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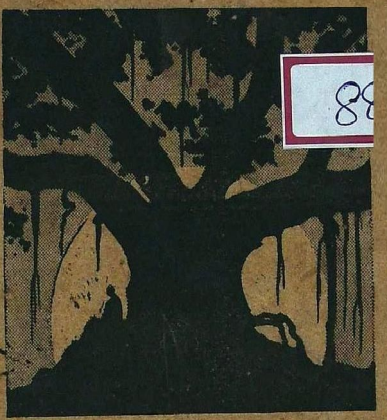

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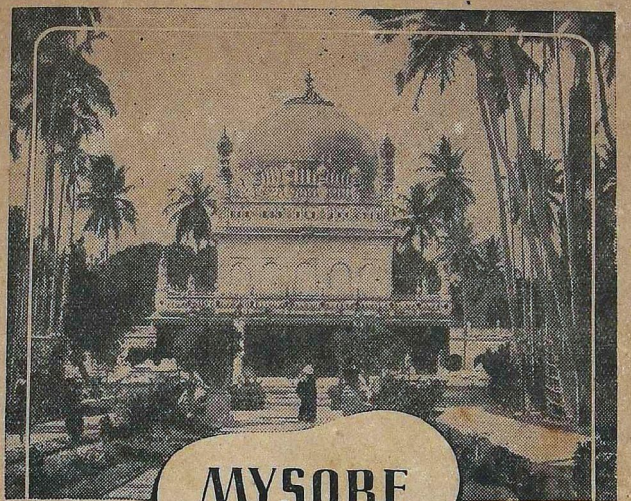

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- ★ Original literary works in English, and lighter writing.
- ★ Articles on Social Reconstruction, education etc., which may have a practical value.

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The word INDIAN in the title is not to be taken to indicate any rigid limitation or reserve either in the choise of subjects or of writers. Nor the word THOUGHT to be taken as an unswerving allegiance to metaphysics. We accept the following definition of Thought: "Thought is man's final reality and embraces *vision* as well as *activity*."

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INDIAN THOUGHT

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October—December 1941

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THE PASSING OF A POET

The death of Rabindranath Tagore is not to be mourned in the usual way. Death in his case has not been cruel nor has it removed him from our midst. For, his spirit, enshrined in his numerous literary masterpieces and works of art, will ever remain fresh and deathless.

As a composer of songs in his own Bengali he is unrivalled. Having been for many years associated intimately with the *Vanga Sahitya Parishad*, he has rendered great and substantial service to the enrichment and adaptation of his mother tongue to convey easily all modern ideas. The standardization of equivalents for the many scientific terms and modernistic usages in the English language, has enabled the Bengali literature and language to gain an enviable prominence in the literatures of the world. Sanskrit roots and terms have been really helpful to this movement, and having no linguistic prejudices, the *Parishad* has liberally borrowed from Sanskrit sources. Hence even to the lay ear, when the Bengali poems of Tagore are read, they leave the same impression of richness and mellifluousness as Sanskrit verse. It is an imperishable labour whose fruits are reaped in the shape of many new writers and potential composers of songs in Bengali.

Even as the odour imprisoned in petals mingles with all life when the perfect dawn is near, the spirit and work of Rabindranath Tagore have now become one with that of many another, dedicating himself to the higher demands of human personality. The atmosphere of Shantiniketan, so conducive to imbibing what is best in our civilisation from the days of the Upanishads, is the lasting achievement of Tagore's limitless imagination and spiritual urge. Let us therefore bow to that sense of universality which actuated the Poet to share his gifts with the rest of mankind and make of every one who came within his fold not a mere visionary but a realist building upon the best in life.

'C'

THE AVERAGE MAN

By R. K. Narayan

Since starting this journal I have been hearing a great deal about the average man. I am told that I must keep my eye on him if this journal is to prosper. People tell me, " we have read this journal with great interest but we are afraid many of the articles appearing in it may be above the head of the average person. You must try to appeal to the average person."

This, naturally, prompted me to look for this person. I did my best to pick him out in this crowded world. I kept my eyes wide open when I was in a bus or train or a gathering in the hope that I might catch a glimpse of him. I listened intently to other people's conversations in the hope that it might help.

This proved to be exhausting work. Very soon I realized that it was an impossible search.

* * *

The person who mentions ' Average ' invariably applies it to others. He always assumes that he himself is other than average—above, preferably, but never below.

From the context in which this reference is made I understand that the average man possesses the

following virtues. Nature has endowed him with a robust constitution. He is very methodical in everything. He looks after his family correctly. He maintains a precise account of his income and expenses. He pays off his debts promptly. He sends his children to an ordinary, commonplace school. He is elated when they pass their examinations, irritated when they fail. He is industrious and honest and serves his masters faithfully. He is a good neighbour.

These are excellent qualities no doubt, but they imply in a subtle way a set of parallel defects. He is hardworking because he is a born drudge. He looks after his family so well because knows nothing else in life. He pays off his debts promptly because he has a sort of secret haughtiness which makes him say to himself, " why should I be under an obligation to anyone ? " He is law-abiding because he is a prude. He keeps a strict account of his finances because he is disposed to be miserly. Even his health is so good because he is thick-headed and is free from the torments and exhaustions that beset a sensitive mind. Intellectually he adopts the line of least resistance. The finer shades of literature and the arts are not for him. In books he can appreciate only gossip, sensation and buffoonery. In music he prefers the cheapest tunes, in cinema he demands the broadest melodrama. Politically he is at the mercy of the loudest orator, and he can be beguiled with slogans.

It is supposed that he constitutes the bulk of the population and hence his goodwill is indispensable for the commercial prosperity of any undertaking.

After a laborious search I am almost convinced that this is an imaginary being—something like those mythical birds one reads about in any *Purana*. When people say " You must try and appeal to the average man," they say in effect, " You must work within the understanding of the average idiot ; but don't make the mistake of thinking that it is myself."

This notion of the ' average ' person has caused a deliberate cheapening and lowering of standards in all creative work. I have known a publisher who at one time produced first-class literature later on turning over rank rubbish by the ton on the plea that he was going to please the average person. I have heard a film director explaining away his costly rubbish with : " After all the man who really pays for the show is the average person." I have known a director of a radio station spending months on a special programme and finally sending out on the air incoherent, inane noises, and answering all criticisms with, " Our average listener will like this immensely. You will see how many letters we receive appreciating this programme."

Anyone who has anything to do with the public conjures up a vision of an average man according to his own limitations, and on this basis sets out to give

the public what it wants. The public, ever generous and indifferent, takes what is given with a feeling that it might be infinitely worse. This is understood by the other to mean that what he has given is slightly high-brow and next time he takes care to remedy this defect. And so goes on this race to get behind each other, between the public and the man who gives it its books, films, or music.

There may be an average person where economics or other social sciences are concerned, but in intangible matters like response to artistic or intellectual work, there can be no such thing as average. One must set about one's work, whether producing a film or a book or whatever it may be, with an eye on one's own standards and purposes rather than on the purse of an imaginary being called the average man. The average ought always to be reckoned at the end and not at the beginning since 'average' is not a cause but a result.

Humility is often a mere pretence of submission employed to dominate others; an artifice by which pride abases itself in order to be exalted. Though it assume a thousand shapes, pride is never better disguised, never more likely to deceive, than when it wears the mask of humility.

* * *

Pity is often a sense of personal calamity aroused by the calamities of others. It is a subtle insurance against possible adversity. We help others in order to secure their help on a similar occasion ; and the services we render them, rightly considered, are benefits conferred on ourselves in advance.

—La Rochefoucauld.

A VISIT TO KASHMIR AND LADAKH

By W. G. Eagleton

It was my good fortune to spend the hot weather of this year, in the company of Mr. Peter Wright of Bangalore, in Kashmir and Ladakh. When I say the hot weather, I mean of course the hot weather of Mysore. In Ladakh at that time, at the altitudes we reached, temperatures were down to twelve degrees, and in the rather primitive dak bungalows of the grandiloquently-named Treaty High Road, Which leads from Srinagar to Leh and Yarkand, and beyond to Kashgar and Urumchi, we drank our steaming Ovaltine at night by the light of the flickering hurricane lamp that our coolies had haled up the pass, and retired to bed cowering under six blankets and heavy dressing-gown, with our wooden cots drawn up as close as possible to a roaring log fire. Even then, too often we lay awake shivering.

I doubt if I can say anything new or profound about the widely-canvassed beauties of Kashmir proper. The Kashmir Tourist Bureau does justice to those. Everyone has heard Srinagar called the Venice of the East. Everyone has heard of that rich and lovely valley, which Tom Moore could describe without ever having seen it, because it is the imperishable type of the happy valley. Everyone knows of the

formal beauties of Srinagar, with its terraced Mogul gardens and its graceful quasi-Venetian shikaras, propelled by highly-respectable but unmistakably Semitic gondoliers over the surface of glamorous and filthy canals. At every turn, squalor tempered by magnificence, the vista of the grubby bazaar-street terminating in the unapproachable Himalayan snows, a very un-bourgeois paradise. And then the ruffianly touts, offering carved walnut, papier-mache, pashmina ring-shawls and gems from Central Asia, sometimes wheedling, sometimes almost threatening, but always dogging us with a persistence only to be rivalled perhaps by the fly-whisk-selling dragomans of Port Said. For Srinagar is tourist-ridden these days. One would hate to be called a travel-snob, but I feel that with the best will in the world one could not call Srinagar unspoiled. Baedeker's famous characterisation of the inhabitants of the European continent as "always extortionate and often abusive" came frequently into the mind. Yet Srinagar has character, with the big brick-built sham-Tudor villas, incongruously Victorian and English and suburban, and then again the tall grass growing on the roofs of the houses, the brilliantly-plumaged exotic birds, the fakir who knelt down on the crown of the road, and laid his forehead nine times to the ground, indifferent to the shrieking of motor-horns and the vituperation of jutka-wallahs. One learned from the balcony of one's hotel and watched the infinite variety of the street-life. One learned to pick out the Brahmin in

his Jodhpur breeches and pale-pink turban, the middle-class Muslim in his smart European suit and his arrogant gaudy pugaree, perched like a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire ; and out-numbering these, the poorer Muslim peasant with pointed clogs and tapering pyjamas, a coarse heavy blanket thrown about his shoulders and his close-fitting brown skull-cap on his head, often jogging up the middle of the road on an undersized mountain pony with bridle and stirrups of string or hay-rope. And many a reminder there was as we noticed with a thrill that Srinagar is the starting-place of the great caravan route that leads into Central Asia, the brightly-coloured Chinese cap of a Yarkandi merchant, or the ankle-length maroon coat and white cummerbund of a lama. And we began to understand the question that was so often put to us in Srinagar ; when did you leave India ?

But to us Srinagar was only the stepping-off place for Ladakh, and we came eventually to look upon it, sometimes for my part with more than a touch of nostalgia, as the metropolis of sophistication, and of the blase fastidious culture upon which we had turned our backs. I had better say a few words about the route into Ladakh, the famous Treaty High Road. The Treaty High Road into Central Asia was made passable for peaceful caravans by the efforts of Colonel Durand's column in 1891, and as far as the frontiers of Turkestan it is maintained and supervised jointly by the British Government and

the Government of Kashmir. Elaborate arrangements are made for the provision of transport and supplies to authorised travellers along the route, but as we found to our cost, these arrangements do not and cannot function perfectly in winter time, when travellers are not expected, the road being officially closed, and when the good people of Ladakh are hard put to it to get enough to eat for themselves. By what is known as the Res system, each group of villages along the route is obliged to provide transport at fixed rates, up to a certain limit. For instance the large village of Dras can be distrained upon to the extent of twenty coolies and eighty ponies or zo, a zo being a cross between a cow and a yak. But in early April, when we set out, the route is quite impassable to ponies or to zo or to any other four-footed beast, so that our little caravan actually consisted, most of the time, of a straggling line of laden coolies, who in the course of a day's march, clambering over the ice-bound slopes, each man fending for himself, inevitably got strung out over a distance of some miles. Peter, who was invariably the first to make the rest-house, usually had to wait for several hours before the last man had reported. I was quite frequently the last man. At each rest-house a contractor, or *thekedar*, had undertaken to supply provisions at fixed rates, and as we glanced down the lists kindly furnished by the British Joint Commissioner in Srinagar—butter 1/8 per seer, fuel 10 annas per maund, green grass 8 annas per maund,

dry grass one rupee per maund, sheep (alive) three seers per rupee, chicken 8 annas each, fowl 14 annas, eggs 6 annas per dozen, milk 3 annas per seer—we told ourselves that whatever the difficulties and perils encountered, at least we should not want for something to put in the hollow tooth.

'Oh, blindness to the future, kindly given,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heaven!'

