language of the Union Sri Rajagopalachari has issued yet another stern warning. If Hindi replaces English, disintegration of India after Pandit Nehru is a certainty. So he said at the Tamil Nad Youth Union Language Convention at Mayuram, the other day. Speaking on the same platform,

Prof. Ruthnaswami condemned the compromise bilingual formula of the Madras Government. When Madras officials, visiting Delhi, talk in English to the chiefs in the Secretariat the latter answer them in Hindi. It is like birds talking to fishes, he mocked, appropriately. Commonsense would dictate that we must postpone all talk of the language issue until the dawn of the twenty-first century. But who cares for commonsense when the tide of false sentiment is submerging the country?

## A MODEL PHYSICIAN

In Dr. M. R. Guruswami Mudaliar India has lost one of her ablest of physicians. Silent, selfless and unostentatious, he gave of his best to all patients, rich or poor. In the morning hours his house was chockful of patients, mostly poor and helpless. A nominal fee per head was the unwritten rule and even this was waived in most cases. He invariably wrote out prescriptions and was seldom communi-

cative but certain was the cure. Through such service he laid thousands of men and women under an eternal debt of gratitude.

His mastery of medicine was equalled only by his piety and devotion to things spiritual. It may sound odd but quite true to say that he shone like a saint among doctors whom we generally identify as hard-headed, money-grabbing, heartless men. It is difficult to persuade ourselves that he is no more in our midst. It would not be out of place to quote the tribute of "The Mail": "Now his stethoscope is laid down (it should be preserved in a medical museum), the penetrative eyes which no cause of disease could escape are closed, a life that saved innumerable lives is lost. But Dr. Guruswami Mudaliar leaves a deathless example of fellow-feeling and service."

#### FOOD FIRST

One of the usual war-cries of Congressmen is that casteism must be abolished. But nobody knows how to wipe out the deep-rooted differences of caste and class and everyone forgets what the leaders exhorted him to do. The best way to tone down the differences would be to expand production, increase the wealth of the country and raise the standard of living. In Canada and America, for instance, poverty is unknown—"abolished" would be a more appropriate

word in the present context—and the people there are quite contented and happy. Casteism will lose its hold on the people in the face of all round economic prosperity. Our leaders should not put the cart before the horse. Let them make food cheap and plentifully available and stamp out unemployment first.

#### PRIZE FOR THE READER

We would invite our readers to give their frank opinion of this issue. How do they like the stories and the other features? For the letter which we consider best we will be awarding a cash prize of Rs. 5. All letters, which must necessarily be brief, must reach us on or before 15th August. The prize-winning letter will be published with the writer's name and address in our issue dated September, 1958.

#### FROM OUR NEXT ISSUE

"India Magazine" has pleasure in offering its readers one of the most remarkable series of true stories written on the subject of occult experiences.

The series comprises six stories of an unusual type, depicting weird and eerie happenings, and written by a woman who is an authority on matters psychic.

*When a woman defies convention and tastes of forbidden pleasure she is most often reckless of the consequences. See how...*

## A Night Of Folly

Dear Yasodha :

HOW kind of you to make repeated enquiries about my health and happiness. Do you remember the last time we met was ten years ago when we left school? You and I then swore that we would never marry, that we would seek some jobs and earn lots of money for our parents. But our resolutions melted away when our parents decided that we should be married. Of course, most of us girls are like that. Some take degrees, even secure jobs but ultimately marry and have children like all else.

Yasodha, and I shall explain why.

I am going to tell you all about myself and I would most earnestly request you to destroy this letter as soon as you have read it through.

You know, dear, I was married in my nineteenth year to Sahadev. I wouldn't say he was handsome but he had such nice and gentle ways that I soon came to adore him. He was working as a clerk in a textile factory and his salary was enough to support me and his old widowed mother.

SHORT STORY  
BY  
RADHAKISHEN

I am glad to know that you have three kids and that a fourth is on the way. I wish I could accept your invitation and stay with you for some days. It would certainly be delightful to exchange confidences and share the memories of our past. But I am sorry I can't come,

YASODHA darling, we were terribly happy but only for three months. One day he returned home, soaked in the rain. He developed a cold and high temperature. A week later the doctor diagnosed it as pneumonia and at once advised his removal to the hospital. The physicians

there tried on him all sorts of medicines, new and old. On the third night his dead body was brought home.

Should I have to tell you how crazy I was with grief? I threw myself on the corpse and pierced the very heavens with my loud wail. I beat my breast, knocked my head against the wall and would certainly have dashed out my brains had not my neighbours restrained me. It took me nearly a month to collect my thoughts and take stock of my position. My mother-in-law had little money to support herself with and she wanted to go with her sister on a pilgrimage to Banaras. She said she would be glad if her end came in the course of the journey. It is true that she lived only for her son.

Then my father came and took me home at my request. On the death of my husband he had asked me to go with him but I spurned his offer. My mother-in-law even began to think that I had brought ill-luck to her house and caused the death of her son. She did not say so in as many words but her sudden change of attitude was unmistakable.

YASODHA darling, this was monstrous. And I was glad to return to my parents' home. My mother was ailing. She was suffering from partial paralysis; her right side of the body was affected. She wept to see me in my pathetic state. Soon, however, I forgot myself in the

service of my parents. You know, I have an only sister, Subadhra, who is older than me by five years. Her husband, Thabonath, is chief accountant in a foreign company and making a lot of money.

WELL, Subadhra, too, would occasionally visit us with her husband and children and Mother would feel happy despite her agony. We even thought she was improving and the doctor was positive that she would be cured soon but one morning we found her dead in the bed. Her end was sudden and peaceful. We were disconsolate and wept bitterly. But do the dead ever return to the earth?

After a time Subadhra and her husband returned to Calcutta with their children. I ministered to the needs of my old father who was turning his mind Godwards. He now took just one meal a day and spent his evening in the temples around. He would return home late in the night after attending a bhajan or listening to some discourse. As for my part, father's poojas had a soothing effect on my mind. When I was not cooking I would be reading books of all sorts, novels, especially.

Then came a change. My elder sister wrote to Father to send me to Calcutta for a few months. She wanted me to look after her children. My sister was suffering from a sort of tumour in the stomach and doctors said

that she must be kept under observation for at least three months and then alone they could decide whether an operation was necessary. Father was alarmed. He at once wired to say that I would be starting by the evening Express for Calcutta and asked Nath to come to the station and take me home.

I was in Calcutta on the third day, dear. I had never been to that city before. The glaring lights and the roar of traffic made me dizzy and excited. Nath cordially received me at the station and took me to his flat. There were three large rooms with all amenities and conveniences. Subadhra had already been admitted to hospital and her three little children—Raghu, Kishen and Bhushan—were mighty glad to see me and forgot their distress in missing their mother.

The next day I saw Sister in the hospital and she gave me detailed instructions about running the household and looking after the children. I asked her not to worry and implored her to relax herself. Life in the city, as I said before, is glittering and exciting. Nath, my brother-in-law, was very thoughtful and considerate. He brought me some fine saris on Subadhra's instructions and took us all out to pictures twice or thrice a week.

One night when the children were all fast asleep and Nath was in the next room, I opened

one of my sister's boxes and took out some of her gold necklaces and costly silk saris. I wore a red sari to match my colour and put on the jewels and gazed at my reflection in the mirror. I had the satisfaction of realising that I was pretty enough still. Suddenly I turned round to see Nath standing near the door, smiling at me. "Believe me, Mohana dear, you are certainly one of the most beautiful women I have ever met. In this dress and in such a situation how could I resist your invitation?"

Before I could say anything by way of protest he folded me in his arms and showered hot, fiery kisses on my lips. And starved as I was for love, I easily succumbed to his overtures. Yasodha dear, I was hardly aware of the unforgivable crime I was committing. Every night was one long glorious hour and it seemed so short. Nath was making love to me at all times and I was so happy.

BUT, Yasodha dearest, there is an end to everything. My sister has not suspected what is going on in her own bedroom. She thinks that a change of place has done me immense good and has often remarked on my flushed cheeks and ruddy health. She has written so to Father who has asked her to keep me as long with her as possible.

My friend, during these three months of illicit love something

dreadful has happened. I have become pregnant. How I wish to God I had not fallen victim to temptation. It is going to lead to disaster and nothing else. Every woman who dares to rebel against society and defy its convention has a heavy penalty to pay for such defiance.

At first I had a strange feeling. As I got up in the morning I felt giddy. This I attributed to too much outing and frequent visits to the pictures. I was gulping a good deal of tea. This also, I thought, must account for that peculiar sensation. Then gradually I experienced nausea. One day as I was taking my bath I vomited involuntarily and felt some relief. I drank tumbler after tumbler of lemon juice, hoping that it would set me right. But the nausea recurred every morning. Only after two weeks I realised the horrid truth. My brother-in-law had gone to office and the children were in school at that time. I burst into tears at my wretched fate and tore at my hair in despair. Then, suddenly, despair gave way to hope. It must be some serious indisposition on account of bile, I thought. But that hope soon faded away when I recalled how my sister Subadhra had the same experience every time she was in the family way.

I was too ashamed to tell the truth to Nath. Even when I was in such a pitiable condition I wanted him to make love to me. I was afraid that if I told him the

truth he might avoid me and even manoeuvre to send me back home.

A great fear gripped me as I visualised the future before me. Suppose I returned home and Father came to know about my condition? He would consider my sin as the worst disgrace and stain on the family name. And think of the malicious tongues wagging. Do you think he would survive the scandal? No. Of course, he has too great a love for me to reproach me. All that he would do would be to leave the house and his money to me and disappear. He would give up the material world to become a mendicant. Everyone knows that he lives only for me.

I SEARCHED for some desperate remedies. I bought a magazine which specialises in advertisements of drugs, pills and mixtures for women in my condition and sent money orders to those dealers. The postman brought me parcel after parcel. You know, luckily for me, he comes at a time when nobody else is here. I swallowed all those medicines in high hope but they had no effect on me whatever. Believe me, dear, those quacks dealing in spurious drugs and the publishers of such advertisements are enemies of society and must be treated as such.

I made bold to consult a notorious midwife in the neighbourhood who performs illegal operations for fantastic fees.

—Please see page 16

# MIRACLE OF THE RUDRAKSH

Short Story

By ESVEE

“OUR ANCIENTS,” drawled the dapper young Nambudiri in the first class compartment, as he leant comfortably against an air pillow, “were a confounded wise lot”. Having delivered this complimentary remark, he unfastened the top button of his closed frock coat, revealing a sacred rudraksh fastened to a gold necklet, encircling his neck.

I looked up from the opposite berth with some interest. The speaker and I were the only occupants of a first class bogie attached to the Madras-bound Malabar Express, that evening. Little hillocks drenched with golden light from the embers of a setting sun whizzed past, like a panorama on a motion picture screen. The engine panted as it pulled in a slow, yet steady, motion a train of cosmopolitan passengers, through the steep gradient of the Palghat gap.

“They forestalled, for example,” my young friend

continued, “present-day scientific discoveries like magnetic storms and ultrasonic vibrations. These things were used by the demons and Rakshasas in the Puranas to disturb the meditations of sanyasins. Does not the *Ramayana* tell us how Sri Rama was called upon to put a stop to these depredations of the wicked demons?”

I nodded my acquiescence. Inwardly I thought that my young friend was knowledgeable, and his conversation, interesting.

“Modern physicists will tell you that these supersonic vibrations can be created in the laboratory; if they are caught by a concave mirror and concentrated on an object, that object will catch fire. If the vibrations are passed through a human being he would soon be *hors de com-*

*There are more things wrought by prayer than this world dreams of, wrote Poet Tennyson. Here is the amazing story of how a Sadhu's Rudraksh gave protection to the three generations of its wearers.*

bat, by going senile or something."

"That is interesting," I observed. "But surely our wise Ancients must have discovered antidotes or defences?"

"Yes, Sir, I am coming to that. The Ancient Seers found that Saturn, Pluto, Venus and Neptune emit these lethal vibrations, day in and day out, and that the generality of human beings suffer from exposure to them. The few, endowed with natural strength and robustness outlive their effects but many others develop cancer, tuberculosis or even insanity and lead a miserable existence. Our physicists will tell you that a crinkled surface absorbs sound, even ultrasonic sound, and our Ancients looked round for an object with such a surface. They found it in the Rudraksh seed. Thus it came to pass that garlands made of these seeds came to be worn by human beings—ostensibly for adornment but really as a means of supersonic defence."

My friend pulled out the Rudraksh bead snugly nestling against his thyroid. "Look at this," he exclaimed.

I looked. It was an article of incredible beauty—almost mystic in its effect, like a Tibetan carving.

"This is a family heirloom," he continued. "I shall tell you

how it came to our hands. It was the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. My grandfather, as befitting a pious Hindu householder of advancing years, made his will and preparations for the holy pilgrimage to Mansarovar enjoined in the Shastras. One made such pilgrimages only once in a life-time. In those ancient times the pilgrim's route was infested by bandits and marauders never returned to tell their tale.

NIGHT had set in. As the train whizzed past tiny hamlets with their myriad twinkling lights and larger townships lit by carbon filament, I looked up at the distant horizon. Venus was shining bright. Somewhere in the firmament were also Saturn and Pluto emitting supersonic vibrations to the bane of mankind.

"You were saying something about your grandfather's pilgrimage?" I said.

"Yes. Grandfather, being very orthodox, carried provisions for the pilgrimage with him. He would not eat food cooked by anyone other than himself. He made the journey, bathed in the holy rivers en route, and performed Vedic rites. He shared his food and itinerant comforts with a pious Sadhu who kept him company. When the time had come to part the latter unhooked a single rudraksh from the large bead garland he was wearing and gave it to Grandfather, saying: 'Friend,

you have been kind to a penniless Sadhu who can offer nothing of value in return. Be pleased to accept this Rudraksh. It has fourteen sides corresponding to the fourteen phases of the Moon. Worship it when you may, and wear it on your person. Let it become an heirloom of your family."

"Grandfather was soon back home. He bathed the Rudraksh daily in Ganges water, offered it sweet-smelling sandal paste and flowers. He strung it up on a necklet of gold which he wore round his neck. The same necklet, which you now see on me..."

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At this stage conversation stopped due to the noise the train was making. It had changed to the 'outer' line and was picking up speed after passing Morappur.

When the noise subsided, my friend resumed his tale. "To cut the story short, Grandfather rose rapidly in life, from a humble *kariasthen* to a *Jenmi*. He was soon possessed of innumerable broad acres of paddy land and built a mansion—an *Illom*—which soon became the talk of the locality. He fed the poor on his birthdays (and they came flocking from the far corners of the District). He also bought two elephants—in those days all *Jennis* who respected their *Izzat* owned pachyderms and it was a hallmark of prestige to send a tusker for taking part in the

annual Pooram procession in Trichur."

I became lost. "What have Poorams and Pachyderms to do with the Rudraksh, pray tell me," I demanded.

"Sir, have patience," replied my friend. "The year 1910 was the year of the *Dhoomaketu*—a malignant phenomenon which appears in the skies once in seventy years."

My friend was obviously referring to the Halley's Comet.

"Grandfather died that year. Many other good men died including England's most popular monarch. Elephants all over the land sickened and collapsed in a most mysterious manner. During that year's Pooram festival our own tusker, Sankaran, was gored by the *Chondath* tusker, Kesavan, who developed *musth*. There was pandemonium among the panic-stricken crowd as elephants, decked in all their regalia, stampeded the maidan. The vibrations from the *Dhoomaketu* were working their worst havoc—though few people had an inkling of this."

I nodded my head.

FATHER was wired for. He rushed to Trichur—a good hundred miles from our Mana—to find Sankaran sinking. With tears in his eyes, Father, with his own hands, cleaned Sankaran's wounds with holy water in which he had soaked this heirloom Rudraksh. Thinking that

Sankaran would have departed this world by the morrow, my father spoke to him endearing words and bade a tearful farewell."

"During the night the crisis was over. The Rudraksh seemed to have mysteriously taken the cosmic contamination — caused by supersonic vibrations from the *Dhoomaketu* — from the water which was used to staunch the wounds. On the morrow, to the amazement of everyone, Sankaran was still alive, but weak. The treatment was continued for another twenty days. The wounds were completely healed; only a few ugly scars remained to offer silent testimony to the vice of the *Chondath* tusk."

"Now I see the point of your...." I said, but before I could finish the sentence the train shuddered, the carriage zigzagged, the brakes screeched and the lights went out. A sound like that of a skyscraper collapsing during an earthquake mixed with the shrieks and wails of a thousand men, women and children smote my ears. The roof of the van in which we were travelling burst into a hundred splinters and I felt I was being hurled through space...

Twenty days later I opened my eyes to find my body and face swathed in bandages and my hand in a sling.

"A miracle, A miracle," one doctor was whispering to another cocking an eye at me. A few more weeks passed before I was told what happened. At my persistent request a nurse of the Hospital held a two-month-old newspaper for me to read.

I seized on the facts:

.....TRAIN TRAGEDY—Express Derails at Vaniyambadi—153 killed—Three carriages immediately behind the engine smashed to smithereens. Of the two first class passengers who were the sole occupants of the van next to the engine, one is in a precarious condition.....

"That was me," I thought.

...The other passenger, a young Nambudiri of a well known Mana, miraculously escaped without a scratch though his luggage and other effects were lost...."