What we had heard however of the great Zojila Pass, nearly twelve thousand feet up, between Kashmir and Ladakh, filled us with far greater trepidation. George Roerich, who crossed the Zojila Pass in 1925 with the Roerich Central Asian Expedition, writes: "It presents no difficulty in late summer or autumn, but in winter it is dangerous, and practicable only for men, for its avalanche-swept slopes are covered with ice and snow which may at any time give way and carry the traveller down the precipice. Traffic is closed for the whole of winter and during early spring, during which time the traveller has to pay double rates to the coolies who agree to face the peril on the summit of the pass." At the time when we set out Ladakh and Zojila were still in the grip of winter, and the road was officially impassable. The British and Kashmir Joint Commissioners, whose written permission was necessary before we could embark upon the journey, were anything but encouraging; the British Joint Commissioner in particular, the Chota Resident Sahib,

painted a lively picture of the terrors before us, and tried hard to interest us in the less recondite attractions of Gulmarg and Pahalgam. He made it clear that permission could not be given unless we were accompanied by an experienced guide, and so for three days in the company of our good friend Mr. Gulam Mohiyuddin, we trudged from one caravanserai to another trying to find some Central Asian trader to whose caravan we could attach ourselves. In the Tibetan serai of Srinagar, a tumble-down forsaken place, we found only a poor old Tibetan lying fever-stricken upon a bed of rags on the rough earthen floor of the serai, with the ponies of his companions tethered beside him. We gave him a little money, and Mr. Gulam Mohiyuddin arranged for medicines to be sent to him, but we found there no other sign of life and could get no tidings of any caravan starting for Ladakh at that time of year. In the Yarkandi serai, a much more prosperous place, a number of Central Asian traders, bearded slant-eyed Mongolian Muslims in figured Chinese robes, cut off from their homes and families by the closing of the Russian frontier, had spread their Bokhara carpets on the floor, and feathered cosy little nests for themselves wherein to await the coming of better times; but no one thought of setting out for Ladakh for at least some weeks, and we could not afford to wait. Moreover, estimates of the cost of the proposed journey varied bewilderingly, and even the lowest estimate was disconcerting

enough. At last, through the good offices of Mr. Gulam Mohiyuddin, we were introduced to a wealthy Yarkandi merchant, Mahomed Umar Khan, who was even then assembling a large caravan for the journey to Leh. Mahomed Umar Khan, very Muslim in manner and feature, very Chinese in dress, was an old gentleman of extraordinary personal dignity and courtliness—to this day it is one of my regrets that I failed to get a photograph of him—and the prospect of having him as a travelling companion was enormously reassuring to me, the more so as the obvious comfort of his house in Srinagar, his urbanity and evident appreciation of the good things of life, made me feel that the rigours of the journey must have been greatly exaggerated. Moreover, as we afterwards learnt, he had accompanied the Roerich Central Asian Expedition as far as Kashgar. His language was Turki and he could speak no English, but with the help of Peter's halting Urdu we made ourselves understood, and an arrangement highly satisfactory to us was arrived at. But the question was now whether we could be ready in time, for Umar Khan was impatient to start. Then followed three feverish days when we rushed distractedly about Srinagar, purchasing camp-beds, tin kettles and eating-utensils, long alpenstocks, puttees, blankets, grass shoes, woollen caps and, as it seemed to us, all the paraphernalia of a Polar expedition. It made things no easier for us that all these purchases had to be made conditional upon our finally getting

permission to go, for the Chota Resident Sahib had not yet brought himself to the point of signing the order. And when at length, at our final visit to his office, with a shrug of his shoulders and a " well, you seem to be determined about it," he put his signature to the document, and obtained from us a written assurance that we would not attempt to cross into Turkestan; by the time all these formalities were completed, Umar Khan, to our great disappointment, had been obliged to start without us. However, he was only a day ahead of us, and he promised to wait for us at Gund, two days' march from Srinagar. But floundering in that deep snow we were never able to overtake him; for some time we continued to receive messages which he left for us with villagers on the way, but after two or three days we gave up the pursuit. We never saw Umar Khan again, and had to make the best of our way without him, thus losing the credit of having accompanied the first caravan to get across the Zojila pass this year.

Two days brought us to Sonemarg, 8,600 feet up, and for most of the way we tramped through pastoral country reminiscent of the Vale of Llangollen in North Wales. A pleasant, fertile valley, a meandering country road between " dry walls " of loose, piled-up stones; beneath us the rushing Sindh river, crossed here and there by a rickety wooden bridge, and on each side the green slopes of the lower hills; ponies and goats grazing everywhere, even actually on the roofs of the village houses; peasants and shepherds

recalling in their irrepressible friendliness the peasants of Ireland, brushing aside with a cheerful "Salaam, sahib", the much-misconstrued diffidence of the Englishman. But within a few miles of Sonemarg we found ourselves floundering in several feet of snow. I remember sitting down for half an hour to rest on the top of a mile post, which said, I think, two miles to Sonemarg. On our return journey, after the snow had cleared away, I was shocked to find that I could not even reach the top of that mile-post. From then onwards, we occasionally stumbled upon the top of a telegraph pole, and that was all we ever saw of the Treaty High Road. At Sonemarg we camped in the serai, the other half of which was occupied by a deliciously dirty and picturesque Tibetan family, carrying their children slung on their backs like the Esquimeaux. And here we changed into our winter kit, Jodhpur breeches and puttees, belted mackintoshes, woollen Balaclava helmets pulled down over our shoulders, sun-glasses, fur gloves and long sharp-pointed staves. Over our stout boots we drew the grass shoes that are worn by the coolies in the snow, and of which one may expect to wear out two pairs a day. I should add that the intense cold made it quite impossible to shave, with the result that each day I looked more and more like the Second Murderer out of Macbeth. As for our coolies, six in number, it is said of the Tibetans that they never take a garment off once it has been put on; when it begins to fall to pieces another garment

is put on over it ; and the bulky amorphous figures of our coolies would seem to give colour to this belief.

Another day's difficult march brought us to Baltal, at the foot of the pass, the dak bungalow half buried in snow and ringed round with a pine forest, all the ingredients of a Northern European Christmas, and above us, to the south-west, the glistening pyramid of Mount Amarnath. Now we were really up against it. To the Machoi bungalow, on the other side of the pass, is only ten miles, but the pass can be crossed only on foot, only in fine weather, and only at night, and it is a whole night's journey. During the day-time a howling wind springs up, which does not make the precipices any safer, or add to one's feeling of security ; moreover, when the sun gets up the avalanches begin. What is perhaps even worse, the sunrise brings a softening of the surface of the snow which makes the going ten times more laborious. In fact, for this reason, we consistently tried to avoid travelling by day. At every step one sinks in up to the thigh, and must drag one's leg painfully out and plunge it in again, an effort not made any the easier by the great altitude and consequent strain upon the heart. Even then, of course, one has not touched dry ground, and one never knows how much deeper one may sink at the next step. And on all sides, as far as the two lines of peaks that run along both sides of the route, nothing but snow. Nothing to sit on, nothing to lean against, nothing to clutch at, so that it is impossible

ever to rest. Usually, after setting out before daybreak, we had no food until we reached our shelter for the night, sometimes a stretch of twelve hours. For we invariably underestimated the time taken for the day's march, and once having set out we could not stop ; in fact with the sun getting higher every hour and occasionally the noise of an avalanche crashing behind us, we dared not stop, though we were unable to make any better speed. When we became thirsty we used to break off an icicle and eat it. Every day our feet were wet to the skin, in spite of our precautions, and when we finally reached our resting-place, the hours that remained to us before turning in were always spent in attempting to dry our clothes and shoes before the fire.

I remember how we got up that morning in Baltal, the unearthly hour and the oppressive solitude of our surroundings giving us the sensation of getting up to be hanged, groping for our things in the half-light and packing them by the glow of the dying log-fire. As we started out in a long file for the conquest of Zojila, the clear light of the moon threw our shadows against the great wall of snow and gave us, with our woollen helmets and long lance-like poles, the silhouette of crusaders. While we scrambled up the pass in the dark, with nothing to afford us a foothold, not a rock, not a branch, nothing to clutch with the hand, nothing but the slippery hardened surface of the snow, we became afflicted with a

nervous loquacity ; we discussed, as I remember, the validity of Anglican orders, labouring the most obvious and irrelevant points with a feigned nonchalance, and with many a scared glance at the vertiginous slopes above. By 10 a.m. we reached the safety and comparative warmth of the Machoi bungalow, and knew that the worst was behind us. But I confess to many an uncomfortable moment in Ladakh whenever I remembered the appalling snow-covered precipice which we had put between us and civilisation.

At Metaiyan our elderly cook became ill, and after allowing him to retard our progress for some days, we eventually had to leave him behind with a little money, to be picked up on our way back. Henceforward we had to fend for ourselves in the matter of cooking also, which indeed was not so difficult as it sounds, for we could get precious little to cook. At Dras we were able to secure the services of a stalwart Ladakhi called Gulam Mahomed, who proved a cheerful and willing worker but unfortunately knew no more of cooking than we were able to teach him ourselves ; and thereafter the monotony of our food became a great trial. At Dras we rested for several days, receiving many kindnesses from the friendly postmaster, who insisted that it was his obligation as a public servant to cook for us when we could make no other provision ; a versatility and a conception of duty as rare as it is laudable among our civil servants. By this time the snows had begun to melt somewhat, and slush rather than snow was

the element in which we now lived. On the return from Dras, starting as usual well before daybreak, I was actually able to use a pony for a short distance ; but after a few miles the snow became both deeper and softer as day broke and we got nearer to the summit of the pass, so that at every few yards the surface would break and either the forelegs or the hindlegs of my steed would abruptly sink in a foot and a half. As the precipices were uncomfortably near I dared not risk being thrown, and after persevering for a little way I resorted once again to Shanks's pony.

At Machoi, on our way back, came our great adventure, when we were held up for three days by a snowstorm which made it impossible for us to venture further. The telegraph line had been broken by an avalanche nearby—not that it would have done any good to send telegrams, for no one could reach us there—and the postal runners, carrying the mail down to Srinagar, were also snowed up with us, so that there were about twelve of us in all. At Machoi there is no village, only an isolated timber hut at the wind-swept summit of Zojila, and consequently there were no supplies of food whatever, except for the little that we carried with us. The nearest village on the Ladakh side is six miles away, and only once did the storm abate sufficiently to enable one of our men to go in search of food. After an absence of the greater part of a day he came back with a few eggs and a very small quantity of milk. Fortunately the coolies had a bag of maize-flour, with which they made

chapatties and shared them with us. On the second day we had to ration ourselves to one chapatty, one egg and one potato for each meal, and we allowed ourselves three such meals in the day—and very unappetising they were. All day long we could do nothing but sit huddled before our fire in our overcoats, and read some old and ragged copies of Blackwood's Magazine which the chowkidar had unearthed. And every few minutes we looked anxiously at the sky for signs of better weather. One of my most vivid memories is of waking each morning at 3 or 4 a.m., and seeing the great bulk of Gulam Mahomed in the doorway against the phosphorescent snow, and listening in the darkness to the dialogue that took place every morning between him and Peter. Asman saf hai? (Is the sky clear?) And when Gulam Mahomed replied that it was not, I was secretly almost relieved, in spite of the hardships we were enduring, to know that I need not renew my acquaintance with Zojila yet awhile. Finally, on the third morning, when all our food was exhausted, the postal runners woke us in the small hours, and gave it as their opinion that if we made haste we might risk the descent of the pass. We crossed it, thank Heaven, without mishap, and after that made double speed back to Srinagar, and to the good food and comfortable beds of our hotel. And in a few days' time we were busily looking through the back numbers of the newspapers, and taking up again the burden the "anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain", of this unhappy war-racked world.

THE THIEF'S SONGS

By K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

In Sanskrit literature, besides the celebrated names of the first rank, there are many poets and writers whose memory will last as long as fancy and feeling inspire our hearts. Bilhana is such a one. He lived in the 11th century A.D. His "Choura-Panchasika" meaning "The Fifty verses of the Thief" would at once provoke curiosity as to why such a name should have been given to a Poet's song. Indeed, there is as much charm in the lines ascribed to him as in the story encircling his name.

Tradition says that there was a king named Madanabhirama, who ruled over the Panchalas, having as his capital a city called Lakshmimandiram. His beautiful daughter, Yamini Poorna Tilaka (The full-moon of the night) was young and learned in all the arts except literature. Her father naturally desired her to be versed in literature also. So, from a number of applicants to the post of a tutor for his daughter, he selected Bilhana, the poet. Bilhana was exceedingly handsome, and unequalled in literary equipment. The worldly-wise minister of the king shrewdly guessed the danger of engaging such an attractive young man to teach one who was lovely and just of the age to be attracted by youth and

good looks. He knew that the princess abhorred to see blindness and also knew that Bilhana hated to see lepers. So he informed the princess that her tutor was blind and Bilhana that the princess was suffering from the incurable disease which he loathed to see. A thick curtain was therefore hung in the chamber, on either side of which were seated the tutor and the taught, the one pouring out his lore and the other listening to the magic of his words.

Days rolled on thus. On an evening before the rise of the full moon, Bilhana strayed into the queen's garden, where the princess was also present, all alone. Without being aware of the royal presence, he burst into poetry, praising the full moon. The princess heard the familiar voice and rushing to the spot found Bilhana, handsome and blessed with eye-sight. Bilhana too came to know who she was and was struck with her beauty. The trick played upon them by the king's minister became clear to them both. Love's arrow was quick in its work, and soon both preceptor and pupil found themselves lost in each other's company. When the king came to know of their secret love, he condemned the poet, the stealer of his daughter's heart, to the scaffold. As Bilhana reached the execution spot, the executioners were much intrigued to find a smile playing upon their victim's lips. Questioned as to this strange behaviour, he replied to them that he was happy because of the memory of his sweetheart. So saying he began to compose lines and thus fifty verses coursed down his

lips. Marvelling at such a flow of poetry from his lips, the executioners ran to the king to report the matter. The king came to the spot himself and found the poet still in a sweet trance with his lips uttering the name of the Deity of his heart, his own daughter. The king was convinced of Bilhana's true love. Yamini Poorna Tilaka was thereafter given away in marriage to the poet.

Now to the verses themselves, which, though not profound in poetic conceit, are enchantingly simple and descriptive. The purport of a few of them is given here in prose translation; for it is an impossible task to capture the form and spirit of the Sanskrit lines.

* * *

Even now I dwell upon her alone, whose soft skin bears the whitish-yellow of the Champaka bloom, whose eyes are like the petals of the full-blossomed lotus.....Awakened from her sleep and weary of love's fatiguing intoxication, she tries to elude me even as knowledge slips away by long neglect.

* * *

Even now let my mind fondly trace my sweetheart's face, which is white and rosy as the inside of the full blown lotus, with the mark of sweet-scented *Gorochana* on her forehead and her glances rolling slightly with love's wine.

* *

Even now my heart is fixed on her. In the night if I sneezed* she would refuse petulantly to utter the usual prayer " May you live long ", but saying nothing would place on my ears the flowers of gold.

* * *

Even now I do not forget her fine set of teeth resembling the Kunda buds, and her mischievous glances stealing from the edges of her eyes. Can I help remembering her beautiful face ! Can gratitude help remembering good deeds done !

* * *

Even now I recollect her getting impatient and angry with me, while copious tears choked her words with indignation rising in her throat and deep sighs parching up her lips.

* * *

Even now I feel I see her looking in secrecy into the mirror and getting disturbed on finding me in the reflection behind her; her heart will be then agitated, her body heave in confusion and shyness overcome her, because of love's presence.

* * *

Even now I remember her listlessly roaming about, to and fro, inside and out, all because of my

---

*It is usual custom for a person when he hears a child sneeze, to say " May you live long ! " The belief is that a prayer at such a moment will ensure the child long life. Here, in this verse, there is a hint that the lover adapts an old custom to serve his own needs: when he is troubled by his beloved's silence, he resorts to sneezing in the hope that it will compel her to speak.

absence. I can picture her golden-lotus face turning charmingly away followed by her glances.

* * *

Even now I remember her turning on her side in bed, in spite of my attempt to please her; her pretensions to be asleep in my presence; but with the morning, her hand lying on me.

* * *

Even now I remember her getting thrilled all over with intense expectation at my sight, though, when asked by her girl-friends "Who is he?", she of the dreamy eyes, will open them wide in surprise and reply "Not that I know of."

* * *

Even now I feel her concealed like a bee in the petals of my heart. May the Fates mercifully decree that in my next birth at least I shall be happy with her and never be seperated from the fawn-eyed girl of my heart, who is more charming in her love.

* * *

Even now ye executioners stand by your duty, just as God Siva will not give up his *Kalakuta* poison, even as Mahavishnu in his *Kurma Avataram* will not give up the burden of the earth on his back, and even as the mighty ocean will not cease to keep the unbearable fire* within its bosom!

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* The mythological fire called *Badavanala*.

A PARROT STORY

By R. K. NARAYAN

Ramani resolved to become a parrot trader when he saw the following advertisement in a local newspaper :—

> " Wanted a parrot trained to repeat the holy names of gods and *slokas*. Preferably in a musical manner. Prepared to pay Rs. 10/- to Rs. 100/- according to the qualification of the parrot. Communications to be addressed to .. .. "

This advertisement caught his eye at a time when he was keenly searching for a congenial occupation. He was a poet, author of *Blood-Bathed Love* and other epic efforts. He was certain that his works would be recognised by coming generations, but, at the moment, all the editors and the publishers in the world stood between him and his public. Hence his search for a ' congenial ' occupation. And was there anything more suitable to a poet than parrot trade ? You lived in the haunts of parrots and spent your time in their company. What an opulent life for a poet ! And in this luxury there was money. " Prepared to pay Rs. 10/- to Rs. 100/-....." The ten rupee variety was not his concern. He was not going take the trouble to

train a fourth-rate parrot. He was going to trade only in the hundred-rupee variety. The Ramani stamp on a parrot was going to stand for the best in parrots and nothing less. One such parrot a month and you made your hundred a month.

He had as yet very vague notions of the parrot business but he believed in luck and intuition. Some times he sat down, pen in hand, with next to nothing in his head, and at the end of three hours the sheets of paper before him would be filled with a poetic drama or a wonderful sonnet sequence. How was it done? Through luck and intuition. And the same qualities were now going to pull him through the parrot business.

He answered the advertisement. Two days later he received a letter from one Mr. Madusudhan asking him to see him at his residence in Saidapet. Ramani had no idea where parrots were available nor did he know of any parrot that could talk. All the same he had answered the advertisement in order to study the parrot market.

He inscribed on a blank visiting card "T.T.T. Ramani. Parrots Ltd." and started for Saidapet. He took the electric train. He found his way to Mr. Madusudhan's bungalow and sent his card in. He was ushered into a hall where a fat man, sitting cross-legged on thick piles of cushion, welcomed him. "Ah, take that chair, Mr. T.T.T. Ramani," Mr. Madusudhan said. "For years I have been

trying to secure a decent parrot. All sorts of persons promised and disappointed me. I grew desperate and advertised."

" Ah, is that so ? " Ramani asked warmly.

" I was able to get parrots that could only say ' How are you ' 'Ranga, Ranga ' ' Who is there ' and such other nonsense, but not one that could utter a prayer."

" What a pity ! " Ramani said sympathetically. "What a pity that we didn't know each other before. We specialise in religious parrots. I am the trainer in our firm you know." He added as an afterthought, " I have engaged four Brahmin priests in my department to coach the parrots."

" Ah, how cursed am I that I did not know you before. How is it that I don't see your advertisements anywhere ? "

" We don't advertise. We have our select clientele and we usually do not take up extra business."

" How is it that I have not had the pleasure of meeting your parrots anywhere in these parts ? "

" Our religious parrots sell steadily in Benares and in a few pilgrim centres in the North, but the bulk of our business is in South Africa and F.M.S."

Ramani was offered fruits and coffee. " I should like to see your farm sometime," Mr. Madusudhan said.

"With pleasure," Ramani said. "But I am going up North for a few weeks on business. As soon as I return I will take you round our parrot farm." He had a sudden inspiration and added, "I have trained a few parrots in the business line too. They just quote prices and so on and are suitable for business houses. I have some for coffee hotels too. These just reel off the menu. All labour-saving devices. In these hustling times they ought to be very valuable. These business-line parrots save the energy of the shop assistants who have to repeat the same thing over and over again to every customer who comes in. All the saved-up energy could be utilized by the principal of a firm for more productive purposes. This is the place of the parrot in modern economy. Would you care to see our business parrots?"

"No," said Mr. Madusudhan. "They aren't useful to me. I have retired from business. My thoughts are with God now. I want a bird that will be filling my house with holy sounds. I want a bird that will utter *slokas*. I am prepared to pay even one-hundred-and-fifty rupees for such a parrot. Please tell me when I can come for my parrot." "I can't say definitely when I can have one ready for you. I have some advance bookings on hand. In about two months I think I can meet your order."

In fairness to Ramani it must be said that he had not intended to lie. He had gone there in order

to understand the conditions of the parrot market but in his talk with Mr. Madusudhan his imagination caught fire and he saw Parrots Ltd., gradually revealed to him in all its detail of organization. It was more a loud brown study than downright falsehood.

Ramani went home and definitely made up his mind to start the parrot business. His first transaction would be with Mr. Madusudhan. He would, devote all his waking hours in the next two months to training a parrot for Mr. Madusudhan. The labour would be worth Rs. 150. In course of time, with a little practice, he could have a parrot a month ready for sale. As for customers he was confident that he could find at least one Madusudhan a month in this wide world. Certain other details of the work bothered him. Once a customer got his parrot the transaction was done with as long as the parrot lived. What was the normal longivity of a parrot ? Probably ten years. So it meant that normally a customer would not return for ten years. For a moment Ramani wondered if it would be wise to earn the confidence of his customers' servants and bribe them to leave the cages open.....

The instinct that leads the cow to the grass and the fly to the sugar bowl was responsible for taking Ramani to Moore Market, and there one Kandan became his friend. Kandan had just been loitering around, when he noticed Ramani making eager

enquiries at the stalls. He introduced himself to him : " Master in need of a parrot ? "

" Yes."

" What sort of parrot ? "

" A parrot that can be trained to talk. Have you one ? " " Years ago when I was in the army I had a parrot. It could give commands for the troop drill. It was our best companion at Mespot ; but my officer took a fancy to it and I gave it to him.....I know where parrots are to be had and I can get you one if you want....." In the course of an hour or two, squatting on a patch of grass in front of Moore Market and talking, a great friendship developed between Ramani and Kandan. They came to an agreement. Kandan was to secure a young parrot immediately and train it. He was to deliver the parrot complete in two months and receive ten rupees in return. In due course he would be employed in Parrots Ltd., on a salary of fifty rupees a month. Before they parted for the evening a rupee had changed hands.

Two days later Kandan came to Ramani's house and told him that he had purchased a young parrot from some villager. Thereafter he dropped in frequently to keep Ramani informed of the physical and mental progress of the parrot. Sometimes he demanded an odd anna or two for buying certain secret drugs essential for the parrot's throat. In a few days he came to announce that the parrot was

just able to repeat ' Krishna, Krishna ' and also the first two lines of a prayer to God Subramanya. Ramani was quite pleased with Kandan's work and promised to give him five rupees more than the agreed amount. Even then the balance would be in his favour. He drafted the balance sheet thus.

EXPENDITURE

		Rs.	A.	P.
Cost of parrot	..	1	0	0
Special throat drugs	..	1	8	0
Trainer's fee	..	15	0	0
Total	....	17	8	0

INCOME

		Rs.	A.	P.
Selling price of trained parrot		150	0	0
Profit	..	132	8	0

Ramani clamoured so much to see the parrot that one dark night Kandan brought a cage with a heavy piece of cloth wrapped round it.

" I say I can't see anything, take away the cloth," Ramani said. " It can't be done," Kandan replied firmly. " The bird is still young. It will die of paralysis if it is allowed to open its eyes on these new surroundings all of a sudden."

" But how am I to see the bird ? " Ramani asked.

" You may peep through this chink if you like."

Ramani lifted the cage and was about to hold it against the light. " Ah, don't do it," Kandan screamed. " Do you want to blind it for life ? "

Ramani put down the cage. He applied his eyes to a very small opening in the cloth wrapping and said, " I see some faint shape inside but I can't say whether it is a ball of wool or a chicken or a parrot." At this Kandan looked so hurt that Ramani felt sorry for allowing these frivolous words to cross his lips, and apologized. Ramani asked why the bird was not fluttering its wings inside the cage. Kandan explained that he had tied its wings to its sides ; otherwise there was danger of its wasting all its energy in fluttering its wings ; every ounce of its energy had to be conserved for cultivating its voice. Ramani desired to hear the voice of the parrot. Kandan declared that at nights parrots could not be made to talk.

" Well, well. You may deliver it to me in working order on the 13th of next month."

" Certainly, master" Kandan said. " It will be the most garrulous parrot one would ever wish to meet."

" Mere garrulity is not enough," Ramani said. " It must be the most religious-minded parrot."

On the twelfth of the following month Kandan brought a green parrot in a cage. It was a rakish looking, plump bird. The sight of it sent a thrill through Ramani. He had not thought that an ambition could be so readily realized. A small thread was tied round the beak of the parrot. Kandan explained, " It is better that you keep it tied till you reach your customer's place. Otherwise the rascal will talk all the way and gather a crowd behind you." Ramani insisted on examining the full accomplishments of the parrot now. Kandan requested Ramani to go out of the room for a few minutes and he would untie the thread and coax the bird. Of course it could be made to talk even in Ramani's presence but then it might take time, and he (Kandan) would now have to go and attend on his aunt, who was lying in a serious condition in General Hospital. He could coax the bird much quicker if Ramani would oblige him by going out. Ramani went out of the room. Presently he heard the gruff voice of Kandan coaxing the bird. And then the parrot uttered in a melodious voice " Krishna, Krishna." " Rama, Rama," and the first two lines of a prayer to God Subramanya. As soon as Ramani re-entered the room, Kandan said, "I have tied the thread again. As soon as you take him over to your customer's place snipe off the thread with scissors. If you give him a red, ripe chilli he will be very friendly with you in an hour or two, and then you can coax him to utter the holy sounds."

"Right, thanks. Do you want your money now?"

"H'm, yes," said Kandan. "I have to buy some medicine for my aunt."

Ramani took his savings-bank book, went to the Vepery Post Office, bled his account white, and handed fifteen rupees to Kandan. The old clerk at the counter looked at Ramani sourly. The old clerk looked on Ramani's recent withdrawals with marked disfavour. Ramani said apologetically, "I will come back in the evening and deposit one-hundred-and-thirty rupees."

Kandan took leave of Ramani and hurried away to his aunt's bedside.

"Ah! Ah! come in, Mr. Ramani," said Mr. Madusudhan as soon as Ramani appeared in Saidapet with a parrot in hand. "I am so happy that you have brought the parrot. Really! Really! Or am I dreaming? Ah, you are correct to the hour."