"The work of The Family Heirloom-The Sacred Rudraksh?" I said to myself.    ††

### THE TIME WASTED!

*It would surprise the cheque-using public if they knew how much time is spent in trying to decipher their writing on cheques and in dealing with inaccuracies.*

*The girl he had picked up from the gutter became his wife but on their wedding night death stared them both in the face!*

## Day Of Reckoning

IT was the twenty-first day of the month. The month was March, and the year, 1927. To geographers and astronomers this day was just another milestone in the sun's orbit, better known as the equinox with equal day and equal night. But to the three characters dominating our story, the day was something more memorable. This day to them was a landmark in the annals of each, where caught in the conflict between good and evil, the latter had balanced with the former by a strange decree of the same unknown hand that had equalised the light and darkness of that day.

On this day when our story begins, a Madurai-bound express train was steaming through the arid plains of Dindigul. It meandered between rocky crags and tiny hillocks interspersed by a tuft or two of cactus, the only fauna of that region, like a dismembered, disjointed, prehistoric serpent, bellowing out fire and smoke in its course.

The heat inside the carriages was oppressive. Passengers were

cursing the temperature; some were patiently fanning themselves with newspapers, and emitting hissing sounds through closed lips. A child unable to bear the heat wailed out incessantly as if to put the shrill whistles of the engine itself to shame.

"Please, can I have some water?" a mother's voice en-

### SHORT STORY

BY

Edwin DeSagay

treated. The woman at the farther end beside the window turned round sharply. Condescendingly she handed over the flask she kept beside her and looked at the man sitting opposite to her. A faint smile spread on her face.

He addressed her rather suddenly "Malini, a penny for your thoughts!" She shook her graceful head coquettishly, and rested her eyes on the child that

a moment ago had nearly blown its top off.

Madhan seemed to read the thoughts manifesting in the mind of his wife. Like all women she was picturing the day when she too could have her own offspring to fondle, pamper and finally spoil. And, yet, it was only that day they had been married.

THE marriage had taken place suddenly. A handful of Madhan's closest friends had alone attended the ceremony. The function had been so very unpretentious. Madhan had no remorse over it. He had always wanted it to be so. From the first day he had set eyes upon Malini, the vaults in his heart had been sealed to other women. In her, he beheld an unsophisticated angelic charm and the ardour to possess her was irresistible. So, finally driven to fever point by her tantalizing beauty, he had asked her to be his wife. Blind to all social barriers he had demanded only for her love, and she had given it to him freely, reluctantly at first, for it was the last thing she had expected from him. One thing alone he knew about her. She was one of those unfortunate beings thrown to the charity of a censorious world, for when barely in her teens, she had lost both father and mother.

Now as the express train rushed past rocky boulders and dry waste-land, these thoughts crowded in his brain. Events

in his life were, he felt, running surprisingly fast. He had enlisted in the police force as a Sub-inspector only six years back. Now he was Inspector of Police within such a short period. His officers considered him as one of the best sleuths in the force considering the hundreds of murderers, counterfeiters and bootleggers, he had brought to book. He now reflected how his friends at Madurai would take the surprise. There would be reproaches mingled with amazement. He ought to have sent a wire at least instead of bringing his bride before an unsuspecting, innocent group of friends.

A passenger interrupted his thoughts by asking for the time. He looked at his watch. It had stopped. "We are due in Madurai in an hour," he calmly replied. They were now passing through rich green paddy fields. Luxuriant vineyards flanked the sides at places. A cool breeze poured into the carriage and the passengers were now in a mood for conversation.

The hands of the electric clock in the Madurai Railway station showed 7-30 as the train drew alongside the platform. Madhan gripped his wife's arm firmly as he guided her through the thronging crowd of passengers, to a bus-stop nearby.

"WE are almost home," he told her tenderly as they alighted from the bus at Chokkikulam terminus. "Are we?" she queried with evident satisfaction.

The couple skipped across the dark and deserted road and walked briskly, talking and laughing in subdued voices. "One more corner dear, and home-sweet home," he assured. And finally they stepped up the stone steps leading to their home.

MADHAN fumbled in the dark for the electric switch in the veranda. There was a click as the bulb burst forth with incandescence.

Upon that instant, both were taken aback. Not two feet away stood the haggard figure of an ill-clothed man with unkempt hair and grizzly beard. In his hand he held a sharp knife raised as if to strike. His malicious eyes blazed with unleashed fury, and the metal in his hand glinted threateningly.

There was silence as the men faced each other, only a few spaces dividing them. Malini shivered in her soles. Her teeth chattered in her mouth and low moans escaped from her trembling lips.

The intruder broke the silence. "So you are the great inspector Madhan?" He seemed to spit out the words. "Why do you squirm like a scared kitten, you sour-faced cold-footed man? Have you lost your pluck?"

The truth dawned upon Madhan. It had been quite a long time back. This hideous monster confronting him was then a sleek, up-to-date gentleman by day and a ruthless killer by dusk. He was the brains of a slippery gang of underworld characters whom Madhan had craftily trapped. The evidence being limited, the judges could award him only five years' rigorous imprisonment. The intruder seemed to sense Madhan's thoughts. He stepped closer and drew a vicious arc in the air with his knife. "Five years",.....he pronounced sardonically. "Five bitter years, behind four grey walls, each moment bringing anguish and a thousand torments because of you. And, now, the day of reckoning is at hand to wreak the vengeance of those silent days of passive, impotent waiting, for the extermination of that scum called Madhan."

Madhan interrupted the tirade as the intruder was about to proceed. "Don't waste your time with baby talk. Do what your wicked mind compels, but spare this innocent woman—my wife". He laid stress on the last two words.

"YOUR wife?" interjected the stranger.

"Yes, my bride," Madhan replied, "We were married to-day."

It was only then that the trespasser seemed to observe the presence of a woman. His eyes rested on Malini for a trifle too long. Madhan felt an uncomfortable feeling welling up in his chest. This ruthless fiend would stop at nothing and stoop to anything. He would not have the least bit of sympathy for a woman, and go off afterwards without remorse.

A prolonged moment of silence prevailed. Then the grizzly head quivered as he spoke "No...no. I have lost again."

The knife clattered on the stone floor as he slunk into the inky night.

Madhan could not comprehend the strange behaviour of the intruder. "Good must have outweighed the evil in him", he remarked to his wife later. But Malini alone knew the answer. It was something different. The intruder was her blood brother!      ‡‡

## A Night Of Folly

—Continued from page 5

She examined me and shook her head. She said I was a month too late and so nothing could be done in my case.

I thought of telling the truth to Sister. But then, I feared, she would be hurt beyond expression and would never forgive me. The doctors, I am glad to inform you, have pronounced her cured and permitted her to return home tomorrow.

So, my dearest Yasodha, this is my last letter to you. Before my sister's return I must disappear. How? I have secured from a chemist a certain powder which I shall take after posting this letter. I will swallow the powder with some water before retiring to bed and next morning they will find me dead. They will all be sorry of course but they know I have a weak heart. There is indeed no place for a wretch like me on this earth. Good-bye, dearest, and good luck.—  
Mohana.      ‡‡

## FAR AHEAD!

*There is nothing shameful about being bald. Most of the human race will be without cranial adornment in a few aeons. We (bald-heads) are just a few millenniums ahead of our time!*

*An exquisite blend of grace and beauty, Sridevi won the devotion of the man who came forward to marry her but became the mistress of an Englishman who rescued her. Amazing is the sequel to this tangle of love and passion.*

# Maiden of Malabar

ONE stormy night when the wind was roaring among the trees and the rain was battering our tiled roof, Grandfather told us this remarkable story. And I am reproducing it in his own words:

The last century was coming to a close. You know, my children, the forests of Malabar were as wild then as they were beautiful and the white men who ruled over us did not think of destroying them. Our village was some fifty miles away from Calicut and on the outskirts of this village was a dak bungalow wherein was residing a young Englishman, Thompson by name. He was a forest officer but people in the surrounding villages feared and respected him. And his word was law. Every morning at ten o'clock he would come out of his bungalow on horseback, shouldering his rifle, and some of the villagers

would stand gaping and staring at him. He was an extraordinarily handsome man, six-foot-tall with sea-blue eyes and brown hair. Unlike other dorais, he had informal ways and a ready smile for the village people. What was even more amazing, within two years of his arrival in our midst he had acquired a working knowledge of Malayalam and endeared himself to us by speaking in our own language. All the same, we were afraid of him and would seldom speak to him, unless spoken to.

LIKE the majority of the white men ruling over us, Thompson had one terrible weakness—women. This was the information confidentially passed on to me by his chief butler, Govi—short for Govind. He had three or four comely concubines, chosen from among the women of the surrounding villages. But

Short Story By SANKUNNI NAIR

he was generous with his purse and used to give them liberal allowances every month.

ONE fateful evening, Thompson was riding in search of a huge tusker that had run amuck. One of his bullets had grazed the animal's back and it became all the more infuriated and destroyed whatever caught its fancy—a thatched hut, cart or cow. The villagers had shut themselves in when they learnt that it had seized a lonely wayfarer with its trunk and dashed him to death against a tree.

As he was riding on a beaten track that ran round a flower garden in the midst of which nestled a hut he saw an amazing sight and pulled up his horse.

From the hut emerged a young woman of remarkable beauty. Her body seemed to be of golden sheen and as the rays of the setting sun fell on her even the hard-headed Thompson was persuaded that she must be a fairy from the forest. With basket in hand she began to pluck the flowers with her nimble fingers, unaware of the stranger who was staring at her in undisguised admiration.

She suddenly turned back and was startled to see him standing a few yards away. But she was far from scared. She had often seen him riding and heard many stories about him. She bowed her head in greeting and held her palms together.

"Young lady," he said, doffing his hat and speaking in Malayalam, "why are you alone at this hour? Are there no elders in this hut?"

"My mother Ammukutti has gone to the neighbouring village to sell flowers, saheb. My father died long ago and my name is Sridevi. May I know what service you expect of us now?"

Thompson smiled.

"Don't you know, Sridevi, that a big elephant is running amuck and that if it chooses to pass this side it will pull down this hut and trample down its inmates. I have been hunting after it but one of my bullets made it madder than ever. But I am returning to my bungalow now. It is not safe to go after the tusker in the night and I will resume the hunting only in the morning. It is even possible a herd of elephants may join the rogue and play havoc in the fields and villages."

Sridevi wrung her hands in despair. "I don't know what will happen to my mother. But she has some friends in the next village who will probably detain her. Where can I go, I wonder. There is Appu Nair who is in Thekku Matom, six miles away."

"Well, who is Appu Nair? Shall I take you to his house?" he offered.

"No, saheb," she blushed. "He is the man whom I am to

marry next month. It is improper."

There was a muffled noise from afar—the patter of heavy feet. Thompson didn't speak another word. He seized Sridevi by the waist, hoisted her on to the back of his horse, sprang beside her himself and rode at top speed to his own bungalow.

BUTLER Govind was astounded at the sight of the young woman who got down with his master but his face was blank and expressionless as usual. He was a cousin of Appu Nair and had often seen the maiden who was betrothed and to the celebration of whose marriage he had been looking forward. Poor Nair! His hopes were doomed. Only two years ago he had opened a grocery store which served the needs of several neighbouring villages. Now he was rich enough to claim the hand of the fairest of maidens and set up home. Alas! the parrot had been caught in the hands of this white monkey.

But Thompson adopted quite a different attitude to her. He was almost worshipful and very considerate towards her. He ordered Govi to serve her vegetarian dishes and then when supper was over he made a pretext of showing her his room upstairs. The butler bent his ear to listen for her protests and screams. But he was disappointed. He understood that

she had fallen for him as much as he had fallen for her. From the next day a great change had taken place in the Englishman's household. Sridevi ruled like a queen. Thompson had discarded his other concubines. Govi brought in Sridevi's mother who meekly accepted her daughter's situation and consented to live in a part of the bungalow. Thompson gave his mistress three-quarters of his salary and asked her to keep house for him.

When Appu Nair came to know of Sridevi's treachery he kept mum. Govi's words would have whipped any other man into fury and a resolve to take revenge. But who would dare oppose a white man who had the power to shoot all the villagers dead and could get away with it? Govi even suggested that he should mix the provisions supplied to Thompson with poison and quietly kill him. Appu Nair sternly rebuked him. "You don't know what you are talking about. Even now I love that beautiful girl but I will stoop to no mean deed for a temporary gain. Go away, Govi, you are eating that man's salt and don't you think evil of him. Leave me alone, please!"

For a year Thompson and Sridevi lived happily like two creepers twined together. Alone he went to Madras suddenly and returned after a fortnight's absence. The young woman embraced him in joy and kissed him warmly on the lips. Then

she whispered to him of the child she was expecting in five months. Thompson gave a violent start and did not look pleased on hearing this news. "Listen, dear," he said. "I am going to England on six months' leave. I have certain matters to settle at home. I am sure to come back here at the end of the period. Till then, darling, you will have to go back to your house in the garden. Of course, I shall give you a month's pay that should keep you above want until my return. I am dismissing all the servants by tomorrow morning. The bungalow will remain vacant until my successor comes. I am leaving by 11 o'clock tomorrow to catch the evening train at Calicut."

TEARS were Sridevi's only answer and she didn't approach him again. That very night she went back with her mother to their cottage in the garden. Ashamed of his cowardly attitude, Thompson slunk out of the village and only a few subordinates stood together to give him a send-off.

Appu Nair once again resumed his visits to Sridevi. The fact that she was pregnant did not upset him but he was gravely concerned about her weak condition. The blood seemed to have been drained out of her system and she had difficulty in walking. One morning when he went to her house as usual he found her mother standing at the entrance with moist eyes.

"Early this morning, Appu, Sridevi was delivered of a still-born child. Oh, how beautiful it looks even in death. My daughter is just now recovering consciousness. Come in. Tell me what next should be done."

Appu Nair brought in an Ayurvedic physician who gave her some pills and expressed his confidence that she would be all right in a few days. Then with two of his friends Appu Nair carried the little dead body to the burial ground and buried it.

It took four months for Sridevi to make a complete recovery. Meanwhile, Appu Nair sold his business to Govi and left one night with Sridevi and her mother for an unknown destination. Some said he had gone to Palghat but others said he was in Quilon. Nobody, however, knew for certain where he was.

THE villagers were astonished when Thompson hurried back to his post a month after Sridevi's exit. He went straight to the grocery store and asked Govi to bring her. The ex-butler told him the story of the still-born child and Sridevi's sudden departure for an unknown destination with Appu Nair who must have married her. Thompson staggered back to his bungalow. That he was still madly in love with the beautiful Malabari damsel was plain enough.

Govi gathered some interesting details from a junior officer about Thompson's sudden visit to England. Before leaving for India he had announced his engagement to Josephine. She was a widow with a ten-year-old girl by her first husband. She was somewhat attractive but she had lots of money and that was the main incentive to Thompson. She was eager to accompany him to India but Thompson asked her to wait for a while—at least until such time as he could settle down in a cool place and comfortable bungalow. After fixing these he would return home, marry her and together they could all sail for India.

JOSEPHINE was agreeable to this and waited and waited. Beyond scribbling one or two formal brief notes he did not tell her anything about his plans or indicate the date of his arrival. The woman was so vexed that she wrote to the Madras Governor complaining about Thompson's conduct and threatening a breach of promise suit. Well, in those days such action was considered to lower the prestige of the white man in the eyes of Indians. So Thompson was asked to go to Madras and there he was lectured and admonished. Vexed and humiliated, Thompson disbanded his bungalow and hurried to England. Even while on the seas his heart began to ache for the lovely woman whom he had left behind. He was stung to the quick at the thought of the

shabby treatment he had meted out to her.

IN London, Josephine received him warmly and was content to accept Thompson's apology for his seemingly indifferent conduct. The young man found his fiancée uglier and older. When she enquired whether he had fixed his bungalow and how big was the city wherein he was working, he gave her a frightful description of the huge forest so full of wild animals in the midst of which stood his dwelling. Being a city-bred girl, Josephine was horrified and broke off the engagement. Breathing a sigh of relief, Thompson returned to Malabar, eager to win back the beautiful woman who haunted his dreams. But she had vanished like a fairy...

The next day, as the servant forced open his master's bedroom door, Thompson was found dead. He had shot himself with a pistol. ††

#### REAL PURPOSE

"Dear Mary,—Words cannot paint how much I regret having broken off our engagement. I realize now that I need you—more than ever. Will you please come back to me? Life without you is barren and has no meaning. Your absence leaves a space which nobody else can ever fill.—Your remorseful lover, Ted.

"P.S.—By the way, congratulation on winning the football pool."

*An extremely funny story :*

# The Last Resort!

By RAJAN

*You can laugh even in the face of tragedy. That was what Bhasi did when he entered the hotel and gorged himself !*

THE whole town was in an uproar due to the disastrous effects of widespread food poisoning. The death toll increased day by day and in less serious cases numerous people landed in hospitals. The local dailies devoted column after column going deep into the causes which brought about this sudden calamity. To the small and peaceful population of the town this came as a rude shock. They discussed about it in parks and on roadsides. The atmosphere was heavily charged with apprehension, suspense and dismal gloom. People refrained from visiting hotels and coffee-houses. Considering this, the fraternity of the hotel owners seemed to be the worst hit by the mishap.