"In business, punctuality is everything," said Ramani. Mr. Madusudhan took him in. He inspected the cage with delight; and asked again and again if the holy names of gods were going to echo through his halls thenceforth. "Does the bird really utter the names of Krishna and Rama?"

"Absolutely," Ramani replied. "It was trained under my personal supervision."

They sat on a sofa with the cage between them. Ramani took a pair of scissors and sniped off the thread tied round the beak. He took out a ripe chilli and gave it to the bird. It ate the chilli gratefully.

Ramani said, "Since this is a new place it will take about half an hour for him to open his mouth."

"Let him. Let him take his own time," said Mr. Madusudhan. Ramani thrust another chilli into the cage and the parrot attacked it with vigour. They watched it for sometime, and then Mr. Madusudhan asked "Will you have your cheque immediately or sometime later?"

Ramani was not used to such questions. He grinned awkwardly and said, "Oh, I have not brought the receipt book."

"It does not matter. You can send the receipt later on."

"May we hope for another order from you?"

It was at this stage that the shrieking question was asked in Tamil "Are you mad?" It was followed by the command "Get out, you fool!" Ramani looked at the cage in consternation. The parrot had eaten all the chilli and was now in a loquacious mood. He chuckled quietly, and winked at Ramani before saying in lucid English, "Hands up or I shoot! You son of a....." Mr. Mdusudhana

choked as he asked, " Is this the kind of holy sound that is going to fill my house ? " He glared at Ramani.

" There is some mistake," mumbled Ramani. He Suddenly rose and fled, leaving the cage behind. He did not stop to turn and look till he reached his house in Vepery.

Two days later a small advertisement in a paper said: "LOST: a green parrot in cage kept in front of the house. Finder will be rewarded.. .." Ramani wondered for a moment if it would be worth his while to put this person on the track of the parrot. But he realised that he might be hauled up for theft. For sometime he lived in terror of being hunted down by Mr. Madusudhan, but fortunately the visiting card he had left behind contained only his name and not his address.

■■■■■■■■

COLON AND SEMI-COLON

The man who has learned to think of his heart as a pump, with valves that get out of order, is on the way toward having a weak one. Better let him think of it as the seat of love and generosity and it will beat away happily till it stops.

Let him think of his stomach as where he puts his dinner, not as a fierce chemical furnace where acids are tearing up tissues and sending up exhaust gases. Let him think of his blood as part of his lineage, not as the battleground of a myriad of good and evil corpuscles, some on his side, some dead against him. Any man who has realized that he has in him about 25 feet of colon and semi-colon—a sort of string of sausages—can never think the same of himself again.

' Stephen Leacock '

LETTERS

(The letters published below passed from a friend to another some years ago, and are now presented for their literary quality.

We are obliged to screen the identity of both the writer and the receiver of these letters.)

I

My dear Friend,

Your letter disturbed me to-day. You are the most morbid person in the world at the present moment. I am sorry you should have written as you have for you have no reason to complain about me. I do not doubt you have said nastier things to me than I have ever found it possible to say to you. However if you are going to give all the kicks and take none I will send you a nice football with my initials neatly painted thereon by my own hand.

Why should you dwell so tragically on a grim jeu d' esprit? How can you honestly infer what you do?

> The devil hath not in all his quivers choice,
> An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice.

You evidently do not see very far or very deep. I am too perturbed in mind to observe your touchiness

with that felicitious exactitude which will leave you the honey without the sting, the rose without the thorn, or the beautiful wine without its bitter dregs. Minor martyrdoms are cheap today. You have no passion for the pale moon-sickened solitude of my soul. You are a philosopher and I am a fool. What can you expect ? I am not reviling you : I revere philosophers, especially when they are patient with fools.

You are wronging me every day when you say you are not as dear to me as you used to be. What right have you to think thus ? Do you want a book of sonnets dedicated to you every six a weeks ? I never doubt your indulgent attachment, do I ? You are the grave-digger of jokes. This is your only joke !

I am not sure if you are quite as good a listener as you ought to be or even so good a one as you imagine. But I am not going to " bandy " words with you any more. You will have to give up your spasmodic-spontaneous criticisms. I am not so hopelessly idiotic as you seem satisfied to think. You must remember that we people don't willingly tolerate what you so philosophically accept as your portion in this world of sorrow. We work well when we get the chance and we will go on working steadily so long as you don't needlessly interfere with us. The pettiness of some of your men here is enough to make a flea grin.....

I have been very busy removing and regret exceedingly that you never saw me in this house which it grieves me to leave.

So in the intervals of removing I have been reading Keats to keep my head cool. You people who constantly reproach us for lacking wholeness and completeness of nature forget that because we are artists this must necessarily be so. That very concentration of vision and intensity of purpose which is characteristic of the artistic temperament is in itself a mode of limitation. To those who are preoccupied with the beauty of life nothing else seems of any consequence. You ought to know that even in actual life egotism is not without its attractions.

I am very deeply grateful to Mr. K. for his great kindness in letting us go to his house. I will be perfectly happy there but I fear madame will find it fearfully dull. Unfortunately she has not my infinite capacity of doing without company. The place is sanative : the air, the light, the perfumes and the aspects of things concord in happy harmony. I may be idle but I never fear a fit of the "blues." Mirth, lyrical mirth, and a vivacious classical contentment are of the very essence of the art of my inner life.

I shall do well there and not write one letter to anyone unless my mother or brothers. These are the only people who never care how I write or speak.

My friend I cannot help harking back to your irresponsible quibbling about my indifference. You do not seem to remember that the world has grown sick, having been so curiously tolerant of certain persons, separated by choice from the main-current of affairs and engaged in the contemplative life as thinkers, saints, or artists. You forget that there is another yet more finely-grained type of character, akin to those, yet distinct from them, for which the world at present apparently has neither room nor recognition. People forced by circumstance to this scintillating keenness of edge, have usually for their aim in life, my dear friend, a dutiful practice of giving to all things their eternal values. Their peculiar characteristic is a certain abiding wistfulness, anxious but without hope for real knowledge. Thus we seek rather to preserve a receptive attitude of mind than to put forward any definite propositions in the form of creeds, principles or philosophies. Mark the last ! I suppose it is the penalty we must pay for distinction that we should be precisely diaphanous—a medium through which the eye might see all but not an object on which it can find repose. Alien to the strong dynamic forces of the world, in the great development of things, we shall be effective —not as Luther or Danton were effective—but contrariwise by our calm and titanic impotence—vicarious sacrifices to the outraged Furies who must always be waiting round the shadowy corners of windy life.

I myself would never close my heart fast against the feelings of humanity. Nevertheless I would calmly and critically consider by what conduct of life they may enter it with the least importunity or force. However I will sing to you now as the mocking-bird to the rose, as the moon to the lotus—

Lost to a world in which I crave no part,
I sit alone and listen to my heart,
Pleased with my little corner of the earth,
Glad that I came—not sorry to depart.
Why should it be that those who merit least
Must always be the masters of the feast
The fool's purse fat, the wise man's ever lean
and Beauty's self the harlot of the Beast ?
Tis written clear within the Book of Fate
The little always shall oppress the great,
Who most deserve be slaves to those who least,
And only fools and rascals go in state.
To my house of dreams let the rumour run
of the ringing reigns of old
of horsemen riding in the sun
Through worlds of windy gold.

You must not get too big a dose all at once. So I shall come to a close.

I am not going to beg of you to come or not. You are still—I suppose—in possession of your best faculties and I fancy you know your duty is to come. I am sorry I am much too much upset to be very good company but if you give madame your company she will be glad and possibly grateful.

I am retiring from the world and I don't think you will be very successful in getting more out of me. Now I must die down like the angry flare of the sunset sky into the dreary pallid grey of the gloomy night of brooding.

II

My dear friend,

Your brief note has provoked a reply you as little deserve as expect.

I do not know what you call "philosophic note." However you seem on the whole to have appreciated my few words with that *nil admirari grace* which so much suits your particular caste of countenance.

I am very pleased to be here in this retreat and can hardly know how to thank my dear friend for letting me come here. The beautiful noonday quiet here is something like the silence round the shores of sleep. The song of a solitary bird breaks rarely upon the ear and I hear the breeze breathing among the trees like an army sleeping in shadows.

The morning bursts out to bloom in the world like a region of fiery roses and the evening falls in one long wave of reluctant darkness faint and far. I watch the rooks trooping homeward like the stragglers of a decimated army without loot and careless of defeat. The flying foxes come out like so many lost souls seeking their remembered places amidst the haunts of the living.

And mine are those delightful tenuous thoughts of that eternal twilight land which lies between hope and remembrance. All the ecstasy of youth blends with that poignant melancholy which proves the pain of defeated memories. The stars come out like so many faint beacons—the distant flickering lamps of that splendid city which is set on the hills of hope and peopled with so many desires. The night is usually spoiled by the ceaseless noise of innumerable carts carrying back drunken braggarts to their villages.

When there is quiet I feel something of that serene spirit of peace which must possess the souls of the mighty.

Why should anyone feel dull here? Do not tell me it is all a matter of taste or temperament. For I am genial and sociable among the right people. I can enjoy the benedictions of the town too. It is a matter of that exquisite discipline which sustains the sanative soul. It is perhaps not quite true to say that solitude is the school for genius. I suppose the solitary souls in our big cities know well otherwise. Genius is never educated without strife. Is it not necessary to have chaos within in order to give birth to a Dancing Star?"

This beautiful and peaceful existence suits me perfectly. I have spoken to no one of the superior fools here for almost over a long month. Why should

I? Must the monkey go to the crocodile to know what his own tail is like ? It is so nice to be away from people you can never hope to find one single idea in common with, or whose poses and pretences long ceased to attract either one's pity or contempt. Suffer fools gladly—when you have to. That is as far as I will go.

There is an impression here among my fellow Barbarians that I am a perfect young ogre : that I think no one here is good enough for my company : and that I keep Madame rigorously confined under my very nose lest they corrupt her or pollute her mind with their vulgarity and pettiness. It has afforded me much malicious satisfaction to know that this great fact has had a subtle and spontaneous generation in so many diverse minds equally endowed only in one respect—shameless dishonesty.

Who are these people ? Because the land holds both cobra and crocodile must we make them meet ? Where is the social, moral, or ethical code which insists that a man who is perfectly satisfied he is living quietly must go to hobnob with those of weak intellects and vicious souls ? If you were a canary don't you think a donkey might well be suprised and distrustful when you requested to shake hands with it ? If people want to know me let them come here.

III

My dear friend,

Would you kindly explain yourself more clearly : you have recently made some very nasty remarks about me. I've just got hold of them. It is somewhat a pity that there is no doubt they are yours. The only doubtful factor is why on earth you did speak as you have done. I am not one who welcomes tittletattle : only as the world here is very narrow you might have recollected the certainty of those words reaching me. Perhaps it was because of such assured certitude that you have been so unkind.

Your reference to my humour and pleasure are in bad taste, so I need say no more.

I am shortly departing from here. Such books of mine as have " found their way " to you might be left in Mr. G.'s hands as I cannot come to your kingdom. All the same thank you for your kind and strange invitation. It pleased me much to hear you are all well and I sincerely hope your house will be free of all illness for a long time now.

I have nothing much to say about myself that cannot be misunderstood unless that I am very sad about many things ; in one instance over the death of a beautiful young lady friend of mine. However there are infinitely sadder hearts than mine elsewhere, and it is, perhaps, part of that sorrowful discipline of

the soul to remind myself that all the bounty of the spring cannot give reflowering to a plant that is wounded at the root.

IV

CHRISTMAS.

My dear friend,

This is with us at all events—a season of Peace and Goodwill to all. But I need not have waited so long in order to have as benign an emotion. My reason is better. Your pride—have you not a beast within you called Pride—unless more villainous than I care to think it, coud not unashamed refuse my greetings now. I have found you better than you have been.

The harm you have done me in bitter and ungenerous moments, in blind indiscretion, has left me only with a keener perception of your past kindness, with a fuller sense of pronounced value for your generous and exacting friendship and affection.

I am not quite as silly as you seem to be or as you seem to think me. I owe you much and have never been tardy to acknowledge it. And it gives me some pleasure to take advantage of the season and send you even this slight reminder of my gratitude and esteem. Whether you will accept it so I do not wait to ask. But if I have obtruded upon the inviolate sanctuary of your recollections too rudely I trust you will pardon me if I have thrown

a flower through a window I thought was my friend's.

I sincerely wish you well and trust you will have a successful year in and out of your house. I hope you will find good health and happiness always seated amongst you, invisible but always unwilling to depart.

Above all I would wish you to remember that every man has more loyal friends than he knows and, perhaps, you would not care to say of me that I have more friends than I deserve ?

However I must not vex you too much with this reminder of my presence. It will be enough to send you my affectionate greeting—to you all—and conclude by contending that if you are not my friend I am still grateful to be,

Your friend.

V

My dear friend,

Your brief note has brought me much happiness. I am glad you took my red rose to your heart. But why should you " not expect anything in the nature of compliments of the season " from me ? That was not kind of you : for it shows you have little knowledge of me. Nay, worse, it implies a sad want of faith in yourself. The difference is—you choose to remember I never forget.

I did not doubt you would send me kind words and you have. You did not honour the good within me when you expected no remembrance from me and my letter has changed that.

Little do you know what secret influence a word, a glance, a casual tone may bring! Like the wind's breath on a silent harpstring a memory is thrilled into being, touching my inner sense like the light sweep of a bird's swift wing on a deep, still, and silent lake, wakening dreams that come from where I know not.

Did I not find your soft eyes through the dusk looking into mine and all the boundaries of time and place broke down; and far into a world beyond of buried hopes and dreams I beheld in a soft mirage of tender light your well-beloved Face?

Let it be as you say: for our Past has but a sigh for epitaph.

Why—excuse such questioning—why should we pity those who weep? The pain that finds a ready outlet of salt and bitter tears is blessed and needs none of our sympathies. Look how the warm rain fits the shorn field for new yield of grain. It is only where brazen red skies beat down remorselessly upon unsheltered slopes that there is—Drouth. There, there is no relief. The anguish is long: it is a still, unuttered, silent, wordless grief. No sudden tempests or slow dripping tears, only an eternal aching. This

is the sorrow wherewith hearts break and are broken. Think you not as I ?

The world is wide, for those who love ; but not for those who hate. How beautiful an experience to have found one of whom we can say.

> Thy lips, as if endowed
> With potency divine.
> Changed with a word my life
> From water unto wine !

Remember you are not the only flame-hearted lover and friend walking under the planet of Love ! Your words have been as music to me. They have intoxicated my sad young heart. Is ecstasy but the apotheosis of anticipation : While I sit here I can see before me those memories which surge like legions of desperate dreams through the broken bastions of my sleep.

I suppose your mind, like most minds, must have felt the pathos of the story of the girl who leaves her village home to plunge into the deceptive excitement of life in a great city. She sends no word of her surroundings, but her father, month after month, year after year, sets the cottage door open each night, with the quiet words " some day she will return."

She returns at last, broken down in body and mind, the piteous wreck of her former self,—brought back by love, the love which in her saddest degradation she had never forgotten, as it had never failed her—to find forgiveness which she had first despised and then despaired of, in her father's arms.

Of course the father's love had conquered ; yet, touching as is the picture of the old man calmly waiting year after year, it was not his to put forth that greatest love, that went out to seek and to save the lost. I say she could not have sunk to the depths if she could be brought back by what was to her only a blessed memory. Such memories have often served only to repel.

My dear friend, the supreme love will not rely on a memory, however tender or compelling; it has other weapons. I tell you to follow the unfaithful friend or the wandering child into the abyss : to bear the ill-will of others, the odium of the sin, as if oneself the malefactor ; to suffer the gibes and the contemptuous hatred even of the wrong-doer, until the old affection, wounded and half-dead from the blow of the unforgotten injury, begins to reawake from its stupor,—this is the steep but royal path of complete reconciliation.

I know, too, and wonder if you do also, that in every age, human nature would have been infinitely the poorer had no tears been shed for the frequent sinning and the unmanly repentances of those whose own hearts had never known the pangs of honest self-condemnation. Suffering of this kind is the most potent means by which man influences man. It is not of course the most conspicuous. But the grass on the hill-sides grows green because of a thousand hidden streams which only rise to the

surface on the slopes far below. All those who have exercised any empire or influence over the inner loyalty and devotion of others have surely, I fancy, wielded a sceptre wreathed with starry tears of compassion.

But why should I give you all this—why? I suppose you have inspired me to sermonise!

Yet, ere I pass to other things let me tell you a little story. It is one of Gogol's, that golden-hearted harlequin of Russian humour. I cannot even remember what it is called; anyway I shall give it a significant title, being influenced once more by you when you write "the chapter of errors will close"—I will call my version

Why We Should Keep Quiet.

The two Ivans were neighbours. They were the greatest of friends. Never a day passed without their seeing each other and their greatest pleasure was to entertain each other at big Gargantuan-like meals.

But one day they quarrelled—about a gun. Ivan N—called Ivan P—a goose. After this they would not see each other, and their relations were broken off.

Hitherto they had sent every day to inquire about each other's health, had conversed together from their balconies, and had said charming things to each other. On Sundays they had gone to church arm in arm and outdone each other in civilities. Now they never looked at each other.

At length the quarrel went so far that Ivan P— lodged a complaint against Ivan N—saying that the latter had inflicted a deadly insult on his personal honour, firstly by calling him a goose. Secondly by erecting a goose-shed opposite his porch. Thirdly by cherishing a design to burn his house down. Ivan N—lodged a similar petition against Ivan P—.

As bad luck would have it, Ivan P's brown pig ate Ivan N's petition and this, of course, made the quarrel worse.

At last a common friend tried to bring about a reconciliation, and asked the two enemies to dinner. After much coaxing they went. A large company had assembled. Both Ivans ate their meal without glancing at each other, and as soon as dinner was over made ready to depart.

They were surrounded immediately by friends who adjured them to make up again. Each said he was innocent of evil design and the quarrel was within an ace of being settled properly when, unfortunately, Ivan P—said to Ivan N—" Permit me to observe in a friendly manner, that you took offence because I called you a goose." As soon as the fatal word " goose " was uttered, all reconciliation was out of the question and the quarrel lasted until the end of their lives. So endeth my tale !

Such is it that we can poetise thus :—

Some weep that they part
And languish broken-hearted,
And others —O, my heart !
Because they never parted.

THE VENDOR OF SWEETS

By K. V. JAGANNATHAN

(*Translated from Tamil by* SRIMATI K. SAVITRI)

He was a vendor of sweets. He had his own peculiar method of advertising and doing business. He never depended upon others for help. He worked hard all alone.

I speak of Munisamy—the man who sold sweets. His customers were children, the future citizens of the world. How they were attracted by the sight of him as he went singing his song and ringing his iron bell!

He knew a lot about schools though not about reading or writing. He could tell you off-hand that two hundred children were studying in that red-painted school facing west in Sankaran Chetti Street and that a fourth of them were girls.

At the stroke of nine in the morning he would stand in front of the school with his tray of sweets. Till about eleven the sale would be brisk. After that he moved off to other places. The sun might beat down ever so fiercely; but he did not mind it. Even when the sweets became sticky in the heat, his business never slackened.

At five minutes to one in the afternoon he again presented himself near the school. Between one and

two the lunch hour for children—he did good business, and at two-thirty went away to sell in the streets. He would go round every nook and corner of the town and try his luck and present himself again at the school at four. At four-thirty the children streamed out as though they were let out of a prison, and they loved to buy a coconut or an onion sweet and suck it as they went home.

Sometimes Munisamy spent a whole day at one school. At others he visited all the schools by turns. He somehow managed to earn eight annas by the evening. They were all coppers, mostly pies, which he brought home.

Thus Munisamy found a thriving business in vending sweets. There was depression in his trade only when the holidays came. He had to wander far and wide at such times. His trade could have no rest. It might be possible only when he could give rest to his stomach !

* * *

On Sundays he prepared enough sweets to last a whole week. His wife also helped him in the preparation. She earned four rupees a month by sweeping the floor and cleaning vessels in four houses. Their earnings, put together, enabled them to live a simple, peaceful life. A son was born to them.

The summer holidays commenced for the children. For a whole month and a half their merry voices were absent from those cells. The beauty of

the place—its life had vanished and with it the presence of Munisamy too ceased to haunt the place.

He hated the silence of the school. The holidays meant a sweet restful sleep for the children, but Munisamy looked upon it as death. Such days were a crisis in his life recurring unfailingly. They seemed never to move while the other days simply flew on.

And they were the hottest days of the year. He had to wander a lot. He returned home in the evening with tired limbs and a weary spirit.

" The holidays will be over at last. Only a week more. I must borrow a little money from someone and buy sugar, gingelly, and other stuff for making cakes and sweets ", he told himself. But who would lend him money ? His wife helped him. She managed to get two rupees from the mistress of one of the houses in which she worked. With this money Munisamy did some shopping.

Their boy was now two years old,—an age at which a child is apt to put all kinds of things into its mouth. Muniswamy, however, would not let him touch even the little crumbs that dropped on the ground. What right had a poor child to eat sweets ? " If I allow him once, he will get into the habit and it will be a nuisance afterwards", he argued. But could a child understand the legitimacy of his arguments ?

" Papa ! a sweet for me," the little one would ask.

" You will have only a kick " would cut in the angry voice of the father. His sweet words made other children flock round him and buy his sweets. But he hardly knew how to speak to his own child. For, the other children were his customers while this one was just a little slave born to obey his authority. Whether he actually thought so or not his hand-to-mouth existence reduced him to it.

" How you shout at a little child ! What does he know ? " his wife would protest.

" Go to, you ass ! ' A silken string indeed for the broomstick ! ' As if he could not do without eating sweets ! "

" Have we earned anything more though by denying him ? " she would mutter to herself.

The child would stand crying for the sweet. The sight would fill the mother's heart with pain, and enrage the father. He would not, however, raise his hand against the child. He had not descended to that level yet.

* * *

It was the re-opening day of the school. Munisamy got up early. It was like the dawn of a new year for him. He had decorated the tray with coloured paper and arranged the sweets on it.

"This is the first day. God grant that the sweets may sell well," he prayed and applied on his forehead sacred ash. He rolled a long piece of cloth into a turban and put it on his head. He had forgotten to take out the little iron bell on the previous day. Now he took it out and placed the auspicious vermilion mark on it and on the tray.

He then swallowed a little *kanji* and went out to wash his hands. The child chose precisely that moment to approach the tray : he picked up a sweet from it, and put it into his mouth.

Munisamy saw it. "Damn the fellow!" he cried and gave a sharp slap on the tender cheeks of the child. He then hastily took up the tray and went out of the house.

The child sank on the floor shrieking with pain. At the impact of the blow the little bit of sweet he was sucking dropped from his mouth. He screamed as though he were in the throes of death.

The mother came running, and gathered him in her arms. "Oh! the villain! he has killed the child!" she wailed "Has God no eyes? Oh! my darling! why did He will it that you should be born to this cursed woman? Your lot would have been happier even if you had been born to a scavenger. You have fallen a prey to this human beast. Surely, this is a punishment for my sins. When I took him the other day to the Mudaliar's house how that lady

admired him ! ' He looks a very prince ! Look after him carefully' she advised me. Oh ! my little prince, how can that devil have the heart to beat you ? " she lamented.

Meanwhile Munisamy was walking along very fast, with the tray on his head. " The little fellow's hand has touched the sweets. It is an ill omen. Suppose it affects the sale today !" he reflected. " I should not have hit him so hard, however, and come away without even caring to see how he did. I shall not lose anything indeed by giving him just a little piece," he reflected again in a different strain.

" Children ought not to have their own way in everything. Even the son of a king must learn to be obedient" went on his thoughts in yet another strain.

" But what can the little fellow know at his age ? He has done no wrong ! I am so hard on him while I am selling sweets to hundreds of little children."

Thus a multitude of thoughts rose and surged in his mind. Just as he was going along a lane, he suddenly saw a big car bearing down in his direction. He hurried to a side, when his foot stumped against a big stone and he fell headlong on the ground. The car flew past him. The sweets tray fell from his head into the gutter by the side of the road. His turban rolled away in one direction and the iron bell in another.

Munisamy got up and gave vent to his feelings freely. He picked up the turban and the iron bell, and looked for the sweets tray. The sweets were all lying in the gutter. Picking up the empty tray from the gutter he seated himself on the very stone which had sent him down prostrate. Luckily his body was uninjured, but his heart was.

The sweets—the whole lot, from which he would not allow a single bit to be removed even for his own child—lay in a heap before his very eyes, in the gutter. They were lost, irretrievably lost.

Sitting on that stone he looked into his own heart and subjected it to a thorough scrutiny.

" Alas ! what a wretch I am to beat an innocent little child ! " he thought mournfully. " The sweets have all fallen into the gutter. Of what use can they be to any one now ? Had I given just one to the little fellow it would have at least escaped this fate. Now God knows whether the child is alive or dead : I did hit him hard in my frenzy. Suppose he is seriously hurt.... "

Such thoughts harassed his mind and the tears filled his eyes. He beat his head and reflected bitterly again. " I prayed to God, applied the sacred ashes on my forehead, and all that. But I beat the child and was not aware that he was the image of that same God. Can the just God tolerate it ? Indeed, it is He that has pushed all the sweets into the gutter."

All at once he was filled with an intense desire to go home and see his child. He got up, unrolled the turban and threw it over his shoulder and with the bell and the empty tray in his hands, he started back for home.

" Why, you have returned so soon ! Have all the sweets been sold away ? " his wife asked.

The child had cried itself to sleep on her lap. Munisamy saw the red marks of his fingers on the soft cheeks and also the stain of tears over them.

" The sweets were all lost in the gutter " he said in a sad voice.

She was seized with fear. " What if he should beat the child again to death thinking that the accident was due only to the child's laying his hand upon the tray ! " She did not wish to rouse his anger by referring to his cruelty in the morning. Accordingly she held her peace. He expected she would rate him severely. But she did nothing of the kind. Her silence went to his heart. He laid down the tray and feeling weary and exhausted he went and sat in a corner of the room. He hardly knew what to say, neither could she venture to break the silence.

Although he remained silent outwardly, a storm raged in his heart. He felt his heart would burst if he did not say something.

" Is he sleeping ? " he asked.

" Yes."

" Did he cry very much ? "

" Why do you talk about things which do not concern you ? "

" Did I hit him hard ? "

" Perhaps you did. What about it now ?