Perhaps there was one man unaffected and undisturbed by these dangerous happenings. He is the hero of our story. Generally people called him by the name Bhasi. But I have also heard mischievous urchins poking fun at him by calling him the "Weightlifter". For Bhasi presented a very poor

specimen of humanity. Lean, lanky, haggard and with a slight stoop—he more or less looked like a skeleton. He had a wild-looking face but his deep-sunk eyes still retained a mischievous gleam. At first sight he appeared to be a middle aged man but a closer scrutiny would sufficiently convince anybody that perennial starvation had made him look older. In his favourite haunt in the bus stand he would be ever ready to oblige any man who had some luggage to be taken anywhere. But unlike his other colleagues he never higgled about his charges. A few paise...and his face brightened with a mystical smile but then there was an inexplicable philosophical sadness lurking somewhere in his face that reminded one of a grim struggle to control some agonising pain.

That day there was particular reason for Bhasi to be sad. The two previous days he had gone completely without food. Excruciating hunger gnawed at his stomach. It was nearing evening and still his attempts at procuring a few annas proved futile. Exist

he must—he decided he had to do something. In a sudden spurt of effort he started walking. Soon he was in the Bazaar. The hotels seemed deserted save for the array of flies that were nestling unmolested on the tables. Bhasi walked on. He was in the main street of the town. On both sides of the road he could see big hotels with cushioned chairs and ceiling fans. All on a sudden Bhasi stopped. His pale shrunken face lighted with that same sardonic smile. His mischievous eyes shone for once. Next moment Bhasi was inside one of the big hotels of the town. Seated in a comfortable seat he surveyed the scene. He was almost alone in the spacious room of the hotel and as the waiter came he ordered briyani and kurma. The hotel manager was eyeing him with cool disfavour. But he was his first customer since morning. Why should he lose him by any hasty action, the hotel manager asked himself.

With a nonchalance that disarmed all who doubted his capacity to foot the heavy bill, Bhasi started attacking the briyani before him. He ate greedily and in a short time he emptied the whole plate and took a lot of sweets. The hotel manager, strict disciplinarian that he was, signed to the waiter to present the bill. But as the waiter approached with the bill, Bhasi slumped forward in his seat with a frightening shriek. For one full minute the host of waiters and the manager

stood still, thunder-struck as it were. The hotel manager was the first man to grasp the situation. There was the deadly poison in the food served to the customer. He leapfrogged from his chair and was near Bhasi in a trice. Bhasi was making all sorts of curious sounds and heaving rapidly. He was also sweating all over. The waiters helped Bhasi to a reclining position on a nearby bench. By this time a small crowd had also collected before the hotel and some persons were trying to have a glimpse of the unfortunate victim. It was then that the manager woke up from his dreams. Now the whole situation was unfolding itself before him. The deadly spectacle of the police jeep before his hotel and all the thousand and one troubles came before his mind. He stared blankly at Bhasi in bewildered despair. One of the waiters had now gone and brought a taxi to rush the victim to the hospital. And as the victim was taken and the manager was seating himself in the front seat it was sad to behold his face. It was paler than Bhasi's. The car sped towards the general hospital. The driver, realising the urgency of the situation, was driving at top speed. Suddenly there was some movement inside the car. Bhasi had shaken himself free from the hold of the waiters and was now sitting. The manager looked back. He heaved a sigh of relief. After all, he thought the condition was not so serious as all that. It

*—Please see page 28*

# PRETTY WAS THE BRIDE

By SOMAYAJULU

A NUMBER of rickshawallahs gathered round Kasi, their colleague in the profession, and congratulated him on his marriage with a nice-looking woman. Theirs was a platform wedding, performed under the presidentship of a local leader. The ceremony was run through with an exchange of flower garlands.

"Three cheers for Kasi and his bride!" shouted the rickshawallahs who had come to attend the ceremony.

"What is her name?" asked one.

"Oh! Vasanthi! A fine name, isn't it?"

A third man joined in the conversation.

*Love in the hut is at times as magnificent as that in the palace. Vasanthi, the old rickshawallah's second wife, was a mature beauty but she had a shady past...*

"Kasi is an extraordinarily lucky fellow, I say, to marry such a grand-looking woman. So pretty and so buxom but I guess she is twenty-eight. I wonder what attraction she has found in Kasi, who is nearing fifty and whose front tooth is missing."

"Better not talk ill of our colleague," snubbed one of them.

"HE deserves of this happiness. As they say, love is blind. The bride is like a blossom in the mud. She does not belong to the city. Kasi is not handsome, of course. But he has a smooth tongue and winsome manners and no woman dislikes him. It is unfortunate that he lost his first wife five years ago."

"We have come to Kasi's hut

it last," shouted an old man. "Let us go back to our duties and leave the couple alone."

The rickshawallahs indulged in a loud, coarse laugh at this suggestion and went their several ways.

KASI'S hut was one of three that stood at the edge of the Cooum river-bed where a cool wind always blew. Overlooking the huts was a long broad stony pavement which skirted a busy road.

A small power lamp was burning in a corner of the hut and he was sitting with her back turned towards him. He, too, was very shy but mustered up courage at last and spoke in an uncertain voice. "Well, well, you seem to have gone dumb."

She giggled but still fixed her eyes on the wall. "Don't you now every new wife must be silent for some days at least?" he said without turning her face to him.

He laughed outright. "Are you the same girl who met me near the Central Station every night and talked her head off? But marriage, as they say, is some magic that transforms people. You look more lovely today. Come nearer. Oh, I forgot! Bring those two paper bags. They contain buns and sweets."

She jumped like a squirrel,

grabbed the bags and dumped them at his feet.

"Come on, serve them out to me on a paper and help yourself also. Aren't you hungry? But from tomorrow, you know..." he paused.

"What? From tomorrow onwards?" she repeated, wondering.

"You have got to cook. I will buy new pots and bring the provisions."

"You will find my cooking delicious, I guarantee," she smiled. "And then you won't be tempted to eat anywhere else."

They finished their light repast in silence. A sudden gust from the river blew out the little lamp and plunged the hut in utter darkness. He seized her in his strong arms and gave her a loud smack on her lips. She pushed him violently back. "Before I allow you again to kiss me, may I ask you about the small gold nose-screw you promised on my wedding day?"

HE laughed coarsely. "That is all, is it? All my savings in that tin-box will be yours. Soon you will have a nose-screw, a gold chain and glittering earrings. Are you satisfied, dearie?"

She relented at last and gave him a kiss of her own accord.

Kasi's colleagues often had occasion to chide him for toiling like a slave day and night. "I seldom see you in your hut, man," complained Muni, who was a close chum of his. "What if you are a married man? Even if you work eight hours a day you can earn your daily quota of four or five rupees. But why do you work in the nights as well? It will affect your heart, fellow, and reduce the span of your life. You don't want to leave a pretty widow?"

KASI laughed uproariously at his friend's query. "What a question, Muni? She and I are agreed that we should have a hutful of children but she is a bit extravagant, wants jewels and all that and loves costly food. I suppose there is no harm in indulging her whims."

"That is all right," commented his friend. "But there is a limit to this sort of dirty job. Don't over-strain yourself," he warned.

He returned to his hut early that day for his meal but did not find his wife. He inferred that she must have gone to the bazaar. He then took out his small tin-box which he had stuffed with coins and currency notes. He emptied the contents on the floor and quickly counted them. "My God!" he exclaimed. "Another hundred rupees she has taken in less than a week. We are left only with five hundred. I don't know what she is doing with my life's savings."

He replaced the box in the hole in the corner and emerged from the hut, when he saw his wife hastening. She was carrying a bag of provisions and looked rather scared at his sight. But his smile was reassuring. "There is no hurry for the meal. I just peeped in to see how you were carrying on." He pointed at the sky, "You see the storm-clouds; there will be heavy wind and rain. So I expect to make more money by carrying stranded people at taxi rates. You had better not expect me till early morning."

He put on his rain-proof canvas over-coat and strode out with his vehicle. Vasanthi smiled warmly at him. "But I expect you to return at least before 3 a. m. You need some good sleep."

As he anticipated, a storm unleashed its fury and the skies opened out a virtual deluge. By midnight Kasi had earned twenty rupees and longed to go back to the warmth of his hut and the arms of his wife. He left his rickshaw behind a tree on the platform and walked eagerly towards his hut. There was not a soul to be seen outside the other huts. Everyone was sleeping inside. He was about to call his wife to open the door but he suddenly came to a dead stop when he heard voices inside. The light was burning powerfully and through a crevice in the back wall of the hut he could see and hear very well. His wife was talking to a dark, fierce-

looking man of thirty with a curly head. He was very strong and very stout and his speech and manner indicated that he was drunk.

"Only a hundred rupees, you wretch of a woman? I have not seen him but I allowed you to marry him because you promised to steal all his savings for me. Two months back you gave me only fifty. You said he had a thousand rupees salted away. Now you are lying. Do you forget that you are my mistress at all times?"

He gave her such a mighty slap in the face that she sank to the floor without a cry. He snatched off the gold chain from her neck, and stealthily crept out of the hut. Kasi waited until the stranger reached the road. It had begun to rain again. He went into his hut, saw that his wife was having only a faint, and poured a tumbler of cold water on her face. He blew out the lamp lest she should recognise him. He closely buttoned his coat and sallied out. It was raining harder than ever and he quickly took out his rickshaw into the road. The headlights of a motor car showed the stranger standing under a tree. He was pulling his vehicle at a rapid pace when the stranger accosted him. "Hey, rickshaw! Stop there. Take me to the nearest taxi stand, will you?"

Kasi paused and peered at him. "All right, master, get

in. But there is no rain-screen for the vehicle. Be quick, please," he urged.

The stranger sprang into the rickshaw and breathed a sigh of relief. Kasi took him on a roundabout route and halted in the centre of a small vehicular bridge which had a three-foot parapet wall. He 'downed' the vehicle, muttering something to himself. He felt the rim of the wheel and then told his passenger, "Will you please step down for a minute? I shall set right the wheel in a minute. It is a bit rickety."

The stranger grunted as he obliged and covered his face with his hands to keep off the lashing rain. Kasi who was bending low sprang like a tiger at his wife's assailant. He produced a long iron rod which he aimed at his head. One blow was enough to send him staggering against the parapet wall. Kasi then gave him such a vigorous kick that he toppled over the wall into the deep dark waters of the Cooum.

The next morning the police fished out a dead body from the Cooum but they had no clue to identify the dead man. All that he had were ten ten-rupee notes which were soaked and reduced to a pulp and a small gold chain.

WHEN Kasi opened the door of his hut his wife received him with a welcome smile. He em-

braced her with unusual warmth and affection and said enigmatically, "I had a dream while sleeping in the rickshaw, dear. Your troubles are all over, and from now on you will be really happy."

VASANTHI kissed her husband for a reply. Then, sobbing suddenly she told him the story of the man who had overshadowed her life. His name was Veeru—a bad character. As a smart leader of the light-fingered gentry he was quite prosperous and kept a bunch of mistresses of whom herself (Vasanthi) was one. She was entrusted with part of his stolen goods and she was enjoined to keep her mouth shut. Often he used to kick and beat her until she screamed and lost consciousness.

Somehow, she continued, Veeru had come to know that Kasi had some savings and instigated her to steal the money after a sham marriage with him.

"But I swear to you, dear," Vasanthi cried, "that the day I came to this hut I came to love you and hate the rascal but he continues to blackmail me. Two hours ago he came here..."

Kasi drew her into his arms, and pressed his right palm against her mouth. "I know you love me, dear. Don't talk about him hereafter. I have sent him away on a long, long

journey, and you won't see him at all. Now let us sleep and be happy." ¶¶

### The Last Resort!

—Continued from page 23

was Bhasi who broke the ice. He said, "Where are you people taking me to? I am all right. Please leave me on the road by myself." The owner guffawed in delight. In supreme relief he asked the driver to stop the car. For once he had to obey Bhasi, the coolie. He let Bhasi out; thanked his stars for saving him from the grim ordeal of a police check-up.

Free once again, and as the car with the hotel manager moved out of sight, Bhasi felt his stomach with a grin. It was full! ¶¶

### OUTWITTED

A man bought some fine Havana cigars and had them insured against fire. After smoking them all, he put in a claim on the grounds that they had been destroyed by fire. The indignant insurance executives naturally refused to pay, so the wiseacre sued. What's more, he won his case.

The judge decided that once the company had accepted a premium and issued policy, it was financially responsible.

The sharpie accepted payment, but had little time to gloat. The insurance company had him arrested for arson!

### Juicy Anecdotes:

## GOSSIP-THE SALT OF LIFE!

By K. R. VAIDYANATHAN

SOMETIME ago, I read a news item that the houses in Sangli were having a 'Swastika' or cross mark to appease a couple of spooks. This reminded me of a similar incident that took place in my village, some years ago.

Sangli is attributable to gossip too. But I cannot resist the temptation to recall here instances of gossip if only to show to what extent idle talk can shape our lives.

One day, there was a widespread rumour in the village that whoever did not put a trident mark in impressive colours on the front wall of the house, would have his house visited by a ghost after midnight. There were some seemingly brave men who would not be cowed down by the fear of ghosts, others who brushed this aside as mere gossip and even challenged that they would not succumb to it. But believe it or not, every house had the mark, the next morning!

It was realised much too late that gossip was at work, let loose by some superstitious merchants trading in colours. Let me, however, hasten to add that this is not to conjecture that the story of

There was the young, good-looking girl who came to our place from a remote town to earn a living. She was subsequently appointed as a teacher in the local primary school. An young man, also a teacher in the same school, fell for her. They were soon married and started life happily. But people would not let them alone. Rumour spread around that the girl had already been married and was a widow, having lost her husband soon after the marriage. The husband who eventually heard this became frantic. They quarrelled frequently. There was anything but peace in the house. People jeered at them, even boycotted them. The poor girl became desperate. Unable to stand

the slander any longer she fled and disappeared overnight. Later the poor husband also followed suit and nothing was ever heard about them—a tragic example of what malicious gossip could do to take people out of existence!

Once, a golden necklace was missing from a house. Sure enough, the maid-servant of the house was accused of taking it, thanks to gossipers who were already at work. The police arrested her. A few days later, the theft of a few rupees under similar circumstances was reported from another house. Investigations revealed that these thefts were the result of a ruse played by a young thief who was masquerading as a beggar and entering the houses freely for alms. But it was too late and damage had already been done to the reputation of the young girl.

But the rumour-mongers are not always that bad. They can also turn a situation for the better, if only they so desire. A rich man had a daughter of marriageable age. But there was no one to marry her in spite of tempting dowry. Reason: the girl was squint-eyed, with protruding teeth, and was rather imbecile. Her parents were naturally driven to desperation. They could no longer hold up their heads in public. Fortunately many of their so-called friends came to their rescue. They got to work and opinion was so created that a prospective brideg-

room, a middle-aged man, coming late one night, heard everything in the girl's favour. What he ultimately saw was a young fashionable girl wearing dark glasses standing before him in dazzling light. Suffice it to say the marriage was solemnised at the next available 'muhurt'. The very next day the happy couple left for Singapore where the man was working.

Instances like this could be multiplied. But then we have to admit that gossip has become an essential part of our lives. Every man and woman sometime or other, wittingly or unwittingly, indulges in loose talk or becomes a victim of gossip.

People seem to have an uncanny knack of prying into other people's lives. A chance comment on someone's character or some casual event would be promptly picked up by wagging tongues and exaggerated out of all proportion. Nay, they can even fabricate or distort stories when circumstances so demand.

"Why do people gossip?" one may ask. Herein lies the answer: "Gossip has a bad name, because so much malice is associated with it. But gossip, in the true and undefiled sense, is nourishment from the good earth of the doings of the people. True love and gossip stem from the same root: an interest in other people. When that interest is lacking much of the saving salt of life is gone." It

# A Sprained Ankle

(By FAMILY DOCTOR)

"A **SPRAINED** Ankle" is one of those terms which has been used for so many different conditions that I think I should start discussing it by defining what I mean. I mean, an ankle whose ligaments have been stretched; they need not have been torn, and in fact, so tough are these cords binding the joint together, that it is really very unusual for them to be torn at all. In fact, the fibula, the slender supporting bone of the leg, often snaps before any of the ligaments give way under stress.

## The Swelling

What happens when the ligaments are stretched? The first thing is that blood leaks out, very quickly, into the tissues and forms a large swelling, which is painful. The blood clots and then has to be absorbed slowly, so that it may take some weeks before it finally disappears. While it is there it is preventing normal movements, and is of no use; so if you can prevent it in the first place, so much the

better. You prevent it by pressure just over the injured place, at once. But before you do this, you will want to be sure it is the right thing; that is, you must be fairly certain it is a sprain.

## Simple Test

It is not too difficult to tell the difference between a sprain and a broken ankle immediately after the damage is done. Later, if there is a lot of swelling, it can be so difficult that only an X-ray will make perfectly sure. But at the moment when it happens, before the swelling starts, you can try pressing on the painful part (not too hard) and see if this is over the bone or the joint. At the ankle if it hurts to press on the bony knob at the side, it is most likely broken ankle. If the sore spot is the hollow below the knob, you are probably dealing with sprain.

## Pressure Bandage

If you decide it is a sprain, try to make a firm bandage over

it, with your handkerchief as a pressure pad, and keep on walking. If you can do this, you have a good chance that you will avoid the swelling altogether, and have no further trouble. If this is not possible, but you still think it is a sprain and if you happen to be near home, you can try putting the foot and ankle in two bowls of water alternately, one as hot as you can bear it without risk of scalding, and the other very cold. You leave the foot in each bowl just long enough to get accustomed to the different temperature, and then exchange again. After this you tie a pressure bandage over the ankle, with a big pad of cotton wool. Do remember, with these bandages, that if the ankle becomes more swollen you must loosen them; it is very dangerous to leave them on if they become tight, as you may easily stop the circulation, especially in older people.