" Is he hurt by any chance ? "

At this series of questions she burst out indignantly, " Very fine indeed ! Your coming and speaking to me like this ! Why did you not straight away kill the child with a single blow ? Having treated him so foully you come out now with your enquiries ! Will not God make you suffer for this ! " She could speak no further. She burst out weeping.

Munisamy's eyes also filled with tears. He restrained himself with some effort. " Come now " he said her. " Hear me. I swear to God I will not touch the child again. I sinned and God has punished. I say, do not cry....." He broke into sobs. In this commotion the child woke up from its sleep and looked at them.

Munisamy got up and went to the basket in which he stored the sweets. He came back with his hands full of sweets and gave them to the child.

" My darling ! From today you will have it first," he said and kissed the cheek which he had slapped in the morning.

The child smiled. Biting the sweet he looked at his parents and burst into a laugh.

" Look at the little rogue laughing ! " exclaimed Munisamy. What relief he had now ! What bliss !

By kind permission of *Ananda Vikatan* of Madras.

COUNTERFEITS

The Englishman who religiously sits down to his solitary dinner in a dress coat in the sweltering heat of equatorial Africa at least obeys an obscure impulse to safeguard his self-respect. The Indian who imitates this ritual from a muddled feeling that it is somehow necessary to his own self-respect is merely a figure of fun. But he is tragic, too, as all frustration is tragic. The pathological hankering for testimonials from successful Europe, the tendency to praise itself and to blame others for the wrong reasons, the habit of mimicking thought and using words as counters, the inability to distinguish between means and ends—these are the stigmata of a generation that has lost its sense of values and tries to comfort itself with cheap counterfeits.

—A Broadcast Talk.

THE BLINDMAN'S EYE

By N. RAJAM

(The Blindman's room in a house)

Blindman : Who is there ?

Boy : Can't you see ?

Blindman : How can I ? I am blind, you know.

Boy : Oh, I forgot. I am your new boy. Your people have asked me to work from today. They have promised me ten rupees a month. You must increase it after six months.

Blindman : Certainly, if you are a good boy. What sort of a boy are you ?

Boy : Of course I am a good boy. Master (lowering his voice) I promise not to tell anyone, but tell me whether you are really blind or just pretending to be blind.

Blindman : I am honestly blind. I am not joking.

Boy : May I test you ?

Blindman : Yes.

Boy : How many fingers do I hold up before you now ?

Blindman : Two hundred. (Laughs). Boy, now will you tell me something about yourself ? Where did you work before you came here ?

Boy : I was a ball-picker in a tennis court. Some days ago a ball was lost and they said I stole it and then drove me out.

Blindman : Did you steal the ball ?

Boy : No, but I wish I had stolen it, master ; in any case they call me a thief. There is a rascal in the second court who stole the ball. I will settle my score with him some day. They drove me out, and when I went home my father said he would send me to a school. Whenever I am out of work my father threatens to send me to a school. Is it fair ?

Blindman : Why not go to a school ?

Boy : Oh! You also think so ! I went to a school for sometime. I tremble even now to think of it. It is not a place for human beings. They beat and torture people there everyday. That is why I am always ready to do any work rather than go to a school. My father will be quiet as long as I am in some work. The moment I am out

of one he will think of sending me to a school. If he is so fond of schools why didn't he go to one himself? This is what I don't like in elders. What is not good for them is good enough for us I suppose?

Blindman: What is your name?

Boy: My name is Rama. But very few call me by my name. My father calls me Monkey; most of the people in the tennis court used to call me 'Hey' or 'Lazy Rascal'; and later they called me 'Thief'; and many people just call me 'Boy.'

Blindman: I will call you 'Rama.' It is a nice name. Vishnu when he came down to the Earth to destroy the ten-headed Ravana incarnated as Rama. It is a grand name.

Boy: You are very good not to call me 'Boy' or 'Rascal.' Will you tell me Rama's story someday? My father has often begun the story, but has never gone on with it. Something or other usually upsets him and he will break off and never take it up again for months and months.

Blindman: Perhaps he doesn't know the whole of Ramayana.

Boy : Don't say so, master. He knows all our stories. The trouble is he is a very angry man and only very occasionally can we ask him for a story.

Blindman : If it is so, it will take over a hundred years for him to finish Ramayana alone: and then there is Mahabharatha and numerous other things. Don't ask him for stories hereafter. I will tell you everything if I find that you are a good boy.

Boy : What should I do to be called good ?

Blindman : You must be regular, punctual, and you must not trouble me. You must take me out every evening.

Boy : Where do you want to be taken ?

Blindman How can I say ? You ought to know all the interesting places in the city. I will come with you anywhere. The previous boy was sent out because he wouldn't take me to any good place in spite of my repeated requests. Every evening he would take me to a stone bench in a nearby park, and I grew sick of it. He would seat me on the stone bench, slip away somewhere, and come back late in the evening and bring me back home. He was a very bad boy.

Boy : He was a bad boy really. I won't do such a thing. I will take you to interesting places. You don't mind walking a little distance, do you ?

Blindman : Not at all, I can walk for hours and hours.

Boy : Shall we go to a football match this evening, in that field near the tank. There is the final match between The Blues and The Muslims. It is going to be a thrilling match.

Blindman : We will go. Have we to buy tickets ?

Boy : Yes, an anna per head.

Blindman : I will bring two annas.

Boy : Please don't waste the two annas, master; even if we get in you won't be able to see the match ; as for me I can see the match without going in. Let us buy something to munch for two annas.

Blindman : How will you see the match without buying ticket ?

Boy : There is a tree outside. If we go there early we can get a seat on the branch ; from there I can see the match very well. If you stay under the tree I will tell you everything that I see.

Blindman : You won't fall off ?

Boy : Oh, no. I have seen hundreds of matches from that tree. Even if I have money I won't buy a ticket.

Blindman : I never knew people did that sort of thing.

Boy : Tomorrow let us go to Nishat Bagh and hear the band ; day after tomorrow let us go to the Market. You will see how crowded it is in the evenings. On Sunday we will go to a lecture in the park near our house ; but remember, you will have to tell me good stories all the way. If you don't, I will do as the previous boy did.

Blindman : Don't try to copy that bad boy. I will tell you long stories.

Boy : Master, another thing. Dasara is coming very soon. During those nine days you must let me go away after three o' clock everyday ; only for nine days.

Blindman : Won't you take me along with you ?

Boy : Impossible. I shall have to be running about and going to so many places everyday—palace, exhibition, tournaments, wrestling matches, and numerous

other things. I can't take you because I shall be running from place to place.

Blindman : I am also eager to see Dasara festivities.

Boy : Oh ! Very well then. If you will let me go away at three o' clock everyday I will take you to the Maharaja's procession on the last day.

Blindman : I agree. You must keep your word.

Boy : I swear I will take you to the procession on the last day, but you mustn't keep me after three on other days or offer to come with me.

Blindman : Shall we go to a cinema some day?

Boy : No. You can't see and I can't see either, because I shall have to be telling you what is happening in the picture. It will be a waste of money. With that money we can by some good things to munch during our walks. No, never to a cinema.

(Scene 2)

Blindman : Is this the Clock Tower ?

Boy : Yes.

Blindman : Do we go up ?

Boy : Certainly not. They won't allow us there. We are at the foot of the Clock Tower. This is as far as we can go. We can see the procession very well from here. But cling fast to me ; otherwise you will get lost.

Blindman : Yes, yes. Who is pressing on us ?

Boy : I don't know. About twenty thousand fellows are pressing on us.

Blindman : Is it a big crowd ?

Boy : Oh, yes. There is no room for all of them, and so most of the people are standing on only one leg.

(The firing of a cannon is heard in the distance) The procession has started from the palace. Hundreds of sepoys are coming. What gorgeous dress they wear ! Yellow trousers, green coats, and red turbans. I wish you had eyes !

Blindman : Is it the sound of their marching ?

Boy : Of course it is. Here are some camels coming. They have two-hundred twists on their backs. Some fellows are sitting on them. It is a wonder that they don't fall off. I would not sit on a camel for

anything. Here are some elephants. They are as dark and high as the Chamundi Hill. Hope they won't walk on us.....Sirs, sirs, there is a blind-man here. Don't push. Here are a thousand horses (Clatter of hoofs), and what riders! They are carrying silver swords! I wish I could become a horse-man too. (Approaching sound of bugle and trumpets, and cheering of crowds.)

Boy: (Voice rising to a scream) Here is our Maharaja coming. Go on clap your hands, master. Here is our Maharaja on his big elephant! What a howda! It is made of diamonds and gold. The elephant has passed on .... The crowd is breaking up, be careful, there is a lot of confusion. Ah, sirs, sirs, have pity on a blindman, don't try to trample him down; don't push, don't push; ah, master, let us go now. Come carefully, ah, where is my master? Who are you?

A Voice: Who are you?

Boy: Have I been holding your hand all the time?

Voice: I think so.

Boy : Where is my master ? Oh, master, master, where are you ?

Another Voice : Here young fellow, why are you madly running about ? Have you no eyes ?

(Sounding of various motor horns, and the noise of starting cars, and babble of crowd.)

Boy : (Crying) Did you see my master ? Who has seen my master ? (A far-off cheering and clapping)

O, what shall I do now ? Hundreds of cars will go about and knock my master down. (Sobs and cries)

(His cry " Master ! My blind Master ! " is heard far and near, up and down above the babble of the crowd.)

Some Voice : What is the matter little fellow, why are you crying ?

Boy : I have lost my blind master ; now hundreds and hundreds of cars will be going about and running on him, and thousands of people, what will they care for a blindman ? They will trip him up from behind, walk on him, and crush him under their feet, and run their motor cars over him. Oh, Oh, Oh, ...what shall I do ?....Oh, Oh.

SCENE THREE

(It is midnight. Blindman's room in the house).

Boy : I have come to announce that my blind master has been lost in the procession crowd. He is probably dead now. I couldn't find him though I have gone round and round the whole city and can't walk anymore.

Sleeper : Who is there ? Rama !

Boy : (In ecstasy) Master, are you the person lying on the bench ?

Blindman : Yes.

Boy : Master, are you sure ?

Blindman : Rama, Rama, where are you ?

Boy : I am outside your window, Master. I am holding on to the bars.

Blindman : You are a bad boy. Why did you leave me in the crowd and go away ?

Boy : Don't call me a bad boy, master. Goddess Chamundi knows that I am not lying. I didn't know that I was holding someone else's hand in the crowd. How did you come back, master ?

Blindman : I didn't know that I had my hands on someone else's shoulder. At any rate I think I had my hands on your shoulder when you said that the Maharaja's elephant was passing us, but immediately after that I was rushed, knocked down and so on. I thought my end had come when I realized that you were not there. But some good people protected me and brought me home. I don't know who they are. And what do you think I have done today. I walked from the gate into the house all by myself.

(Sobbing noise from the boy)

Blindman : Rama, are you crying ?

Boy : Yes. Your people will dismiss me in the morning, and then my father will send me to a school.

Blindman : Don't cry. Now listen (Lowering his voice) I don't think there was anyone in the hall when I came in, and no one knows, and I won't tell anyone.

Rama : Will you swear that you won't ?

Blindman : Certainly.

Rama : You are a god, you are a saint, my master. You are a very good man.

I will take you to a cinema tomorrow, if you will give me money for the tickets. I promise I will. I will now go home, eat, and sleep; I am tired; I have wandered all over the city today. You are a god, master. Lie down and sleep. I will come early in the morning.

Blindman : Are you holding on to the window bars ?

Boy : Yes, master.

Blindman : Jump down carefully and go home.

(Rama jumps down and runs away).

SENSE OF HUMOUR

The British soldier himself is one of the world's greatest humorists. That unhumorous race, the Germans, held an investigation after the late War into the causes of morale, and attributed much of the British soldier's staying power to his sense of humour. They, therefore, decided to instil this sense into their own soldiers, and included in their manuals an order to cultivate it. They gave as an illustration in the manual one of Bairnsfather's pictures of " Old Bill " sitting in a building with an enormous shell-hole in the wall. A new chum asks : " What made that hole ? " " Mice " replies Old Bill. In the German manual a solemn footnote of explanation is added : " It was not mice, it was a shell "

—Sir Archibald Wavell.

THE WAIF

What could the little boy know of the music of Eastern lands — so strange, so weird, so full of mystery? He was so small, looking like an elfish thing. His frame was delicate, and the winter before last, a terrible one, had given him consumption. But there was fire in his eyes and pliancy in his limbs. "Five hits at my knuckle from your marble; just come and take the game." That was how the lazy son of an indifferent neighbour seduced poor Nanoo to play, and Nanoo's marbles hit the other's knuckles rather sorely. I wonder how the boy used to play the live-long day, at the same time running various errands for all my neighbours. He scrubbed the floor in my house, gathered flowers for my neighbour, ran for the doctor, the barber, or the washerman to answer demands for them.

Very few knew how he came to be about us. I caught him one day chasing butterflies in an early hour when the sun shone brightly among the trees after a night of heavy rain. Chasing the butterflies and catching them from under his thin garment, he let them off to chase them once more. On another occasion, when there was a grand festival by the waterfall on the hills to the west of the town, I saw Nanoo busy ringing the temple bell, scattering

flowers gathered about the gardens there, and making friends with the monkeys which ran away to the topmost trees with cocoanuts and plantain fruits left unguarded about.

Monkeys are a disreputable race. My neighbour's child was playing with a jewel belonging to its mother who was busy offering flowers to the waterfall representing the Holy Gunga. There was a scream from the child and in a moment a monkey had abstracted the jewel from the child, and run away to the topmost branch of a tall tree. Perhaps the bright jewel suggested various fancies to the thief of a monkey. But how was the jewel, a fortune by itself, to be recovered? Nanoo in a moment made a weird call for the monkey, which obediently came forward and placed the jewel in the hands of the child.

Nobody knew whether Nanoo had any parent living. He grew among us like any flower in the crannies of walls. Nature nurtured him and we did the rest. Yet the pity of it! Was he not a loafer? a street Arab who was not to be associated with the pieties of the earth?

I remember the day quite well. It was after ten in the night when the moon was full, and all the fairness of the earth came out vividly in the resplendent hour. I had arranged for a musical performance on the fiddle by a master whose fame was thrilling the whole country. The performance was over at about one in the morning. A strange pathos being

everywhere, our feelings were highly strung, and some heaved sighs which ended in tears.

The next morning found us deep in our daily vocations. Nanoo had promised his help in getting me a jasmine plant of a rare kind. That day I missed the boy, and both men and boys came inquiring after him for he had something to do for every one of them. We all missed him from that day, and in course of time many had forgotten his existence. But I could never forget the poor orphan boy who came into our midst all unknown and went away, none knew whither, having made it all sunshine during his stay with us.

Years passed. One day, when it was spring time, there was a certain freshness in the air. In the usual course of rambles that morning, I stayed away beyond the usual time of returning home, for there was light in the bushes and music in the wind above. I had just reached my arms through the hedges to pluck a sun-flower when a strange wave of melody reached my ears, and before me was a passer-by who sang out a stray bar of music that lay somewhere in his brain. A few yards behind him was a boy of some twelve summers with a bundle of stringed instruments clasped on to his shoulders. His hands were in the act of drawing a bow over a fiddle with but two strings. In an instant the boy had caught the vagrant tune of the passer-by and worked it out on the fiddle, and the thrill of it went through my frame and shook it.

"Nanoo," I cried, "what had become of you all these days? Where had you hidden yourself? Answer me, my boy! For have we not missed you?" The boy replied—a very strange boy indeed! There was none the like of him ever that I knew. How did he answer my inquiries? Having caught the tune from the wayfarer before him he crushed out of the frail frame of the instrument the wildest and the most pathetic of musical notes, and made one pant and sob, for the very ecstasy of it. And it was thus some time before he could give me a reply, and then, "Oh, sir, excuse me! My instrument will force me to forget even gratitude. I ran away from you? Why? That is a story." And I learnt that the boy's passion for music, long hid in his heart, was roused by the famous fiddler who had played in my house some years before. The boy had run away to him and sworn that he would lay down his life to listen to that great musician. And by little service he won the heart of the master who taught him the art. Though not proficient, the boy could awake the strangest passion on the delicate wires, by his touch. And he made for sale miniature little fiddles on which little boys and girls might play. And the little boys and girls ran after him, as he drew the lead on his own; and they parted with their little cash to possess these fragile bits of wood. I asked him if the sale brought enough for him. He said, he generally got enough for his day's needs, but that people often listened to him and went away without buying an instrument. But there

was no complaint in what he said. I induced him to visit us once more. And when he did so, it was quite a great event in the annals of the little village. But I knew he would not suffer himself to stay long away from his occupation, and the day came when he vanished from our midst and nobody knew where he had gone.

In the meanwhile, the great rains had failed and a great drought had parched the land and sucked out the waters. "The earth was iron-bound, and the heavens one sheet of brass." And on odd occasions I used to think of the poor boy, Nanoo. Could he but thrive on his odd custom, famine could never touch him. But then I knew that hunger murders love. How could he thrive now when crumbs were dearer and rarer? And my heart bled for the poor boy.

One day I was sitting in the verandah of my house. News was brought to me that Nanoo was dying even at that moment on the bank of the river. I hurried to the spot, and when I saw him with his fiddle broken by his side he was gone past all recovery. He looked a skeleton. The famine had done its work. A smile wreathed his wan lips. He dribbled out in the intervals of gasping for breath the story of his struggle againt hunger, and he could not be stopped — for he knew he was dying fast. The story is soon told. The famine drove

away bounty from hearths where he had lived in better times. Nobody listened to his songs, none bought his instruments. Custom failed, and he joined a famine camp where he broke stones for a public way, under a blazing sun. He wore out his heart for music; he could neither eat the poor fare of a famine camp, nor sleep after a day's cruel toil. And the consumption gave him the final blow. He ran away from the camp. He ran away to where his instrument was hidden, and played on it, till it drove him out of his mind, for the high fever was on him. He dragged himself on to our river side, thinking of us in his last moments. Oh, the last moments! and he came there to die. And he died towards six in the evening when the sun went down behind the hills. With him was buried his broken gourd of music, and the river goes on for ever, seeming to murmur in odd little splashes the story of Nanoo, the waif.

"K"

THE ROAD TO MERCARA

By M. N. Srinivas

(A Travel Diary)

I left Mysore by the Mail Bus. The weather was cool, with a pleasant wind blowing from the west. In front of me sat a boy of about ten years—a very dark boy who wore green spectacles that were too large for him. He was reading a newspaper through his green glasses. By his side was a Muslim dressed in multi-coloured clothes. It was Ramzan, and probably the Muslim was going home to his people. In the same row occupying the last seat was a hefty fellow in a woolen suit. He wanted to talk to me, but I was in no mood for it. I am always moody at the beginning of a journey. A kind of mild melancholy fills me at such times. I feel a sentimental attachment to the things I am leaving behind. Something or other now reminded me of my college days. It was evening, the hour between day and night. There was the cricket field streching away before me, and the slender tower of the pavilion stood outlined against a sky, rendered ineffably beautiful by a dying sun. The players threw long, slanting shadows on the green-carpeted floor, and the sun lit up everything with a mild, golden light. The scene rose up before me, and I was filled with a

strange melancholy. Why was man born? What was the purpose of all this beauty? And why should you be compelled to leave your friends and relatives behind you and go about in a bus?

We had an uneventful journey up to Hunsur. There (at the entrance to the town, to be exact) the Muslim suddenly shook himself out of sleep and exclaimed, "I have lost my purse! I have lost twenty-five rupees!" And then he became inarticulate, producing gurgles and making wild gestures which had meaning only for himself. He pointed to the boy with the green spectacles and said "He.....He saw.....my purse....." "You.....monkey!" he shouted at the boy. It was hardly believable. Such a young fellow to have done it! "Search the boy. He must have it on him if he has stolen it."

"Search him!" the cry was taken up by the entire bus. The boy remained surprisingly cool and said "Search me if you like!" He proceeded to strip. The Muslim gripped the boy's arm and moaned "My money gone!" "Look into your coat pocket" said a friendly voice, but he refused to do anything but moan. Suddenly, out of the confusion, I saw the conductor hold up a purse, saying "I have it! I found it under the seat!" Then the whole bus turned on the boy. "We will give him over to the police!" "He ought to be tied to a post and whipped!" "His grand father is a big merchant

here, in Hunsur. He has a lakh of rupees. And look what a grandson he has ! " " He is certain to become a big robber one day."

I ventured to say " Threaten the boy that you will hand him over to the police, and let him alone after a drubbing." The conductor was practical. " We shall have to wander to and fro the court if we tell the police." This settled it. But someone shouted from behind " Don't tell him that now. Give him a good fright now, or when he grows up, he will rob our homes." This message was accepted by everyone. " We are handing you over to the police," everyone told the boy. The driver also joined in the joke. He stopped the bus in front of the police station and shouted, " Be quick with it. It's late already." The boy was now convinced that the driver meant business. His stony calm was at last broken. He wept profusely : " Anything but the police. Sirs, I will hold your feet and beg your pardon. I promise never to do such a thing again." The conductor kicked him. I threatened the boy, " I will send word to your grandfather." The boy held my feet, " Do anything but give me to the police." The bus left the police station and his weeping stopped as suddenly as it had started. The bus at last halted in front of the Hunsur Post Office. Someone thrashed the boy soundly. He was ably assisted in the task by the postmaster, the peons, and in fact, by everyone who passed that way at the moment. Truly, we are a moral people, and everyone who had a

whack at the boy was doing so purely out of moral considerations !

A few miles from Hunsur. It was a scrub jungle. The gentleman in woollen suit made up his mind to talk to me : " Are you bound for Mercara ? "

" Yes."

" Then move on to my side, and we can talk." He assumed I was eager to talk to him. His friend, a Coorg, who had just returned from Bangalore after an interview with the Recruiting Officer, joined in the conversation.

I told them who I was. I was writing a thesis on the Coorgs for Bombay University. Yes, it was my first journey to Coorg. I didn't know a soul there. I had a letter of introduction to someone.

Immediately, Bhim Singh (for that was his name) took charge of me. He told me what to see there and what not to. The Coorg added his own comments now and then.

Bhim Sing was a Rajput. He was born in Mercara. His ancestors had moved down south from Central India. He spoke Kodagi like a Coorg. He had married a Kodagi girl. At present he was in Bangalore, doing business. He had, from what I heard of him, led a varied life. He had been contractor, travelling salesman, and a hundred other things. He had roamed all over India. He was in Bombay for three years, and a year in Ceylon. Now

he was on his way to Mercara because his mother was dead.

I said " Sorry."

She was old. Sixty-five. But a mother, however old she is, is a mother. Bhim Singh hadn't seen her for ten years.

We approached the Mysore border. The narrow road ran through thick and high jugle.

" Any game here ? " I asked.

" Of course. Everything. I have shot any number of deer. And Cheetahs are pretty common."

" Any tigers ? "

" Tigers ! I once shot two in a day here. I used to camp here in a lorry every night from Mercara. That was years ago. We got news that a tiger had killed a cow here. We sat up over the kill. Nothing happened till four in the morning. It was very cold and our teeth chattered. We decided to go away. As we tried to get down the tree, two tigers, a male and a female, appeared suddenly, and we shot them both. I will show you the skins at Mercara."

The jungle was denser. Bamboo shot up to a height of fifty or sixty feet. The bamboo is a most graceful tree. High above on the trees, graceful fronds bowed, swaying in the breeze, to the deities of jungle.

The Coorg invited me to his estate. It was near Siddapur. " Of course, you will find it pretty dull. I wouldn't have invited you if you were here for pleasure."

Bhim Singh told me he had some good books about the Coorgs. "I will give them to you. Meet me at the bus stand tomorrow. I would have met you earlier, but for the funeral."

"It doesn't matter. Thank you."

"I will arrange about your food also. And I will take you to Uttaiah. He knows a lot about Coorg. And you must come to Bangalore. My wife can tell you a good many things."

I thanked him once again.

Siddapur. The Coorg took leave of us. I saw him disappear into the jungle along a footpath, followed by a servant carrying his trunk.

Siddapur is a village on a slope. Pigs and hen cross the street causing the driver a good deal of annoyance. The houses were thatched with straw. The rain and sun of months had painted the straw a dull grey. Mercara is nearly two thousand feet above Siddapur, and the distance between the two is only twenty miles. The ascent is steep. Silver oak trees shoot up to a great height on either side of the road. Pepper vines with their broad, dark leaves—I mistook them for betel—wind themselves round the stately silver oak. Below these spread the coffee plants, their dark-green, shining leaves looking strangely vicious. The oak trees look very respectable, guardians of the hoary traditions of a dead age. And like all those

who stand for the past, they are more than a trifle gloomy.

The climb was steep. We reached a town having the unique name of "The Tenth Mile," the tenth mile from Mercara. Bhim Singh was engaging someone, who had entered the bus at Siddapur. "I smoke a hundred cigerettes a day. And I offer fifty to business men. It's all necessary in business. Often I leave tins with those likely to give me business. That's the right way in business."

Meanwhile, the bus sped along a snake-like way up a hill. The tarred road was narrow, cut out of a niggardly hill. On one side the ground fell in an abrupt slope a thousand feet or so. Coffee twigs trailed into the road, waving a welcome. A hill rose on the other side. Before us, we saw a green wall of trees. When the bus reached the green wall, it turned sharply to a side and went round the hill. To our left was a great green valley flecked with brown. Beyond this stood a clear blue hill against a cloud-filled sky. In the centre of the valley ran a paddy field, like a tender-green river and lost itself in a dark jungle of tall trees. On the other bank of the paddy-river stood a red house.

It was all a riot of green. Fern, beautiful and delicate, grew on the wayside.

Mercara. A strange town it looks from the bus, red-roofed houses pasted on to the slope of a hill. The

houses clung together, like men on a cold night. Mercara looks a toy-town, pretty as a picture.

The policeman at the bus stand told Singh where his mother was buried. Singh became moody, and for the first time in the journey silent. I shook hands with him, and promising to meet him the next day, got down from the bus.

The main street in Mercara goes up a hill. It looks fantastic to men of the plains. The climb was a stiff one. Why did the houses huddle so closely?

I reached my destination. My host was out on his weekly visit to the estate. The hostess told me to wait for a few minutes while she prepared coffee for me. It started raining outside. I felt lonely. "Six months I have to spend in this place," I thought with some bitterness.