#### Most Usual Sprain

You may find that these measures were sufficient to stop the swelling, but that you still get a sharp twinge of pain now and then, when you move the foot in a particular direction, other movements being painless. In this case, you are getting pain when you make movements which put the damaged ligament on the stretch; it is asking to be rested until it has had time to heal; and you should do everything to avoid these painful movements. The most usual sprain is on the outside of

the ankle, and so bending the foot inwards, so that its outside edge is along the ground, will produce pain. You can use adhesive strapping to keep your foot slightly turned the opposite way, so that the inside edge tends to be along the ground. Other movements should still be free, and you should be able to walk around easily.

Just occasionally this fails, and the ankle keeps on giving way. In these cases, and happily they are unusual, the ligament has been torn and an operation is necessary to repair it. Generally the result of this is quite satisfactory, and as I said, it is a rare necessity.

#### Breaks Vary

If you are not sure it is a sprain, or if you think it is really a broken ankle, then you must rest it. Breaks vary from cracks in bone with no separation of pieces, to complete fracture with two bits of bone no longer joined together. In such a case the foot would be quite obviously out of position. The minor kind is, again, the more common. If in doubt, you can try pressing on the bone farther up the leg, or bending the foot (by hand, not by itself) towards the side of the injury. If it is broken, either of these will make it hurt. (In a sprain, it hurts to bend it away from the injured side, because this stretches the ligament). If in doubt, see your doctor. ‡‡

## SHORT STORY

# THE CALL OF LOVE

By VIDYASAGAR

*[She forgot that she was a married woman and a mother.  
and fell into her lover's arms again. . . .]*

KAMALA was singing a tuneless cinema song, repeating all the comic gestures of the actress who gave it life on the screen. With arms akimbo, old Parvathi, her mother-in-law, stood behind her, watching the scene and ominously shaking her head. Unaware of the formidable and forbidding figure behind her, Kamala swung her hips and danced merrily. Though she was twenty-five she was supple and graceful and her body bent and twisted at will.

Suddenly she froze in terror and silence as she looked at the long shadow of her mother-in-law before her. She at once squatted on the floor, picked up a vessel and began cleaning it with tamarind paste.

But Parvathi would not leave her at that. "Are you not ashamed, woman?" she snarled. "You seem to forget that you are a full-grown woman, well past the giddy age of seventeen. Have you forgotten that your son, Mohan, is three years old

and that your daughter Munna is getting on for two? And you are dancing as if you are just a little girl out of your frock."

KAMALA made no reply. Her face was now a deep red and the silent tears that she shed mingled with the water with which she was washing the vessels. There came a tap-tap on the floor. Kamala knew that it was Babu, her husband, but didn't turn her head in his direction to smile a welcome to him. He was returning from a neighbouring village after three days' stay there. He had his vast farms there where harvesting operations had just been completed. Tall and thin, he was stern of countenance and keen of eye. He was a little past forty and though his head was turning grey he carried his years well. He was a man of wiry build but he had one serious physical defect that detracted considerably from his personality. He was lame of one leg; his left foot was slightly malformed and he walked with a big strong walking stick.

But Babu was worth several lakhs of rupees, and parents with daughters of marriageable age came to his village to negotiate. For several years he refused to marry. Only when his mother pointed out to him that his property would go to some undesirable relations if he died issueless, he began to think seriously about matrimony. His choice ultimately fell on Kamala, the daughter of a rice merchant in the city which was twenty-five miles away from his village.

HE brought a cold and indifferent bride to his home but he had fallen madly in love with her. She was beautiful as well as intelligent. After completing High School she had taken lessons in a music-and-dancing academy. She had acted bit parts in some films. Her parents had intended her for a career and allowed her unrestricted liberty. Sundar, a distant relation on her mother's side, was her constant companion and escort. Himself a player of minor importance, he secured for her small parts in the films.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Sundar exerted a hypnotic influence on Kamala. He often induced her to go with him on the pretext of having to take part in some outdoor shooting. She would return home late in the night or in the small hours of the morning. When the neighbours began to gossip Kamala's mother woke up and bestirred herself. One old lady told her how she had seen Sundar kissing

Kamala in the dark lonely lane leading to the temple tank. From that day she forbade her daughter to leave the house alone or speak with Sundar.

The young woman denied the rumours against her and attributed them to malice and spite. But her mother was stubborn. "How can there be smoke without fire?" she snubbed her into silence. "Don't I know Sundar? He is the true son of his father who ruined several decent girls in his time. But we can't bar the door to that young man or his father. Be polite when he attempts a conversation but avoid any familiarity, I warn you."

FOR several days the girl moped and moaned in the solitude of her room. Sundar smelt out some trouble and discreetly kept away from the house. Kamala refused to touch her food for some days and went on sulking. Then her mother mocked. Her very behaviour in abstaining from food or drink was self-convicting. It showed up a girl who was love-sick. Ashamed, Kamala began to eat and drink as if to deny her mother's charge. She even looked quite gay and normal and made her parents think that she had got over her disappointment, if any. Actually she was planning to elope with Sundar, or commit suicide by throwing herself into a well if Sundar refused.

Unwilling to sacrifice their daughter to Sundar, they hustled her into a marriage with Babu. Kamala's father used to buy

Babu's paddy and market it in the form of rice. When he advertised for a bride in the City paper the old man invited him to his house and asked him to see Kamala. Babu had read up only to Third Form in school but he had pots of gold and vast acres of paddy fields in the midst of which stood his fine old house. Kamala was better read than himself. The village landlord said that it would be a privilege to marry her but he did not disguise the fact that he was very old—double the age of Kamala—and that he lacked sophistication. But his limitations were overlooked and the marriage was arranged in no time. Kamala's parents wanted a life of comfort and security for her and this was certainly assured.

BABU was a cautious type of man and would not let his wife go to her parents' house even though the City was so near. His mother was even more suspicious and held that City girls should never be left out of sight. Kamala herself felt that her husband's home was like a jail; until the birth of Munna she had remained in the village. Her parents used to visit her once in a month or two and though they invited both Babu and Kamala several times to visit their home they would not comply. Always Babu found some excuse or other. It was harvest time, the house had to be repaired; the revenue inspector was camping in his village, and so on.

Came the chance at last. Little Munna was having continuous

fever for days and the village *vaid* advised Babu to have her examined by an expert children's doctor in the City. Babu then suggested that Kamala should take Munna alone to her parents' house and consult a doctor there. Even the mother-in-law did not oppose the proposal as she, too, was very fond of Munna. Kamala invited her husband also to accompany her but he unaccountably declined. It was the day on which she sang and danced and drew the withering criticism of her mother-in-law that she departed with her daughter for the City. And she left Mohan behind.

IT was her fourth day in the City. Kamala had recaptured the gaiety and buoyancy of her early days when she had been making merry with Sundar. And chance brought Sundar again into her house on the third day. Her father was on a tour and her mother alone remained in the house. This time she did not object to the young man's presence because she felt that her daughter was now a mother and with a better sense of responsibility.

Towards evening Kamala asked her mother to take Munna to the doctor. She remained alone in the house and was combing her hair when Sundar suddenly burst in. He was whistling a song. He had put on a subtle perfume—a mixture of lavender and rose—that he knew Kamala could hardly resist in those days.

"My dearest Kamala," he cooed, "you look even more attractive these days. What about a picture this evening together?" He was slowly edging towards the chair on which she was sitting.

"Oh, Sundar! Please don't tempt me. It has begun to rain, you see. Moreover, my child is very ill," she pleaded though her eyes betrayed her flaming desire.

"There is your mother to look after your daughter. We shall have a jolly time and return before midnight. I daresay nobody will notice us. Come on, darling."

He drew her towards him, folded her in his arms and kissed her ardently on the lips. "It is heaven, dear, to remain in your embrace," she whispered.

She did not open her eyes and he went on kissing her on her face and the back of her neck. Neither of them noticed that the door was being slowly pushed open and that a man wearing a turban and shirt, and drenched to the skin, was watching them. Sundar accidentally saw him after a few minutes and bawled, "Get away, you beggar, or I will kick you, There is none here to give you alms."

THE stranger did not move. With eyes blazing in fury he aimed one smart blow with his huge stick on Sundar's shoulder. With a piercing howl Sundar dropped the woman in his arms and before he moved towards a

safe corner of the room another blow descended on his head and he fell down unconscious.

Only then did Kamala wake up from her dream of ecstasy to confront her husband. She screamed and a mighty blow on her rump sent her cowering to the opposite wall. Babu did not speak a word. He sat on a chair like a sphinx until the mother-in-law returned with Munna. Meanwhile, Sundar had regained his consciousness and, feeling a big bump on his head, quietly staggered out of the house and disappeared. Babu had come unannounced with all the eagerness and affection of a father to see his precious little daughter. He felt glad that he had come in time to punish the wicked man and foil his purpose.

KAMALA was afraid that Babu would leave her alone and take away her two children. But he did nothing of the sort. He was still too fond of her to dream of doing such a thing. He brought a taxi and asked her to get in. But she couldn't get up. Her left leg had been broken by his blow. He abandoned the journey and had to remain in the City until her fractured leg was set right. After two weeks the doctors discharged her from the hospital, Kamala discovered that she, too, had become lame like her husband. They went home at last. Babu did not speak a word about this incident to his mother nor did he chide his wife afterwards. But he never again trusted his wife out of sight! ‡‡

*Snappy Skit*

## WITH MEN OF OTHER PLANETS!

By M. V. CHANDRAN

*[Will our birth-control experts have to retire soon?  
What a ticklish prospect!]*

THRILLED, as I usually am, by prospects of even minor journeys or out-door programmes for a change from my clap-trap environments, you can imagine the dizzy heights of excitement I reached, at the prospect of inter-planetary travel promised by the success of our earth satellites. Apart from several personal aspects, I visualise some far-reaching changes for mankind as a whole. I am convinced that the co-operation of the new planet—even the first one alone to start with—inhabited by some sort of human species, can forthwith solve or alleviate some of the major and even the insoluble problems of our world.

Firstly, the baffling problem of our population. It is well known that our world population is increasing at such a frightening pace that in due course, our world, even with all its desert areas and other vacant

places will be too small a place for such a number. Would it not then become possible to transport conveniently a substantial quota of the extras to other worlds? Our birth control experts, incidentally, will have relief at last in compulsory retirement. How far will they enjoy it and what next will be their plans? My imagination, I must confess, fails to visualise.

The new abodes of civilisation may also enlarge the avenues of employment to the thousands in our midst, hard pressed for enough jobs in our all too small world. Fortunately, for the applicants, there could be no difficult restrictions such as having to be a 'domicile of the world, similar to the conditions imposed by some of our mundane States, though, of course, reservation of posts is likely for certain categories of candidates. Such for the citizens of the other planet and possibly, for those

belonging to the western or eastern half of our world. In any case, the latter kind of discriminations will perforce take time to be born. But woe betide us if our new fellow human beings are themselves waiting for similar reliefs and looking forward to reaching the earth!

And what of the place of interview and the travelling allowance, you might ask. Well, such *modus operandi* will be settled only in due course. It also remains to be seen whether degrees secured in the Universities of the new planet will continue to be such a craze with our employers as are foreign degrees with certain categories in our world.

Would it not also be possible to augment our earth's resources of food and other essentials through imposts? Countries with long-term national development plans, hard pressed for resources, might usefully exploit, well in advance the new world and its avenues. But woe betide if . . .

Our ingenious traders and businessmen will naturally seize this lifetime's opportunity to dump on the new plane spurious and worthless earthly goods. And the exchanges heartily offered by their ingenious counter-parts might correspond-

ingly be of no intrinsic value, either! A strict business code of morality would therefore be imperative, rigorously imposed by some world authorities like the United Nations.

The question of political creeds of our new friends may perhaps be too baffling, *prima facie*. Whether their sympathy and support will be for the totalitarian or democratic creeds will be influenced greatly by nation or party to accost them first. Gradually, with their understanding of our international political creeds, would also develop inter-space "power blocs," as an extension of the existing terrestrial models. The rights of the new passage will perhaps be owned and controlled by the pioneering nation or group without fear of intransigent attempts to defy such authority, thanks to the Suez lesson.

It is my sincere feeling and suggestion to our peace-minded world leaders, therefore, that even more seriously and urgently than nuclear tests, all experiments in inter-planetary travels might be sensibly suspended until a satisfactory accord is reached on these vital controversial points and their innumerable repercussions and effective remedies are discovered for them. ‡

*In Lighter Vein :*

## WHEN CHAIRS AND BOTTLES FLY

By P. C. NATARAJAN

TWO persons can be found locked in each other's arms under a variety of circumstances. If they happen to be a pair of young lovers, there is then nothing for the third party to do but to tiptoe away as silently and quickly as possible before the intrusion is noticed and resented. Very recently, the members of an Australian State Legislature, however, had to react differently when they saw their own Premier and Liberal member in the said situation in the course of a close scuffle between the two. Excitement mounted inside the House as some members tried to separate the assailants and others rushed for the exits.

Occurrences like this one—wild scenes inside national assemblies—are getting commoner everyday all over the world, as any regular newspaper reader will tell you. Only the other day we heard of the siren

sounding the alarm in the Chamber of Deputies of a Mediterranean country when the left-wingers came to blows with opposing members of the centre and right-wing. The fighting proceeded briskly and had made much headway before the ushers could successfully throw themselves between the assailing parties and bring peace to the troubled scene. Still recent is the news coming from a Middle Eastern country where the two hundred Deputies of the Parliament came to clashes twice during a three-day debate on religious affairs and the national budget, many of them receiving injuries in the course of the fighting!

That things should go on in this way may sadden people who value the dignity and decorum associated with all Parliamentary proceedings, but let us look at the brighter side of these skirmishes also. They came as a climax when the ineffectuality of mere

wordy wrangles of allegations and counter-allegations is felt and the situation demands something better. These lovely incidents provide the necessary outlet for the keyed-up politicians and newspaper reports of them certainly add pep to events for the man in the street, activating him with fresh enthusiasm when life looked dull and monotonous and everything seemed to go wrong.

And here is yet another instance of stirring events reported in a stirring way. Trouble brews inside an Indian State Assembly in connection with the no-confidence motion brought against the Ministry. Next thing, all newspaper posters display the matter in the evening with headlines blazing forth.

The arresting nature of the news and the effect of the block-letters caption are not lost upon the most weebegone citizen that ever plodded his weary way back home after a long day of drudgery at the office desk. "Stop and hear me!" cries the poster cheerfully, "Much juicy matter awaits you in the newspaper today!" Fumbling in his coat pocket our citizen brings out the necessary naye paise and the newspaper changes hands. There it is all! The episode in its entirety is there—how the no-confidence motion was lost amidst jeers, hoots and bhajans, and how the Opposition and other groups fought for the mace in the House, the former quickly rolling up their sleeves for a full-scale battle.

Notice the new jauntiness in our citizen's walking now as he hurries to discuss with his colleagues the animated news of the day!

The readiness with which such eventful situations stir up the common man—even if he is no more than a human automaton—out of his lethargy and infect him with their own liveliness—the cause for it is not far to seek. The fighting instinct is there in all of us, though we have largely succeeded in harnessing and diverting it along channels that are agreeable to the times we live in. Under the crust of civilisation and culture which we are wearing on the top, human nature is, and will always be, as incorrigible as ever. When we enjoy the election campaigns with rival candidates tearing to pieces each other's reputations, we are no better than the Roman audience that drew pleasure out of the bloody combats of the gladiators—only we have substituted a verbal fight in the place of a physical one. Indeed, this elevation of matters from the physical to the mental plane is the characteristic of our progressing civilisation. However, when things go down to the physical level, when we least expect them to do so, as in the case of open fights in assemblies, they may come as a shock to the refined nature in us but the atavistic nature in us comes up then and tastes the raw pleasure of the occasion!

—Please see page 52

## HUMOROUS STORY

*You will explode with laughter over this funniest of yarns...!*

# The Missing Snuff Box!

KESAVA PILLAI, manufacturer of Serve-All Scented Snuff, woke up at twelve midnight, as usual, to take a long shot of his own product and then resume his sweet slumber. His surprise and vexation could be better imagined than described when he found his silver snuff-box missing. Though Pillai was getting on for sixty-five, there had been no occasion in all his business career when memory had failed him like this. Every evening as he closed his factory he would himself open the earthenware jar and take out snuff with the iron ladle to fill his own silver box. He would not trust even his faithful assistant, Ulaganathan, to perform this daily ritual.

Nor would Pillai use any other brand of snuff except his own. As the long minutes dragged by with leaden feet his torture became unbearable. He threw down the pillows from his cot and looked for the snuff-box

underneath. He flung aside the bedsheets, too, but his search led him nowhere. He growled at his wife sleeping in a corner of the room. Bhagyam rubbed her eyes open and stared at her husband in astonishment.

"What has happened? Did you find any scorpion in the bed?" she asked timidly.

BY

SUBHA

PILLAI went straight to the question. "Did you see my silver snuff-box?" he demanded.

"No, I didn't," answered the wife. "And that has caused all this upset, I suppose?"

He ignored the irony in her tone and desperately waved his hands. "Oh, what am I going to do? The box has been mislaid. Can I ever think of a

snuffless night? I fear I will be off my head if I don't get a pinch."

"STEADY, dear," comforted Bhagyam. "Ulaganathan is sleeping on the *pial* outside. I shall give him the keys and ask him to open the factory and fetch some snuff. Can't you trust him? We have brought him up like a son along with our darling Leela."

"It is not a question of trusting him. He is too good a boy. Only, he hates this business though he doesn't tell me so. That is why I have decided not to give him our daughter in marriage," said Pillai as if more to himself than to his wife.

Bhagyam pulled him up. "You are going off at a tangent, dear. Shall we send Ulaganathan to fetch some snuff?"

"Suppose some thief strangles him and knocks off all the cash in the safe there? No, no, I would rather die of snuffless agony before the morning than have the factory opened now. Bhagyam, who do you think could have pinched my snuff box? I daresay this house harbours at least one thief. I am a merciless man, you know, and when I track him down I shall hand him over to the police or kick him out of the house."

He suddenly blew his nose and held his head in his hands. "It

is just a dull ache now but it will soon split my head."

Bhagyam came close and placed her hand caressingly on his shoulder. "I can't see you suffer like this. Remember, day after tomorrow Selvam Pillai and his son Somu are arriving here to negotiate the betrothal of our daughter. Don't look so sour. You already seem to prefer a daughterless life to a snuffless existence."

"Our Leela is no mere slip of a girl," retorted the old man. "Is it not time we married her off? She is twenty-four. Another thing. Since Leela is our only child and will be inheriting my business, her husband must be a capable and honest man. Don't you think that Somu deserves of her hand and fortune?"

"I don't know much about Somu. But his father, Selvam Pillai, is a notorious spendthrift. Do you think he will not cast a covetous eye on Leela's money? I pray God I should precede you to Kailas. But supposing I am destined to survive you, do you imagine Selvam Pillai will agree to let me live with Leela?"

At this thought, she began to snivel and wipe her tear-dimmed eyes with the tail-end of her sari.

Kesava Pillai patted her on the back. "That aspect of the matter escaped my attention

altogether. I shall think about it. But, ah my head! It is splitting almost. What shall I do?"

BHAGYAM forgot her own problem and looked miserable at the sight of her husband's suffering. "Our servant, Velu, is a veteran snuff-taker, dear. Shall I get a little of the stuff from him?"

"God forbid! You call it snuff indeed. I will never use any other brand but my own, do you hear?" he suddenly shouted.

There was a gentle knock on the door from outside. "May I know if anything has gone wrong? Can I be of some assistance to you?" queried a voice.

The old couple breathed a sigh of relief. "It is our Ulaganathan!" they exclaimed together. "Come in. We were just talking a little loud, that is all."

A tall, handsome man with sparkling eyes and a winsome smile entered the room.

"Ulaganathan," spoke Bhagyam. "Our Annaru has mislaid his silver snuff-box and is having a hell of a time for want of a pinch. I suggested you should go to the factory with the keys and bring some snuff. But he wouldn't listen."

"I am ever at your beck and call. I am only sorry that Annaru is suffering. But if only I knew of this earlier..." he paused.

"What would you have done?" asked Kesava Pillai impatiently, even sceptically.

But Ulaganathan was humble enough. "This evening, Annaru, before leaving the factory I had secreted in a dried plantain bark some six pinches of snuff from the jar. You see, I am suffering from a bad cold and I thought our snuff would help cure it speedily," he said, grinning.

"And so you have exhausted it all?" demanded Pillai in vexation bordering on disappointment.

"LUCKILY, Annaru, here is snuff enough for two good pinches," assured the young man, producing a little packet from his shirt pocket.

At one jump Kesava Pillai bounded forward with the agility of a young athlete, grabbed the packet from Ulaganathan's hands, took one long shot of the Serve-All Scented Snuff and groaned in relief with tears streaming down his cheeks.

"How thoughtful of you!" remarked Bhagyam to Ulaganathan.

"Oh, don't give another thought to it. Now, Annaru,

if you don't go to sleep you will fall ill and the guests will be displeased. Let me go."

"Just a minute, Ulaganathan," said the old man. "I want to ask you a plain simple question. Are you willing to marry Leela and run my business? You know, you are an orphan and we have brought you up from the cradle. Will you care for us in our old age? Say, 'yes' or 'no'."

"Yes, Annaru, I will consider it a privilege to marry Leela whom I love, and to serve you two whom I regard as..."

"Enough!" shouted Kesava Pillai, holding up his hand. "But I know your heart is not in the snuff business. All the same if you fulfil the one condition that I am going to stipulate, the marriage is as good as fixed and I shall wire to Selvam Pillai not to come."

"Yes, Annaru."

"That you will be a regular snuff-user and will always keep a silver-box filled with Serve-All Scented Snuff."

"Yes, Annaru," agreed young man, smiling.

"See how cautious Annaru is," mocked the old woman. "He is making sure that his experience of tonight should not repeat itself. Anyway, Ulaganathan, you have made me happy tonight. May God bless you and Leela."

THE young man left the room and in another minute Kesava Pillai was snoring with a smile of contentment on his face.

Bhagyam peered round cautiously, then dug up a silver snuff-box from the folds of her sari and replaced it under her husband's pillow. She had achieved her aim. Her husband's prejudice against Ulaganathan had been dissipated through a borrowed pinch of snuff! That was what she had wanted! ††

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# BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

By LINDSAY HAMILTON

"AH! You're just in time, Tony," Major Grier thrust aside a sheaf of typewritten papers he had been studying closely for the past hour.

"Oh, Lord!" Tony grinned good-humouredly. "Don't tell me, it's another case."

Energy and intense zeal shone in Grier's eyes like a fever. He was never so happy as in the early stages of investigating any crime with baffling or contradictory features.

"I want you with me in this, Tony. For once we are working against all the apparent evidence."

"You forget I'm the sleeping partner," Tony grumbled. He stretched himself full-length on

a couch and sighed contentedly. "Spring-cleaning, cuss 'em. The bathroom is my only sanctuary, and you can't really rest under a leaky tap...Well, fire away, Major, old lad. I'll be with you in spirit, as they say."

IN no way irritated by Tony's appearance of drowsy inattention, Major Grier began to explain.

"It's the Maida Vale murder; Inspector Benson is on the case. I don't think he quite relishes the job. Old Benson, under the skin, is a bit of a sentimentalist. A very attractive young lady is under grave suspicion. May have to arrest her—he feels it will come to that—he is trying to help her with the other hand. We are called in on this young lady's behalf."

"On the side of the angels?" murmured Tony.

"I don't know about that," replied Grier dryly. "Wait until you hear the story. I'll give you the facts as briefly as I can, and after that the statements made by various witnesses."

"THROW me another cushion, then. If you're going to spout I may as well be comfortable."

"The unfortunate victim was a wealthy woman of a retiring nature. She came to London twelve years ago when her husband, a Lancashire millowner, died and left her sixty-five thousand pounds. Two years later she was married again to John Sinclair, a schoolmaster. Naturally he gave up his life of struggling and, according to all reports, cared for his middle-aged wife with a devotion that their friends and acquaintances describe as touching. The more so since six months ago Mrs. Sinclair's health gave way, leaving her a helpless invalid.

"And that brings us to Miss Alice Payne, the nurse. She was the third Mrs. Sinclair had. The other two, in one way or another, had proved unsatisfactory. Mrs. Sinclair was an extremely timid woman, generous to a fault, but the strong practical type of woman terrified her. Her husband found this treasure, Miss Payne; she was not a professional, but she was fully qualified, and, it seems Mrs.

Sinclair found her very sympathetic and kind."

"Is she the party in distress?" asked Tony, in a voice of gloom. "Paragon of virtue and all that. I don't like paragons."

"No, not Miss Payne, but Enid Templeton, Mrs. Sinclair's companion. I have already said Mrs. Sinclair was a kindhearted woman. Enid Templeton is a living testimony of it. Mrs. Sinclair treated her as if she were a beloved daughter. Gave her beautiful clothes, allowed her to indulge in all the pleasures dear to a young girl's heart. Enid seems to have led a life of unrestricted gaiety—dances, theatres, parties, and so on.

"THERE is one other important witness you must meet before I tell you the facts of the murder, and that is the housekeeper, Maria Finch. She comes under the heading of faithful servitor by virtue of ten years' contented service with the Sinclairs.

"On the night of the crime Mrs. Sinclair, Enid, the housekeeper and maid—I think we can disregard her entirely—were alone in the house. Mr. Sinclair was indulging in his one yearly dissipation—a re-union dinner. He was not home until 12.45 a.m. A taxi driver confirms the hour. The nurse had begged leave to spend the night with her mother who wrote to say she was ill and depressed. Mrs. Sinclair seldom needed any atten-

tion during the night, so the matter was easily arranged. She had been killed by means of prussic acid forcibly administered, for her neck was marked as though a hand had held her down by the throat."

Major Grier tapped the papers in front of him with his finger.

"INSPECTOR Benson's report is singularly dramatic. Enid Templeton had a sensational story to tell. About 9.30 p.m. she retired to her bedroom to write letters, but fell asleep in her chair. She woke suddenly, feeling cold and frightened. Some one was trying the door of her room. The door rattled. Whoever it was apparently changed his mind and shuffled off down the corridor, stumbled quite noisily and let out a muttered curse. There was dead silence for a time, and then a door downstairs closed with a snap. Enid Templeton says she looked instinctively at the clock and noted that it was exactly eleven o'clock.

"She summoned all her courage and crept downstairs. Now Mrs. Sinclair's bedroom is on the ground floor, and can be approached either through a sitting-room or direct from the corridor. The sitting-room was the nearest way, and it was to this door Enid went. The only sound in the house was the ticking of an old grandfather clock inside the room. She opened the door and stood there petrified with terror. Directly in front of her the

clock-face showed up plainly in the moonlight filtering through the window. You can well understand that at a moment like that the picture of it would be photographed permanently on her brain....."

Tony fidgetted uneasily, then made a despairing gesture. "Oh, Lord, Major, don't keep me in suspense! You were going strong until the clock got in the way. She wasn't scared at the clock, was she?"

"No, but it is a point of importance, for it confirms beyond doubt the hour of crime, if her story is true. It was a minute past eleven when she left her room. The grandfather clock proves that she made no mistake. It stood at two minutes past eleven. What actually frightened her was a noise from the inner room—a shuffle of feet, a sudden gurgling cry, followed by a tense whisper; 'Now then, where d'you keep 'em?....out with it, quick'.

"THE rest of the story is incredibly weak. Enid says she crept away intending to summon assistance.

"In the corridor she was seized from behind and a hand clapped over her face. She struggled and tried to scream. Something was thrown over her head and shoulders; her arms and legs were bound, and she was carried upstairs. She remembers being thrown on the bed and lying there helpless and terror-

stricken. Then, she asserts, she must have fainted, for she remembers nothing until the housekeeper came to her room in the morning with the tragic news."

"THAT's a bit of a tall yarn," said Tony in perplexity. "One doesn't usually remain in a faint for eight hours or so."

"When you hear the rest you will think it not only tall, but childish," said Grier. "She says she was left bound and gagged, yes, she was found in her night attire in bed by Maria Finch next morning. Asked to explain, she had no explanation to give. Her story suggested an attempt by someone to extort from Mrs. Sinclair by force the whereabouts of her jewellery. The safe was in that very room for any eye to see. It wasn't tampered with. No one had broken into the house by door or window. The husband, closely questioned by Benson, admitted with reluctance that one article of his wife's jewellery was missing. Inspector Benson produced a pearl necklace he had found in Enid's room. It was the missing article."

"She at once protested that Mrs. Sinclair had given it to her a few days ago. She was to have worn it at the Three Arts Ball for the first time. Sinclair was quick to admit that this might be true, only he had not known it. His wife was amazingly generous, but as a rule she took a delight in recounting in a

simple way her kindly works. Evidently she had forgotten to tell him. It was unusual, but quite possible.

"Further facts came out. Mrs. Sinclair had recently added a codicil to her will, leaving Enid a very substantial legacy. Enid denied knowledge of this. You see the trend of every single and separate piece of evidence?"

Tony nodded. "What have the housekeeper and the maid to say?"

"VERY little, but it goes to strengthen Benson's conviction that Enid's story is pure fabrication. The girl took her mistress a hot drink at a quarter to eleven, turned out the light, and went up to the housekeeper's room where she stayed talking with the door open for at least half an hour. Both she and the housekeeper are emphatic that no one was moving in the house during that time; if there had been they would certainly have heard the sound of the door closing with a snap as described by Enid."

"Another small point to which Benson attaches importance, is the fact that Maria Finch, after ten years' contented service, had handed in her notice only that morning. She apparently resented Enid's presence in the house, and her assumption of authority. To complete the evidence I ought to tell you that Sinclair's movements from the

time he left the house until the taxi deposited him outside the door at 12-45 have been satisfactorily accounted for and confirmed. The nurse spent the night at her mother's house."

"It amounts to this," said Tony in a sleepy voice, "our little Enid is in the soup. If she didn't do it, who did? Do you know there's something beautifully simple about this case? She either did or she didn't. Assuming she didn't, the answer is—well, we'll call it a lemon for the present."

At that moment the telephone bell rang. Major Grier returned from a brief conversation, with a sour smile.

"Benson is piling it up," he remarked, and shook his head dubiously. "I'm afraid we are on a certain loser this time. Enid Templeton's real name is Higgins; her mother served a sentence for fraud—she was a fortune-teller."

Tony made a gesture as of a weary patient waving aside nasty medicine.

"Tell Benson her father may be a printer's devil, but we don't care." He rose to his feet and stretched himself. "I think I'll toddle along to Maida Vale. I could do with a grandfather clock. I wonder if Sinclair has any further use for it."

The Sinclair residence was a detached house of medium size.

Tony wasted no time in admiring its spick and span exterior. He rang and asked for Miss Templeton.

Five minutes' conversation with the distraught girl served to convince her that he was here to act as her friend. Tony certainly had a way of winning the confidence of beauty in distress. She told him at once a story substantially identical with the one he had already heard. She went further and confided to him the story of her past—of how she had left her mother and struggled to free herself from the tawdry association of childhood.

Tony looked at his watch, went to the door and opened it. He stood listening for a time.

"Doesn't that grandfather clock chime?" he asked.

"No, it's been out of order for some days."

"OH! Did you hear it chime the hour that night, or was it out of order then?"

Enid stared into space. Gradually her eyes widened. She drew a quick gasping breath.

"I—I never thought of that before." Tense excitement made her almost whisper the words. "The clock was all right—all the day. Yet, it did not strike eleven that night. I should have heard it, I'm sure of it."

Tony began to smile in his peculiarly sleepy way.

"I suppose the clock in your bedroom is reliable? Haven't you a wrist-watch?"

"Yes, but it was away for repairs.

Mr. Sinclair took it for me. The bedroom clock never varies a minute. I'm very particular about it—in fact I...." she stopped suddenly as though bereft of words to express some new bewilderment.

"Well?" murmured Tony.

"It is curious. Why didn't I think of it before! I always keep it five minutes fast for I hate being late for anything. Yet—oh, I can't understand it."

"Yet," supplied Tony softly, "it was exactly in time with the grandfather clock?"

She nodded. Tony smiled his entire satisfaction and changed the drift of his questions.

"You fainted, you say? Had you ever fainted before?"

"Yes, twice before." She strove to recall details of the occasions, but Tony cut in at once.

"And the sensation of going over—was it the same that night?"

She looked at him with eyes perplexed and a trifle startled.

"It—it was different, but I hadn't thought of it before. It was not so sudden."

Tony surprisingly took her arm, and, pushing back the loose sleeve, examined the soft white skin minutely. Astonished, she submitted and held the other arm out for inspection. Above the elbow Tony found a tiny red mark, dropped her arm and smiled.

"It was no faint," he remarked. "You were pricked by a hypodermic needle. In the struggle you would scarcely feel it. And now, I want to see the ante-room I shall be there for some time. Will you see that I'm not disturbed?"

She left him in the long narrow room next to Mrs. Sinclair's bedroom, apparently lost in admiration of a grandfather clock standing against the right hand wall. Tony opened the door, peered inside, and began to feel about in the works as though searching for something.

[It wanted but half of a minute to twelve o'clock. Tony was watching the clock-face with eager intentness, as though expecting it to give voice to its secret knowledge, when the door of the room suddenly flew open and the owner of the clock stood staring at him with every symptom of amazement and alarm.

Ten minutes later Tony was speaking rapidly over the tele-

phone to Inspector Benson. The little he had to say was so convincing that the Inspector applied immediately for a warrant for the arrest of John Sinclair, and dispatched an officer to detain Miss Alice Payne.

"It is thought," said Grier, discussing the exciting chase that followed, "that Sinclair, realising there was no escape with the flying squad hard on his heels, and the police all along the road warned to look out for him, deliberately drove the car into the river. He must have rushed straight off for his accomplice immediately the minute you left, picked her up and tried to make a quiet getaway. Anyway, they've paid the penalty, both of them. What I can't understand is why he should suddenly cut and run for it. So far as he knew he wasn't even suspected."

"He saw me watching the clock," said Tony. "And that was quite enough for him."

Grier frowned in evident perplexity. "You haven't explained the clock business. Something to do with his alibi, I suppose?"

"Exactly," agreed Tony dreamily. "I don't like paragons, and I don't much care for alibis when they're too perfect. Assuming Enid Templeton's innocence there was only one

solution. All I had to do was to concentrate on smashing that precious pair's alibi. Sinclair was not home that night until nearly one o'clock. Therefore our Enid was wrong about the time.

"The rest was easy. The clock itself gave the game away. Sinclair knew it when he found me waiting for it to strike twelve. It didn't strike two. You know as well as I do that when the chime mechanism runs down, or is jammed, when it is set in motion again, whatever the actual hour, it will just strike one more than it struck before it was obstructed.

"Sinclair had jammed the chiming mechanism between one o'clock and two o'clock in the morning. It was a last-minute precaution—something he had overlooked in his careful plans. That fellow had some nerve, Major. He made sure Enid had no watch—he may have tampered with it himself. To arrange an alibi for his lover, Alice Payne, was simple. She lived within easy reach and could leave her mother's house in the night without being missed. Together they carried out the ghastly business. Sinclair then stole up to Enid's bedroom, after setting the grandfather clock back to somewhere near eleven. There was a risk in choosing such an early hour,

but he gambled on her habits of retiring early when she was at home, and the fact that she was a heavy sleeper. He succeeded in setting her bedroom clock back, crept outside and made some noise to disturb and bring her down to investigate. The whispered threats and gurgle were acted for her benefit. Sinclair slipped out into the corridor and seized her from behind. They knew she would tell the simple truth in the morning, so they deliberately set out to make her story sound like a foolish fabrication."

"By Gad!" exclaimed Grier with some vehemence, "and they nearly succeeded, too."

Tony grinned expansively as he went to the phone. "Benson missed one piece of damning evidence," he observed mildly. "I'm going to give it him now. Enid's father was a plumber's mate.... I say, Major, old lad, I'll sleep here if you've got a shake down; that bathroom tap of mine is still leaking." ‡‡

(Concluded.)

#### When Chairs And Bottles Fly

—Continued from page 40

Chairs and bottles are some of the missiles that come in handy for members during fights in overseas Parliaments to render the opponents speechless. If the

codes of chivalry were practised in the present times also, the Speaker would have to plead in the midst of the fire-for-all, "Honourable members will at least wait for the women members to get out of the House before they have it all out among themselves!" But this is the era when the fair sex demands equality with men in all respects and the latest news item says women have secured their seats in the British House of Lords also. Under these circumstances, women members may not prefer to remain aloof when things get heated up inside the House but may themselves quite like to have a hand in them!

Finally, when trouble flares up in Parliaments, the young and agile members can easily cope up with the situation but their bulky counterparts will be put to much hardship, being suited for neither offensive nor defensive tactics! ‡‡

#### DISCOVERY

A fond father took his teen-age daughter up to the big city to see her first night-club. When the floor show came on the chorus girls appeared wearing just a dab of gold-and-black satin.

As he stole an uneasy glance at his daughter, she leaned over and whispered. "Do you see what I see?" The father gulped. Then she added: "They're wearing my school colours!"

#### LONG, COMPLETE STORY

## A Girl and Her Money

*When two young women love the same man he can well expect hell of a time and trouble. But when three girls engage in a wild chase after him sympathetic males can well imagine his plight!*

RAMANUJAM was terribly upset. Everything seemed to go wrong with him that day. He did not get the money he expected from his customers but he was pestered with heavy bills which became due that very day. Even the days of grace had expired. His very credit was at stake. To borrow would mean positive destruction of credit. To overdraw was out of the question. He had exhausted his credit in that direction.

At last, finding no other way out, Ramanujam, a business magnate that he was, stooped to do a very dishonourable thing—and a crime in the eye of law, to tide over what he thought to be a temporary crisis.

Ramanujam's family consisted of his wife, two sons, two daughters and a ward, an orphan daughter of his deceased sister.

Ramanujam's wife was an elderly lady in her late forties. Krishna and Govind were his sons, Krishna being the elder of the two. Krishna was a

young man of twenty-five while Govind was his junior by four years. Prema was his elder daughter, slim, tall and beautiful and Susila was her younger sister. Both were in their teens with a difference of three years between them. Susila was pretty, and inclined to be plumpy. Prema was innocent while Susila had a grain of cunning in her wisdom. Prema was a bit vain and was conscious

BY

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of her beauty. Of the brothers, Krishna was a brilliant youth, highly educated with a flair for higher studies. Govind was practical and joined his father in his business after he passed his matric examination.

KAMINI was the ward of Ramanujam. She was the personification of beauty but an adept in domestic work. She

was extraordinarily industrious, was an excellent cook and had a worldly wisdom far beyond her years. Her beauty did not turn her head nor was she conscious of it. She declined to go to college though her uncle offered to pay for her education for she felt that academic qualifications were an unnecessary and purposeless luxury for a girl who did not aim at a career. And Kamini looked forward to settling down only as a housewife.

RAMANUJAM got over his immediate financial crisis. But greater trouble was yet to come. Things did not go as he had expected and disaster after disaster began to descend on his business. He had practically locked himself into his room and took personal charge of his accounts, and his accountants were given other assignments. Not even his own son, Govind who helped him in his business, knew of the real state of affairs.

Ramanujam had a private secretary, Keshav by name. Keshav was a young man of thirty and he was his personal secretary, stenographer and accountant rolled in one. Ramanujam had great trust in Keshav and treated him as a member of his own household. Keshav thus had more than one opportunity of meeting Kamini in his boss's house. Needless to say, this began to grow a strong love between Keshav and Kamini.

It was 8 p.m. Kamini heard a knock at the door. She went to open it and found Keshav on the doorstep. She blushed. The reason was this. There was none in the house except herself. All inmates of the house had left for the cinema. Keshav appreciated her embarrassment.

"I am very sorry, Kamini, I did not know that you were alone, and that my boss was not at home. I wanted to consult him regarding an urgent matter of business importance. Where can I see him?"

"He has gone to the cinema along with others, that's all I know," she replied.

"I am dead tired, Kamini," explained Keshav and took his seat on the bench. "You say he is not at home? Can you at least tell me to which picture he has gone? Then at least I might search him out and convey the information."

Kamini shook her head gloomily.

"I am sorry, Keshav," she said. "I am so indifferent to these pictures that I have not cared to remember the name of the picture they have gone to see."

"What then am I to do?" said Keshav in despair. "It will be just a wild goose chase, if I should try to seek him out

at this time of night. The best I could do is to come again at 11 p.m. meet him and tell him. So I shall be going, Kamini. But I am thirsty. Perhaps you will be good enough to give me a cup of water—preferably hot water if you can."

KAMINI hastily went in, and in a couple of moments brought him steaming coffee. Keshav drank it murmuring a thousand thanks to Kamini.

Suddenly Govind entered and finding Keshav and Kamini exchanging some intimate secrets, turned round to Keshav in anger: "So this is how you reward our kindness to you, Keshav?" he demanded angrily.

"Govind" pleaded Keshav, "I have done nothing wrong. I wanted to meet your father and not finding him was about to go when feeling thirsty I asked for a cup of water..."

"And Kamini served with a cup of coffee," Govind completed the sentence. He then turned to Kamini. "Go in, Kamini. This is not proper for a girl of your age. You should simply have asked him to come some other time and not carry on conversation, offering him drinks and all that nonsense."

"Govind, do not get angry. He was thirsty and as coffee was ready, I gave him a cup," replied Kamini without flinching.

"Enough of this, Kamini," he said curtly, and turning to Keshav, "Now you may go. And mind you, please do not come to this house again."

Keshav bowed and departed.

The very next day, Keshav got a letter from Ramanujam telling him that his services had been terminated. Keshav was literally thrown into the street. He had to seek a fresh job—and he was without a pie. A heavy price to pay for daring to love a lady of rank, he muttered bitterly—under his breath.

KESHAV had a sister, Saroja by name, and he had also an aged mother to support. And the struggle he underwent to keep even this small family going was really great. But Providence relieved his distress to a little extent—he received a periodical remittance of Rs. 50/- per month from an anonymous benefactor whose identity he could not successfully probe. Pride urged him to refuse the remittance but necessity compelled him to pocket his pride and accept it. He packed his pride by swearing to himself that he would find out his benefactor and repay him.

Before Keshav had been peremptorily asked not to come back to his boss's house by Govind, he used to take Saroja to Ramanujam's house and here she met Krishna. Krishna too met her in Keshav's

house. Between Krishna and Keshav sprang a strong bond of friendship, each encouraging the other's love.

When Krishna heard of the dismissal of Keshav, he protested against such unkindness. But both Ramanujam and Govind asked him curtly to mind his own business.

Krishna did not reply but felt greatly hurt that he should have been given such a treatment instead of being given some explanation justifying Keshav's dismissal.

ONE evening, Prema met Keshav on the beach, walking slowly on the Marina with a sad face and with his hands in his pockets. It was Prema who trailed him and Keshav smiled sadly as he wished her.

"Were you able to get another job, Keshav? I am sorry you were given such a short shrift," her tone was full of sympathy for his lot.

"I am trying, Prema," replied Keshav. "But getting a fresh job is not so easy. It may take days—even months."

"I wonder why your services were dispensed with, Keshav," said Prema.

"That is exactly what has pained me, though—I suspect—" But Keshav suppressed himself

and left the sentence unfinished.

Prema's eyes opened wide and she asked what were his suspicions.

Keshav shook his head. "After all, they might be without foundation. After everything is said and done, that is the fate of all private service. We may be chucked out of service and we have no right to ask why," he said.

But Prema was not convinced and itched to know the reasons for his dismissal.

The sad face of Keshav haunted Prema all that night and she swore she would find out the mystery underlying his dismissal.

One midnight Prema heard the voices of her father and brother Krishna in the adjoining room. It was not her fault. She could not but hear them because in the silence of the night, the conversation was clearly audible.

"KRISHNA, will you not follow my advice at least in this vital matter?" her father was saying. "I want you to marry Kamini."

"But I don't love her, father," said Krishna.

"Why not? Is she not beautiful?" asked the father.

"I do not say so, father. She is indeed beautiful. But I have been regarding her as my own sister," he said. "Why not have her married to Govind?" he asked.

"But, I am against it—for various reasons. And Kamini may not love him," said his father.

"ARE you sure Kamini loves me, father?" asked Krishna. "Have you ascertained that?"

"No. But I can persuade her. She is an obedient ward and she will not slight my advice," he remarked.

"Well, father, let me give you this piece of information," said Krishna. "Kamini loves Keshav whom you have dismissed from service."

Ramanujam jumped from his chair as if he had received a rude shock. He thumped on the table. "That shall never take place as long as a spark of life is left in me. I cannot allow Kamini to marry a beggar in the street—and that is what Keshav is now."

With this outburst the nocturnal conversation came to an abrupt end.

Two days later, another conversation took place at the same hour as the previous one. But it was between Ramanujam and Govind. Prema heard this too.

"I hear you are in love with Kamini," began the father cautiously. "Is it true, Govind?"

"It is both true and untrue," asserted Govind.

The father felt intrigued. "Perhaps, you will be good enough to explain. You seem to be talking in riddles."

"I can be frank with you, father," he confessed. "I love her for her money."

"But she is my ward and I can't consent to such an adventurous marriage," he said, with the best composure he could command. "But does she love you?" he asked.

"I have not ascertained," he replied. "But so far as my information goes, she seems to be in love with Keshav. But, I think I can persuade her to love me."

"BUT I am dead against this marriage," thundered the father.

"Half the battle has been won, father," quipped Govind in glee. "I need only your consent."

"No, Govind. I can't agree to this marriage. I have weighed the reasons for my objection. As for money, I shall give you any amount you want. Think well over what I have said."

Both these conversations sent a pang into the heart of Prema. But she overcame this feeling of anguish. Only one doubt assailed her. Did Keshav love Kamini too? She was in a dilemma. She had such affection for Kamini that she regarded her sorrow as her own.

But Providence had more trials for her in store.

ONE day, Kamini came into her room, wreathed in smiles and as was usual with her, she entered into a long conversation with Prema. But, today, Kamini was in gay spirits and looked quite happy.

As the conversation progressed, Kamini became more communicative and opened out her heart to her. She confided to Prema her feelings of love for Keshav and his reciprocation of that love in the fullest measure which had made her so happy and she naturally wanted to share it with Prema. Prema heard her with every appearance of extreme interest and sympathy. But she was undergoing a torture which soon overpowered her; she could bear her agony no longer and she fainted. Kamini, not knowing the real cause, got completely unnerved and sent a shriek of alarm. But Prema soon recovered consciousness and begged Kamini not to make a fuss over her nervous attacks which were usual with her.

Little did Kamini imagine that she was the unwilling cause of her sorrow.

One night, as usual, Prema and Kamini were talking about the latter's love affair with Keshav, when suddenly there was a slight noise near the door which seemed to be pushed open, very slightly. Prema rushed to the door but could see none. Prema laughed at her fears. After all, it might be a breeze which might have forced the door open.

But when the same happened the next night also, Prema was quicker than the intruder and she found a female form retreating into the darkness of the corridor outside her room. But they were now sure that some one—obviously inimically disposed towards them—had been spying on them. Who it could be, they had not the slightest idea.

LET us now turn our attention to Keshav. A week passed after the incidents narrated above happened. It was 9 p.m. Keshav was walking on the "lover's path" in the Marina, thinking of Kamini and the smooth and rapid progress of his love affair, when suddenly some one struck him from behind with what seemed to be a dagger and he fell down on his back without a cry. There lay his body on the "lover's path" in the dark all night, his head injury bleeding profusely. The assailant before he took to his heels inserted a note

into the pocket of Keshav's shirt. He then ran towards the seashore and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

Keshav's body was discovered next morning by a fisherman who was proceeding to catch fish. And he was soon rushed to the hospital.

The news was flashed in the morning papers and it shocked Prema and Kamini who both attended on him night and day during all the time when his very life hung in the balance. And when at last he recovered, his eyes looked lovingly at Kamini and he murmured his gratitude and thanks to Prema.

THE police announced a reward for anyone who would give them a clue for tracking down the assailant. They also inspected the spot and found a towel slightly stained with blood, lying on the ground. The police dogs were now promptly pressed into service. They took the police to a lonely hut in Tondiarpet and stood near a young man who lived in it.

And this man was a notorious rowdy. He made no bones about betraying his paymaster. But even he was not able to identify him for it was a dark night when this unknown man had come to engage him. He wore coloured spectacles and a cloth covered part of his face. He was young and stalwart and slightly short. But the assailant said he

could spot him for his manner of speech was peculiar. He was paid to deal a blow on the head of Keshav but not one serious enough to kill him. The object of the assault was only to intimidate him. Another note was put into his pocket so that he might know the object of the assault.

The police also recovered the note from Keshav's pocket. It ran thus:

*Warning:* 1. This is just to warn you that if you do not give up loving Kamini, the next attempt will be on your life. Be warned.

Kamini begged Keshav to abandon her for she could not reconcile herself to the fact that he should come to any harm because of her. But Keshav swore that he would track down the assailant and his conspirators and bring them to book.

The police took the assailant into custody and made vigorous investigations which did not yield immediate results. But they did not lose hope. They knew there would be a second assault and the entire police were alerted to guard over Keshav without anybody knowing it.

THE police were right in their expectations.

A second attack was made on Keshav. This time it was a stab on his left arm from behind at

the same hour of the night and at the same place. Keshav fainted with loss of blood. He recovered after an hour. This time, too, he found a note pinned on to his shirt. It ran thus:

*Warning: 2* "You have not given up Kamini. Next time, the knife's target will be your heart. Abandon Kamini or die."

THE police rushed to the spot of the assault and found, not one, but two handkerchiefs, made of silk and exquisitely worked, lying on one side of the lover's path. The two police dogs jumped violently at the sight of the kerchiefs and rushed forward while the police followed them. Without even a single stop the dogs rushed with the kerchiefs in their mouths, one in each, and stopped ohly before the house of Ramanujam.

The police asked Ramanujam to bring all the inmates of the house into the central hall. This was done. The dogs sniffed at every one of them. They suddenly sent up a short growl and one of them held the hand of Kamini while the other caught the hand of Prema.

Kamini and Prema shrieked with fright. The police themselves were puzzled. They arrested both the ladies and out of consideration for their status, pending further investigation, they were asked not to go out of the house and two

policemen watched over the house.

When Keshav heard of these incidents, he rushed up to the police chief and told him that some mistake had occurred for he could never suspect Prema and Kamini of such a dastardly crime. The chief shook his head knowingly and coolly said: "We know. Strange things happen in the crime world."

The shock overwhelmed Prema and she pined away in grief. Kamini was more courageous and tried to comfort Prema but without success.

Keshav's health took a serious turn, after a few days of seeming recovery. It was Susila who now nursed him in the hospital with devotion. Prema and Kamini not being able to be near him, Keshav continued to progress very slowly. But Susila seemed to like this prolonged convalescence. She was thrilled to be near Keshav and attend to the smallest of his wants. When he was asleep, she took his hands in her own and covered them with kisses. Her action woke up Keshav who hastily withdrew his hands and looked at Susila in complete wonderment for he never suspected that she was in love with him.

"KESHAV, dear," she entreated. "Do not spurn my love. I have nursed this love for the last two years and have pined to meet you and pour out my heart to you. I do it."

She knelt beside his bed and begged him not to reject her. Keshav felt completely embarrassed and tried to argue with her.

"SUSILA! don't you know I love Kamini and that she loves me? How can I be so faithless as to abandon her? You must really give up this folly," he pleaded earnestly.

Finding Keshav adamant, Susila rose abruptly from his bedside and rushed out of the room, sobbing bitterly.

Susila now plotted to get Prema and Kamini out of her way. It was to work upon their minds in such a way that they would prefer to commit suicide rather than outlive ignominy and imprisonment.

With this purpose in mind, she sought interviews with Prema and Kamini.

"Oh, Kamini!" she said one day. "Keshav's position is becoming worse everyday. I am not very sure he will survive this stab. Throughout yester night, he raved and it was only 5 a.m. that he began to sleep."

Thus she went on working on the minds of Prema and Kamini that Keshav had not a ghost of a chance to live. Naturally they were greatly alarmed. They made one strange request to Susila one day.

"Susila," said Kamini. "I have only one request to make. I am sure you will not refuse."

"I will give even my life to help you, Kamini," said Susila.

"They say opium in large doses is fatal but it kills without tormenting the victim. I want you to get me an overdose of opium. I can never bear to live after Keshav's death."

Susila appeared to be alarmed. "What, Kamini, do you want me to be your murderer? God forbid," she said with as much vehemence as she could command.

"Susila," implored Kamini. "Just consider my fate, in case Keshav dies, I shall lose not only him but also get an imprisonment for murder. Do you not think that death is preferable to these?"

Susila did not reply but appeared greatly perturbed. "I shall think over it and come and tell you," she said and departed.

Two hours later, she came back into the room and handed over a small packet to Kamini. Prema looked on with dazed eyes but said nothing. But as she lay on her bed, she saw a sudden gleam pass over her eyes, which did not escape the attention of Susila.

One day, the police saw Govind conversing in low tones with a bad character in the city and feeling suspicious arrested them. The bad character confessed that it was he who had paid him to stab Keshav on the hand. Govind realised that it was all up with him and made a clean con-

fession the substance of which was as follows :

**H**IS desire to marry Kamini was motivated by his love for her money which was entrusted to his father by her deceased aunt and Kamini's mother. The amount was considerable running into a couple of lakhs of rupees. But Keshav stood in the way. Keshav became the target of love from three ladies. Kamini, Prema and Susila. He and Susila entered into a pact. It was to see that Kamini or Prema did not marry Keshav. But this did not exactly fit in with Govind's plan for he wanted to marry Kamini. The plan was to eliminate Prema from the love-race and see that Kamini married Govind. From Govind's point of view Keshav's existence would continue to constitute an obstacle to his marrying Kamini but there was no help for it for Susila wanted to marry him. The plan was first to get Prema and Kamini out of the way and bring about the marriage of Susila with Keshav and then to devise a way by which Kamini might be induced to marry Govind.

The police informed Kamini and Prema that they were absolutely innocent. Keshav rushed to Ramanujam's house anxious to meet Kamini. Kamini was overjoyed and fell into the arms of her lover. From her bed, Prema smiled sadly. Kamini and Keshav rushed to her bedside with the glad tidings of her freedom. But it was of no use to Prema. She was already

half-dead and the pallor of death was on her face. Kamini suddenly remembered something and searched for it and was alarmed to find it missing. It was the opium packet. The truth suddenly dawned upon her. Her suspicions were confirmed by Prema's confession.

"Kamini, dear! I know what you are searching for!" She said. "I have swallowed it to prevent my dragging on like this half-dead. Now, Keshav, give me your hand. I am not ashamed to confess that I have loved you as deeply as Kamini but her joy is mine. It was I who sent you remittances unable that I was to hear of your privations. Good-bye!" And Prema closed her eyes, smiling, and passed away.

**T**HE rest of the story is soon told: Susila and Govind bolted nobody knew where. As for Ramanujam, he confessed he had embezzled Kamini's money entrusted to him but Kamini forgave him. Keshav confessed he knew of this long ago but had not cared to betray him though it sounded treacherous from the point of view of Kamini. Only one point needs explanation. How did the police dogs point out Kamini and Prema as the culprits? This point was cleared in the course of Govind's confession. Susila had stolen the kerchiefs and asked the assailant to plant them near the place of assault purposely to get them into trouble and to get them out of her way! ‡‡



# IT IS FUN

## SAME PRICE

*Kid Brother :* I saw you kiss my sister last night.

*Boy Friend :* Well, here's a quarter. You just keep quiet about it.

*Kid Brother :* Okay. And here's a nickel change. I charge everybody the same price.

## TROUBLED

*Mrs. McGee :* My little boy is troubled with rheumatism.

*Mrs. McGee :* Really? How did he get it?

*Mrs. McGee :* He hasn't got it. He just doesn't know how to spell it!

\* \* \*

## WHAT A SUGGESTION!

They had once been sweet-hearts. They met now after having been separated five years. She was wheeling a baby carriage.

*He (nervously) :* What a cute baby! How old is he—she—it?

*She :* Just two months.

*He :* What do you know! Your youngest, I suppose?

## REASON

*Kiddie :* Why does a giraffe have such a long neck?

*Mother :* Because its head is so far from its body, I guess.

\* \* \*

## ALL CURSE . . .

*Judy :* What did your father say when you told him you flunked maths because you spent so much time preparing for the beauty contest?

*Trudy* : Shall I leave out the curse words ?

*Judy* : Of course !

*Trudy* : He didn't say a word !

\* \* \*

### SO ABSENT-MINDED

*Professor No. 1* : Has your baby learned to walk yet ?

*Professor No. 2* : Gads, no ! He's just learning to drive the car.

\* \* \*

### CHEAPER !

*Professor* . What do you know about nitrates ?

*Student* : They're cheaper than day rates ?

\* \* \*

### SO SORRY

*Student* : I don't think I deserve a zero on that exam.

*Professor* : Neither do I, but it's the lowest mark there is.

\* \* \*

### CORRECTED

The queue in the post office was getting longer and longer. At its head—before the grille labelled "Pensions"—an old lady was taking her time. She fumbled in her handbag, brought first one and then another article

out and laid them on the counter. They made an imposing collection.

The pension book still hadn't come to light, but a little old man with a military air about him could stand it no longer. He called out :

"Hurry up, Ma. This is pay parade, not a kit inspection."

\* \* \*

### GUSHING

The newly rich woman had just returned from her first trip to France. "Paris," she gushed, "Paris is marvellous. The people are all so much more learned and cultured than in England. My dear, even the street-cleaners speak French!"

\* \* \*

### HER ENEMIES

The small daughter of the house, by way of punishment for a minor offence, was made to eat her dinner alone at a small table in the corner of the dining-room.

The rest of the family paid her no attention until they heard her delivering grace over her own meal with these words: "I thank thee, Lord, for preparing a table for me in the presence of mine enemies."

### OBJECTION

"Now," said a film director to the stunt man, "this is what I want you to do. You hear a shot, look round wildly, and then plunge over this 40-foot precipice into the water."

"But there's only two feet of water there," came the objection.

"Well, you don't want to drown, do you?"

\* \* \*

### EXPLAINED

The temperance lecturer was getting into his stride. "I wish," he shouted to his audience, "that all the beer, whisky and gin were at the bottom of the sea."

"So do I," shouted a man at the top of his voice.

"Thank you," said the speaker joyfully. "I am glad to see a teetotaller."

"Not at all," replied the heckler. "I'm only a deep-sea diver!"

\* \* \*

### HOPELESS

The trainer of a horse that was never in the money called over a new jockey early one morning:

"This nag is going stale," he said. "He needs a stiff work-

out. See what you can do with him."

"Yes, sir," said the jockey. "You want me to ride him round the track?"

The trainer sighed. "No," he corrected, "just run in front and pace him!"

\* \* \*

### OUT OF THINGS

"I'm the only girl in evening dress here," said a blonde at a dance. "I feel very much out of things."

"Yes—and you look it, too," replied her companion.

\* \* \*

### AFRAID

Shortly after the funeral of a henpecked man, everybody came back to the house to pay respects to the widow and family. One friend stopped to commiserate with little Gladys.

"And what were your father's last words?" she asked by way of making conversation.

"I don't think he had any," answered the child. "Mamma was with him to the very end!"

\* \* \*

### WITHOUT HORNS

Sweet Young Thing (from the city): "Oh, what a strange-

looking cow! But why hasn't she any horns?"

Farmer: "Well, you see, some cows are born without horns and never have any, and others shed theirs, and some we dehorn, and some breeds ain't supposed to have horns at all. There are a lot of reasons why some cows ain't got horns, but the reason why that cow ain't got horns is because she ain't a cow—she's a horse!"

\* \* \*

### ONLY MARKING?

"You don't learn them kids nothin', that's why," he stormed at the teacher who came to investigate. "Here, read this," and he produced a battered letter.

It was from the headmaster of the school his eldest son was attending and contained only glowing praise. "But it says, 'Your son should make his mark in the world,'" the puzzled teacher read aloud.

"That's it! You see?" the father shouted. "Fourteen years of schoolin' and he can't even write his own name!"

\* \* \*

### DESCRIPTION

Anguished husband, at information booth of crowded department store: "Have you seen anything of a small, plump, blonde woman spending money like a drunken sailor?"

### NO DRINK

An Englishman was showing an American over his house. Opening a bedroom door, he saw his wife kissing a man, said, "Oh, sorry," shut the door, took his guest downstairs and offered him a drink.

"But aren't you going to do something about the fellow upstairs?" asked the astonished American.

"Oh," said the host, "he's a teetotaler."

\* \* \*

### BLONDES!

The professor lectured long and loud on the miracle fabrics that chemistry has given the world, but in the final examination, when he asked what outstanding products chemistry has given us, the student still answered, "Blondes."

\* \* \*

### TRUTH

Many fathers are concerned about whether their sons will grow up to be he-men.

One little boy came in from school howling. "What's the trouble?" the father asked.

"Jimmy punched me!" wailed the lad.

"Then why didn't you punch him back?"

The boy glared at his father. "Because then it would be ~~his~~ turn again!"

## FROM FAR AND NEAR

### HAPPY WITH HIS FOUR WIVES

*In the course of an interesting article in "The American Weekly" John Carlova treats us to a fine pen-picture of Mr. Foo Yip Fong, a Chinese merchant in Singapore, and his four happy wives.]*

FOR two years I lived next door to a man who had four wives—all at the same time. This was in Singapore, where polygamy is practised by some of the Buddhists and Moslems of the multi-racial population.

My neighbour was Mr. Foo Yip Fong, a benign, balloon-shaped Chinese merchant, about 64 years old. In addition to his four wives, he had 17 children and six grand-children.

It was a situation, I must admit, which intrigued my wife and me to end, and whenever possible we discreetly tried to delve into its mysteries.

Gradually, as we came to know more of the polygamous household next door—as well as many others like it in the Far East—we realized the situation was as

much a matter of tradition and economics as of the morals.

Mr. Foo himself told me that, as a young man, he had married his first wife on a straight business basis. Her father, a wealthy merchant, had provided the capital for Mr. Foo to set up his own business.

#### First Bride

The marriage pact was incidental to the financial arrangement and symbol of the close bond between Mr. Foo and the merchant. Mr. Foo, in fact, had a choice among three of the merchant's daughters. He chose the one he thought would be most likely to help him get ahead in business.

He chose well. Mrs. Foo No. 1 was in her late 50s when we knew

her, but she was still a sharp, vigorous businesswoman. Mr. Foo never made a business move without consulting her.

She was also the undisputed head of the household. None of the other wives, and certainly none of the children, ever dared oppose her.

That, I eventually found, also applied to Mr. Foo. Inside their big pink mansion Mr. Foo No. 1 was the real boss.

I used to wonder how so strong-minded a woman could have permitted other wives to enter the home, and I once asked Mr. Foo about this. "Mrs. Foo was the one who suggested it," he said.

### Second Wife

Mrs. Foo No. 2 was brought in because a good housekeeper was needed. Mr. Foo had prospered and built his mansion, and he and Mrs. Foo No. 1 had two sons and a daughter.

Mrs. Foo No. 1 personally picked Mrs. Foo No. 2, a plump, pleasant girl who soon grew into a buxom cheerful housewife. She ran the home efficiently, kept her husband and his first wife in comfort, looked after the children, supervised the servants, and found time to give birth to nine little Foos.

Wife No. 3 was brought into the Foo household as a matter of prestige. A business rival of Mr. Foo had taken his third bride, and Mrs. Foo No. 1, some-

what nettled, had insisted that Mr. Foo do likewise—a move that, to an American mind, would appear to be a somewhat extreme manner of keeping up with the Joneses.

### Social Asset

Mrs. Foo No. 1 kept her eye out for someone who should bring social lustre to the family name. She finally found what she wanted in an old, aristocratic but impoverished Chinese family. For a financial consideration the head of the family agreed to a union between one of his daughters and Mr. Foo.

Mrs. Foo No. 3 was a good social asset—sleekly groomed, well educated, an accomplished pianist and singer, and a proficient conversationalist in any of half a dozen languages. Whenever Mr. Foo had any dress-suit social obligations to perform, it was usually Mrs. Foo No. 3 who accompanied him. She grudgingly gave birth to one little Foo, and then flatly declined to co-operate on any others.

It was then that Mrs. Foo No. 1 made the most extraordinary proposal of all to her husband.

### Pretty & Passionate

On his 60th birthday, she told him: "Foo, you have been a good man, a kind husband, and a devoted father. Now your years are running out. You have not much longer to enjoy life. I want you to find a

pretty, passionate young girl and make her your wife No. 4."

Mr. Foo was mildly shocked.

"We Buddhist Chinese," he told me, "marry as an obligation to give security to as many wives as we can afford to keep and to perpetuate the family name with as many children as possible.

"Marriage is a means of acquiring prestige and displaying our wealth. Sometimes, although rarely, we marry for love in the romantic sense, but never—at least admittedly never—for lust.

"When I reminded my No. 1 wife of that, she said to me: 'Then you have my permission to bring a concubine into the house, or several, if you like.'"

Mr. Foo shook his head. "I could not do that, of course. Although some wealthy Chinese men bring concubines into their homes and rotate and discard them as they would a harem, I consider it an immoral practice."

### Mrs. Foo No. 4

In many regions, where a man can't have more than one wife at a time, the system of concubinage is accepted. Here and there men who can afford the luxury have both wives and concubines.

Mr. Foo told me how he had acquired Mrs. Foo No. 4, smiling as he remembered.

"I had gone to a business

party one night and we were being entertained by a troupe of sing-song girls from Hong Kong. One of the girls was a particularly attractive child and I was quite fascinated by her. I also had a sound reason for marrying her—I could 'rescue' her from a life that was not good for one so young.

"I took her home, Mrs. Foo No. 1 approved of her, and we arranged to make her Mrs. Foo No. 4."

Of all the Mrs. Foos, my wife and I liked No. 4 the best.

### Demanding Women

As delicately as I could, I once brought up the matter of sex in a polygamous household. Mr. Foo told me: "In theory, a Chinese husband with more than one wife is supposed to distribute his attentions equally among them. In practice, this is seldom the case.

"It sometimes happens that a man fails to balance his choice of wives and finds himself with too many demanding women. This is a serious situation. If the man tries to meet the demand, he may exhaust himself physically. If he rebuffs his wives' advances, he may lose respect in his own household. Or, worse still, the dissatisfied wives may turn elsewhere for companionship."

I got the wives' viewpoint from Mrs. Foo No. 1. She told

me: "Most wives in a wealthy, polygamous household are far better off than they would be in a poor home with one husband. In the East, women have always outnumbered men. It is better, in our opinion, to share a man than to have none at all.

"And despite anything you may think in the West, it takes a good man—a serious, responsible man—to keep a number of wives."

The Buddhist Chinese are permitted by their religion to have as many wives as they can afford.

#### Planter's Fourteen Wives

A few years ago two Chinese millionaires in Singapore got into an argument over who had most money. To prove their claims, they began adding wives to their households. They were up to ten wives when one of the millionaires died of high blood pressure.

A higher marital score—the record for South-East Asia—was set by a Chinese rubber planter in Malaya. When I heard he had 14 wives and 43 children, I thought such an establishment would be well worth a visit.

My wife and I drove up from Singapore one Saturday. We found a long, barn-like bungalow. A passageway ran down the middle, dividing two rows of cubicles. Each cubicle housed a wife and her younger children. The older children had a building to themselves.

I asked the head of the house why he had married so many wives. He said: "I need many wives. There is much work to be done here—and I like children, too."

Although my wife and I became accustomed to knowing people who practised polygamy, we never became quite reconciled to the idea.

"That," Mr. Foo once argued with us, "may be because the Western mind is more hypocritical than the Eastern in this matter. We accept the biological fact that a man is not made to be faithful to one woman all his life.

"We marry a number of women, take care of all of them and their children, and give them social standing and security.

"You in the West divorce a wife before taking a new one, or you keep the original—out of a feeling of shame rather than responsibility—and take a series of mistresses. Fundamentally, I think our system is more honest."

\* \* \*

#### FATAL KISS!

Tall, fashionably dressed, wearing diamonds but thickly veiled, a slim young woman drove to a prison in Philadelphia, U. S. A., and announced that she was a cousin of a young man who had been imprisoned for a jewel theft.

"May I see him, just for a few moments?" she begged.

She was permitted to speak to the prisoner through the bars of his cell.

What words passed between the couple may never be known, for the warder stood beyond hearing.

On taking leave of the convict the woman lifted her veil and imprinted on his lips a long, passionate kiss.

The convict turned, staggered to his bunk and collapsed upon it, his face buried in his arms.

Sobbing bitterly, the visitor covered her face and was accompanied to the gate by the sympathetic warder. She drove off in a limousine.

#### Weak Heart

The warder returned to the cell to find the man dead on the floor. Between his lips was a screw of discoloured cigarette paper. A doctor found that this was impregnated with a deadly poison. Its effect had been practically instantaneous, he said.

That "murder with a kiss"—the only authenticated instance of its kind in the history of crime in the U. S. A.—took place in 1923. The woman has never been traced. Why she gave the man the fatal kiss and who she was remain mysteries which have baffled criminologists for thirty-four years, records a British weekly.

Kisses have sometimes proved

very dangerous if not always fatal.

When a German was on trial for "killing his wife with kissing," medical evidence was called to prove that it was possible that passionate kisses showered incessantly on the girl affected her very weak heart and caused her death. But the husband was acquitted.

#### Led To War

In the Balkans in 1936, an army colonel was bereaved by a kiss. He was embracing his pretty young wife before setting out on manoeuvres when his revolver went off accidentally and killed her.

Another fatal kiss, given by Ferdinand of Bavaria, Germany, in 1703, led to the loss of many lives for it precipitated a war.

He was horse-riding on an estate many miles from his palace when he saw a beautiful girl walking in the spacious park surrounding the palace of the royal neighbour. So bewitched was he by her lovely face and figure that he kissed her impetuously. What he did not know was that she was a princess of the royal family and that her fiancé had seen the stolen kiss.

A duel was fought and both men were wounded. This led to a war between the two kingdoms which lasted many months. ††

# Questions & Answers

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*(In response to requests from numerous readers we are introducing this feature. Answers may be diverting, informative or instructive as the case may be but under no circumstances is any offence meant to anyone. All types of questions are welcome though the right to pick and choose is reserved.)*

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**G. Gajeswaran, Tirupathi.**

**Q.**—I have failed in the University Exam. and I am disgusted with my life. I won't mind if somebody buries me alive. What would you advise me to do?

**A.**—Yours is the philosophy of the pessimist and the fool. Better bury your books fathoms deep and look for a job in keeping with your qualifications. For all youth, life is rosy and inviting. Only men like you will turn a blind eye. Cheer up, fellow.

**Miss J. Kaur, Amritsar.**

**Q.**—When Hindi becomes the official language of India...?

**A.**—The history of Ceylon may repeat itself here and the sacred unity of India will be disrupted. Despite what Morarji Bhai may say English and national unity go together.

**A. K. Krishna Bhat, Udipi.**

**Q.**—My parents are urging me to marry soon but I am still looking for an ideal beauty. When do you think I will succeed?

**A.**—Evidently the call of matrimony has yet to come for you. We have heard hundreds of young men saying that each one will marry only the most beautiful lass. But a man's idea of beauty differs, and we have seen those very men marrying plain-looking girls—some of them with noticeable defects! When

the heart is in turmoil a man may think the cross-eyed woman next door is a paragon of beauty. A snub nose may lend more charm to a woman—so her lover may persuade himself and think that life without her is impossible. So the standard of beauty varies. When your girl comes along you will have similar emotions and go into raptures!

**M. Moreshwar, Poona.**

**Q.**—I like modern girls immensely. But it is a pity that their good looks wear off so soon.

**A.**—You mean, they wash off!

**G. S. Trikannad, Belgaum.**

**Q.**—Why does Government declare Saturday as a half holiday? Can you trace its origin?

**A.**—It is not Indian in origin. In England, about the eleventh century the Government directed that all work should stop by noon on every Saturday. The British Government that ruled over us adhered to this old regulation. But our Indian Government which eschews everything foreign and which is changing our calendar also in Indian fashion is aping this alien tradition. Is it not strange?

**Praminath Dutt, Calcutta.**

**Q.**—I have enrolled myself as a member of a famous debating society. Can you guess the reason?

**A.**—Oh, yes. You must be newly married and find it difficult to argue with your clever wife!

**Ballbah Sahai, Patna.**

**Q.**—What is love?

**A.**—When two hearts, male and female, beat in unison, love is born. Then follows blind devotion. The man and woman think the world of each other. That illusion is love!

**Q.**—Before the birth of our child my wife was gushing with love for me. Now she seems to be neglecting me. The baby takes up most of her time day and night. What does it show?

**A.**—It shows stupid and senseless jealousy on your part. Do you think bringing forth and bringing up a child are just jokes? Any amount of attention that the mother gives to her child is not enough. It will clamour for milk and make continued calls on mother's time and she dare not deny it anything. So be sensible and adjust yourself to the changed circumstances.

**C. R. Raisinghani, Ulhasnagar.**

**Q.**—Do you fear death?

**A.**—Only fools and misers fear death. But a true man with a sense of *Vairagya* wishes for his end when the purpose on which he has set his heart in this life is fulfilled and when he is assured that his dependants can live after him in freedom from want and with a sense of honour. To achieve all this he must surrender himself to God. Life after death is just a continuation of life on this earth. Why then should we fear death?

**S. Vaidyanathan, Coimbatore.**

**Q.**—How big is the elephant's brain?

**A.**—The elephant possesses a brain which is less than one six hundredth its body weight. It is that small!

**B. Ramarathnam, Madras.**

**Q.**—I believe I have the makings of a great Carnatic musician but nobody cares to give me a chance—neither the All India Radio nor the local music sabhas. Can you suggest a way?

**A.**—Better try singing at the top of your voice at street corners. If crowds collect and throw naye paise at you it is an encouraging sign. But if they throw stones at you instead, better give up music!

## Those Lingering Kisses Are Back!

**THEY'VE** been out for years, but sizzling kisses are on their way back to the cinema screen. Osculations have been mere pecks compared with the long, lingering embraces of the Garbo-John Gilbert era.

Watch Rock Hudson and Jennifer Jones in "A Farewell To Arms" and you can see something of the old style again.

And take a look at the kiss in "Teacher's Pet," which is now in London and will be released soon. It's quite a kiss. . . .

Doris Day is at the receiving end. Clark Gable is the donor. He takes her in his arms without warning. She reels back, totters across the room and collapses in her chair as her legs give way under her.

"I didn't need to act that scene," Doris reports. "When

Clark Gable kisses like that, you wonder what's hit you."

And he's fifty-nine!

\* \* \*

### MAGIC IN NAMES!

The names Edythe Marrener, Margarita Cansino and Norma Jean Baker probably mean nothing to you—but don't feel too badly about it. For they are the *real* names of three leading screen stars.

For Edythe Marrener read Susan Hayward; which I think you'll agree suits her much better. Margarita Cansino is rarely out of the news, but you'll know her as the fabulous Rita Hayworth, recently seen competing with Kim Novak for the affections of Frank Sinatra in "Pal Joey." The wiggle and shape of Norma Jean Baker have become world-famous under the more familiar label of Marilyn Monroe.

There's nothing new about name-changing among people in the lime-light. Back through the centuries the famous, particularly painters and writers, have done it to help their careers along—either because they didn't like their own names or in order to avoid confusion with somebody else. Stewart Granger, for instance, is really Jimmy Stewart, but when he started in films there was already a highly successful actor with that name, although James Stewart was born James Cooper!

### Pleasing

A name that is pleasing, easily pronounced and easy to remember is a "must" in show business and it is fascinating to speculate how many established stars would have captured the public imagination if they'd remained as they were baptized, writes Alison Barnes in "Tit-Bits."

Would Cary Grant, Robert Taylor, Ray Milland and William Holden have enjoyed such great popularity if they had continued, respectively, as Archibald Leach, S. Arlington Brough, Reginald Truscott-Jones and William Beedle? And suppose John Wayne had stuck to Marion Morrison; just think of the confusion as to whether he was an actor or an actress!

Such a misunderstanding did occur when the teenagers' new heart-throb, John Saxon, was first booked for a screen test under his real name, Carmen Orrico. Everyone at the studio

was expecting a girl, and the female test-script was prepared! There were quite a few red faces when the husky, dark-haired young he-man strode into the room.

### So Lovely

Saxon's agent, Henry Willson, who had already thought up the names Rock Hudson and Tab Hunter, promptly concocted an alternative title for his new protégé. He suggested Angelo Saxon but the young actor plumped for John Saxon because it was simpler and less fanciful. Thus it is as John Saxon that he stars with the pretty new teenager, Sandra Dee (real name, Sandra Douvain), in the youthful romantic comedy, "The Wonderful Years."

Cyd Charisse, the beautiful ballerina who plays a straight dramatic role in Universal-International's sea story, "Twilight for the Gods," has changed her name several times. She was born Tula Ellice Finklea—not exactly an ideal name to put up in neon lights, and scarcely in keeping with her Latin loveliness.

She became Felia Siderova, then Maria Estomano and, when she married dancer Nico Charisse at the age of seventeen, changed permanently to Cyd Charisse. Cyd was the nickname she had as a child because it was the nearest her younger brother could get to "sister." In private life Cyd is now Mrs. Tony Martin.

Swiss actress Lisalotte Pulver had to abbreviate her name to Lisa as a concession to English-speaking audiences, who will see her for the first time co-starring with John Gavin in "A Time to Love and a Time to Die." Now Lisa intends to go through life with two names, because she is already well known as Lisalotte in Germany and other European countries. Another Continental actress with a dual title is Mylene Demengeot, the beautiful French girl, who stars in "Bonjour Tristesse" and usually calls herself Mylene Nicole when making British films.

### Zsa Zsa & Garbo

Zsa Zsa Gabor, who makes a guest star appearance in "Touch of Evil," changed her Christian name to Zsa Zsa from Sari, which seems an unusual and pretty enough name to me. The great Garbo was originally Greta Gustafson, Natalie Wood was Natalie Gurden and Mara Corday began life as Marilyn Watts.

Because nearly every film actor and actress dreams of appearing in Hollywood productions—some of which are seen by as many as eighty nations—it is rare for a name to exceed two syllables, or to be hard to pronounce. In many cases only minor alterations have been needed.

For instance, William, ("The Big Beat") Reynolds only had to substitute a "y" for the "g" in Regnolds, his original name; Dorothy Maloney became Dorothy Malone; Deborah Kerr

was cut down from Deborah Kerr-Trimmer; Mitzi Gaynor was evolved from Mitzi Gerber; Kim Novak from Marilyn Novak; Hildegard Neff from Hildegard Knef.

### Their Glamour

Jock Mahoney, star of "The Western Story," was originally Jacques O'Mahoney, a name deriving from his French-Irish-Cherokee Indian ancestry, but his friends call him Jocko!

Jane Powell and Hedy Lamarr glamorous co-stars of "The Female Animal," both did some name-changing before making their mark in films. Jane, who is also to be seen in "The Girl Most Likely," was Susanna Burcel, and Hedy's rather unglamorous surname was Kiesler.

### THE GREAT SCANDAL

"LANA'S daughter: 'Wh! Stabbed Mother's Lover.' 'Belinda Lee Poisoned By Sleeping Tablets.'" In millions of homes these sort of screaming headlines were digested with the toast and marmalade, write Margaret Hinxman in "Picturegoer."

But the repercussions from them will be chewed over long after headlines have been forgotten. For, in cold career terms, can Lana Turner and Belinda Lee survive these scandals? How will the box office react to their private life crises?

From the short-term viewpoint the facts are remarkable.

Since the day the news broke that Lana's daughter Cheryl had killed her mother's boy friend, American box office receipts of *Peyton Place* leapt up by twenty per cent and more. In England, the film has been doing spectacular business, too.

Even so, Lana is worried—and she needs to be. For it's probable that the hostile women, who crowded her after the inquest, reflect the long-term attitude of picturegoers.

#### Top Billing

The problem of Belinda Lee is neither so urgent nor intense. But it's still a problem. She gained a lot of sympathy in Britain when her Italian romance with Prince Orsini ended in an over-dose of sleeping-pills.

But her studio's attitude seems to be strictly one of "sitting on the fence." No new film, after *Nor The Moon By Night*, has yet been announced for her by the Rank Organization, the studio to which she's under contract. Before, as Rank's top female star, she was rushed from one film to another.

But, according to our Rome correspondent, Henry Toby: "The publicity—although perhaps distasteful to Belinda's British fans—abroad has made Belinda Lee Britain's most well-known female star.

"In France and Italy, where previously she was almost unknown, her films have become money-spinners since the Orsini

affair. She now gets top billing in Continental cinemas.

If Rank isn't interested in promoting Belinda further, Toby goes on, French, Italian and German producers are. They're queueing up to bid for her services.

The indications seem to be that Belinda can weather the storm—if she cares. For she's bluntly admitted that career comes second—"love is all-important."

But Lana's scandal has unleashed a wave of moral condemnation for it involves not merely herself, but her fourteen-year-old daughter, too.

The powerful women's clubs of America won't easily forgive. And in Britain, although reaction is not nearly so organized as it is in the States, how many respectable picturegoers will be able to divorce the figure in the headlines from the figure on the screen?

After the first curiosity-value boost in her box office standing, it's likely that Lana will learn the hardest way that even film stars must pay for their mistakes.

#### INDIA'S BIGGEST 'FILMALAYA'

S. Mukherji, the maker of Filmistan, is now out to make his newly formed film company Filmalaya, the greatest and biggest film producing unit in the country.

Mukherji who has converted his palatial bungalow at Santa

Cruz into his production office, is working with a frenzy in organising his new unit.

"Grotto House," at Santa Cruz to-day is presenting the appearance of a huge bee-hive of activity with hundreds of film stars, writers, poets, music-directors, technicians and petty actors and actresses swarming its gates eagerly trying to see that they have the honour of getting a job in the newly formed film company, reports the Bombay Correspondent of "Cine Advance."

Very soon Mukherji will launch his first major production in which Dilip Kumar will play the leading man. This film, a social, will be directed by Mukherji's younger brother Subodh Mukherji.

#### Bold Policy

The film was planned for launching last week with a big scene of a football match. It was proposed to include many local football stars in some of the shots. But director Subodh and producer Sashadhar both decided that since football was to form an important part of the film why not take such shots in which some of the major football stars, who have taken India to international fame, be included in the film. So Filmalaya will wait for the coming Rovers Cup Tournament and take shots in which major football teams in the country will participate.

Mukherji said that he was going to adopt a bold and revolutionary policy in his concern.

Not only will he take some of the major artistes but he will mostly concentrate upon fresh talents and cast them in major roles.

He said that his first consideration will be the story and not big box-office-named stars. He will not also go after big music-directors, but those music-composers who show talent and originality.

#### Tomorrow's Stars

With a view to translating some of his ideals, Mukherji has made a modest beginning in setting up a school to train new recruits in the art of dramatics. Mr. Shenoy, a foreign returned expert in dramatics, who is attached to a well-known amateur theatrical group, where he has been acting as a coach, has been put in charge of this school. Shenoy has already got six pupils under training. These youths are being trained in the art of dramatics, posture, dialogue and various finer points of acting which will make them big stars in future.

This school according to Mukherji is expected to have 100 pupils in the near future. Graduates of this school will find themselves billed in course of time as stars of to-morrow.

#### Girl Composer

Mukherji, the producer who has guided the destiny of many major productions, is at the moment so much inspired by the idea of given youth and fresh talent big break, that he has

placed a special music room at the disposal of a highly-talented 16-year-old girl, Miss Khanna, who is being tipped as one of the leading music directors of India. Miss Khanna religiously works every day in her room composing melodies which will rocket her to fame.

Mukherji has at the moment booked both veterans and youths who have recently made big box-office history, to direct his future productions. Amongst the veterans contracted are Nandlal Jaswantlal, Hemen Gupta, Kishore Sahu. Those amongst the youths who have lately earned big name are Nassir Hussain, I. S. Johar, Subodh Mukherji.

Mukherji will also open distribution offices all over India and also abroad.

He hopes to announce his full plans soon. At the moment he is busy finalising business deals for his pictures. He will soon also shift his residence to Bombay.

## Here & There

"Satyavan", a Tamil social, will soon go into production. It is sponsored by a new company, Rajam Pictures. S. S. Rajendran and Saroja Devi are to be teamed in the film.

Shooting of the Telugu picture, "Bhaktha Tukaram" has begun in Vauhini Studios. Ace actor S. V. Ranga Rao takes the leading role.

Dance director Thangaraj has turned film producer as well with the launching of his new company, Sai Baba Films. It is said that in the maiden film M. G. Ramachandran and B. S. Saroja will be co-starred. Already P. Leela has recorded a catchy song for the new film.

Vasu Films' Production No. 1 has gone on the sets in Gemini Studios the other day. A song of Rajeswari and Susila was recorded as the first item. Sankar is to direct this picture.

One of the fine documentaries of the Government of India, now shown all over the country, relates to the successful work of the Fingerprint Bureau in tracing thieves.

With an excellent theme and good music Ashok Pictures' "Raagini" is proving to be a fine box-office draw. With Ashok Kumar, Kishore and Padmini in the lead, the full entertainment value of the picture is assured.

Colour scenes are being incorporated in two forthcoming Tamil pictures. One of them is Vijaya's "Kadan Vangi Kalyanam" which stars Gemini Ganesan, Savithri, Jamuna and Thangavelu. Another film is "Illarame Nallaram" produced by Narayanan Company.