Suddenly, I recollected Girgaum. Girgaum, that synonym for dirt and noise and crowd — I felt a homesickness for it. The trams and buses going their noisy way, men and women jostling one another for want of space, The brilliant neon signs, hoots of motor horns, the cries of *gharry wallahs*,—in short, the crowded and brilliant life that flows through that vein of Bombay. I hungered for it. Solitude and loneliness are attractive to those who don't know either, I told myself. The beauty of a crowd on Choupatty sands— I felt I would not exchange it for all the beauty of nature.

BOOK SECTION

(Review *By* Paul Brunton, ph.d.)

THE SECRET SPLENDOUR BY K. D. SETHNA

K. D. Sethna is a rising star in the Indian literary firmament who is well worth watching. With this slim volume of nearly one hundred pages he makes his debut to the larger world but I have been familiar with his work since the time, several years ago, when he showed me at Pondichery the yet unprinted manuscripts which were then being privately circulated among a few lovers of poetry.

Whether he writes of Nature's nocturnal beauty or of man's tender love for woman, a single immortal theme runs right through his finely-spun phrases : the quiet quest of communion with the Overself, the profound aspiration to reach the Ineffable. An exalted spiritual awareness is manifest throughout the stanzas which are here strung together. In the words of his final poem :

> If each delightful cadence
> Mark not a flight to Thee,
> My fancy's airiest radiance
> Profanes its own mute core of mystery !

One is impressed by the picturesque words and Pre-Raphælite metaphors in which the poet sets off his

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thought or limns his vision. He is a poet for the artists. But music is lacking and melody is absent. Sethna does not sing; he gazes, enthralled, at gorgeous visions and writes down what he sees.

The poem which I preferred most—not be it frankly confessed because it was necessarily the best but because I adore eventides and make their vigil my riligion—was the one called "Sun-Spell." This is how it opens :

> In cloud-suspense the faint breeze died ;
> A deep glow spread on every side :
> The firmamental hush came down,
> A mirrored soul of aureate brown
> Subduing each form-shade to one
> Pervasive ecstasy of sun.

His pages are not simple ; they are as complex as his highly-cultured mind. They are luxuriously ornate and bejewelled with costly gems. They carry an air of aristocratic distinction.

> " I had not bargained to behold
> A rhythm of cerulean gold
> Nor with an aching mouth impress
> Calm firmamental nakedness ! "

Here is a powerful verse from " Himalaya : "

> The tides of gold and silver sweep the sky
> But bring no tremor to my countenance ;
> How shall sun-rise or moon-ebb lure, when I
> Have gripped the Eternal in a rock of trance ?

And then this swift descent to " Modern Love : "

Amid the whining of the saxophone
And the swift whisper of the dancing feet—
Amid the music's strangle-throated moan
And hundred swinging bodies' colour-heat,
She lures me with far world-triumphant lips
As though in one brief thrill of ecstasy
A wandering voice of epic destiny
Haunted the rhythmic swaying of her hips.

Sethna's work will be welcomed by all those who appreciate poetry of high quality, clad in fine print and paper to match. This volume will assure his status in the front rank of contemporary Indian writers. I hope its reception will encourage him to produce another soon.

The Poetry of W. B. Yeats*

By Louis Macneice

I very much doubt whether there is such a thing as new and old in poetry ; only, as it were, a travelling illumination passing from one area to another of a continuous and indivisible surface, bringing out what a particular age wants to see. In other words, each age deserves its poetry. When we take this as our stand-point, there is no call for any particular age to characterise another as brilliant, shoddy, or cheaply sentimental. In the same way, the latter Victorian swing-away from the tradition of

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complacency and its formulation of the doctrine of ' Art for Art's Sake ' is justified. Its chief prophets from Rossetti and Arnold to Pater and Oscar Wilde were really sick of

> .....this strange disease of modern life,
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
> Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied heart.....

and withdrawing from

> .....this iron time
> Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.

became other-worldly, or in the words of O'Shaughnessy,

> We are the music-makers,
> And we are the dreamers of dreams;
> Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
> And sitting by desolate streams ;
> World-losers and world forsakers,
> On whom the pale moon gleams ... ...

These were the poets of the Nineties. Their doctrine was from Pater and their models from the French Symbolists. Yeats was no exception ; he was enormously influenced by Pater but he was shrewd enough to stop with paying lip-service to Pater's æsthetic atomism for he was always trying to think of the world as a system, of life as a pattern unlike Pater to whom the moods were more important and more vital.

Yeats then, ' learned to think in the midst of the last phase of Pre-Raphælitism.' But he had to

discard the facile theories of the nineties for he could not correlate this pale æsthetic outlook with the 'sickness' of everyday life, especially in Ireland. But, to the end, he had a nostalgia for what he himself called, 'a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions .....' He travelled very far, though, from the doctrine of Escapism and became a realist to whom

> Money is good and a girl might be better,
> But good strong blows are delights to the mind.

From the 'gardens near the pale of Proserpine' Yeats had arrived in the Civil-War-Torn Ireland as the champion of Fascism and as a verse-maker for O'Duffy. He had evolved himself from an identification with the Japanese poets and lay-brothers dreaming in some medieval monastery into an old bellows full of angry wind; from an 'escapist' he had become a particularly brutal sort of 'realist.'

And here he is on common ground with Louis Macneice, one of the quartette singing of the Post-War Disillusion, but it is only superficially so. As Macneice himself admits, "People who know my own expressed views on poetry might consider me unqualified for writing on Yeats, whose expressed views are so often the opposite of mine." But he has been very fair, and what is rarer, he has been very objective and has tried to present Yeats not as Macneice sees him, but as Yeats himself. Still

Macneice cannot forsake his own canons, and he does judge Yeats according to them; but not to the exclusion of recognising that 'Our ways are different;' but that does not mean that I cannot let you live. And he has succeeded in proving that 'Yeats, granted his limitations, was a rich and complex poet, who often succeeded by breaking his own rules and who turned his own liabilities into assets.' Which is rare praise indeed from a poet, critic and iconoclast who has been suckled into a life of cynical despair by the Post-War weariness.

K. J. Mahadevan.

A WOMAN OF INDIA*

(LIFE OF SAROJ NALINI DUTT)

BY G. S. DUTT, I.C.S.

The conception that the Hindu woman has all the joys and duties of her life within the four walls of the home is a thing of the past. She has marched a long way with the times. She no longer sits absorbed in family duties, but "is a woman who works for the weal of the home and community alike." Such is the ideal of the present age and no life could be a more striking illustration of that ideal than that of Saroj Nalini, the heroine of this little volume.

The wife of an I.C.S. Officer, Saroj Nalini, like many of the members of that class might well have

*(OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. PRICE RS. 2/-)

lived a life of ease and luxury had she liked. But she would not do it. She preferred a very different sort of life. She saw the women of her country backward, illiterate and living in purdah, which was a serious block to progress. Saroj Nalini wanted to lift them from this sad condition and make them live freer, happier and more useful lives. She rightly judged that women themselves should be stirred up and made to join in an united effort for their own emancipation. For, the force of such a combined effort alone, she found, could effect the solution of the social needs of the country. With this object in view she established Mahila Samitis in a great many places in Bengal. How these organisations sprang and grew up through the extraordinary zeal and devotion of a single lady must make a most interesting study to all who have intelligence and the spirit of social service in their hearts.

Mr. G. S. Dutt, the author of this book, gives an engaging account of the personal traits and character of his wife ; how without being old fashioned and orthodox she yet loved to retain those customs which she thought were good for the women of her country. She did not despise, he tells us, to wear conch-shell bangles and to put a touch of vermilion at the parting of her hair every morning after the fashion of Hindu women. To please him, he says, she spoke in English, affected the Western method of dressing her hair and even took lessons in ballroom dancing all for a period, but gradually she made him realize that none of these

things were natural and becoming to the people of her country. These are small things no doubt; one can see nevertheless that these require a character and a definite strength of mind.

It is perhaps rather an ideal picture that we find here, painted by the glowing love of a husband. But the life of Saroj Nalini certainly illustrates how a woman can blend in herself all that is best in both the past and the present age.

The fact that the poet Tagore and C. F. Andrews held her in such high esteem as can be seen from the foreword, is the greatest tribute that can be paid to a life, brief but beautiful in its sweetness and simplicity and highminded service to others.

K. Savitri.

U. S. A. *By* D. W. Brogan

THE WORLD TODAY SERIES

This short and shrewd book gives the best reading within its compass. Only a century ago, America was a young, prolific, mainly British and overwhelmingly protestant nation and today it is rapidly moving towards middle aged stability with a very great catholic, jewish and greek orthodox minorities. The size of the country and the variety of the racial origins of the people, if considered, the degree of unity attained, is marvellous. A hefty bone for the contemplative Indians to chew.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. PRICE SH. 2/6

Catholicism is strong in America, if numbers are considered, but it is protestant in a far deeper sense than a mere statistical statement can convey. It emphasizes preaching rather than sacrament, the Bible rather than Church organization. America has no specific religion ; all its important cults are based on Christianity. The American people wish all Churches well, so long as they do not thrust in the name of morals,—standards of conduct too completely unlike those practised by the average citizen. The average American is suspicious alike of a Politician who takes too lightly or a Preacher who takes too seriously the roll of organized religion in American life.

The size of the country accounts for the absence of national papers in America. No paper has a general circulation outside its own immediate region. The American Press has far less effect on public opinion and is far less an indication of public opinion than tradition asserts.

Though the gentleness of the American law of Libel can encourage certain recklessness in an editor he is often timid and is generally influenced by " the great advertising Moguls." As the Film industry hurt the stage, so the radio has taken the power out of the press and is directly shaping public opinion by " fireside chats." The people like to hear their leaders rather than read about them.

In this book, Mr. Brogan has not attempted either temporarily to divert or permanently convert the reader. He is just instructive.

R. K. Pattabhi.

EXTRACTS

"C. R."

Mr. Rajagopalachari is a very well-known type, well recognised and accepted in our traditions. There is a feeling amongst many belonging to countries other than ours to civilisations alien to, ours, that there is something about politics and the life of a country, which is altogether extraneous to, and an importation into, this country; that what may be called political life and patriotic life is not part of the apparatus of the Indian method and technique. That is often said and more often hinted at than said, more often believed in than hinted at and more often acted upon than believed in. I would, therefore, take you back to the origins of our politics. It is in the *Rig Veda* that we read for the first time what is called this specific patriotism and love of country for which one ought to work. *Upasarpa mataram Bhumi*—Worship your mother,—the Mother-land—that saying dates from the *Rig Veda*. Later on the *Atharva Veda* refers to *Mata Bhumi*.

Dealing with what may be called leadership in politics and the qualities that connote that leadership, we have ample guidance in the Vedas. It is stated that what may be called the born leader of men, apart from the warriors, are men who are products

of a certain system of civilisation which arose only in western climes. Dealing with this matter in three separate passages, our Vedas give a clue—and they are a clue—to the life of Mr. Rajagopalachari, a typical Hindu and a typical Indian. The first of these passages shows that our ancients were not impractical dreamers, that, when face to face with the problems of life, they knew how to deal with those problems and not only encounter them but surmount them. "Let me become the leader of those who are my equals"—that is one of the prayers occurring in the passage referred to. There is no getting away from the fact—and I do not make a reproach of it but on the other hand mean it as a compliment and praise—that there is a feeling generally accepted, and sometimes not so generally accepted, that Mr. Rajagopalachari would spontaneously and inherently lead in any assembly. There is not much secret made of the process by which he established that leadership. The Veda says *Asantapam me hridayam*—'in acquiring that leadership, exercising that faculty of utilising your endowment, characteristics and qualities, let there be no heat, let there be no ebullition of temper or outward excrescences of emotional exuberance.' Those who knew Mr. Rajagopalachari would also know that whatever he felt, though he boiled within, the kettle was always cold outside. "When you are bent on your work," the Vedas say, "do not be indifferent to it when you are not active; do not show signs of

smallness or disgust. Although failures ultimately count for success, it is these failures that may confront you and not the success."

Mr. Rajagopalachari is a born leader of men. He felt he should lead and he managed to acquire a position in which he did great work for his country in leading. But there is another side to his character which does not always go with the greediness, the acquisitiveness, and the intolerance which are sometimes the exterior and appendix of leadership. He is a person who could also be a devotee,—a Bhakta. He is a devotee of those great primal essences of the world, whose qualities he loves to portray and in respect of which he has done a great deal of most meritorious literary work. Through his Tamil works, his commentaries of the *Gita*, and even through the short stories run a vein of absolute devotion to the things that count, the things unseen and the things that are paramount in the life of humanity.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar.
(*In a Lecture*)

With Sir P. C. Ray, there is no divorce between politics and spirituality. His spirituality finds constant expression in a life dedicated to social service and to the good of his country, in his Quest of the Ideal, in his strenuous, disinterested, scientific pursuit of truth for its own sake. Thus, in the personality of Sir P. C. Ray, the ascetic, the nationalist, the patriot, the scientist, and the industrialist are rolled into one. Each of these capacities is rare by itself. Their combination is still rarer to find.

A remarkable feature of Sir P. C. Ray's scientific achievements is that he is not merely an individual chemist but is the father of a school of chemists. Sir W. G. Pope, then President of the Chemical Society, while congratulating him on his Knighthood pointed out " his unique work in connection with the development of Chemical research in India." Shakespeare defines the man of genius as one who is not merely a wit in himself but is the cause of wit in others. Sir P. C. Ray's laboratory at the Presidency College became the nursery of the chemists of New India, many of whom have themselves achieved international reputation.

But Sir P. C. Ray figures not merely as a scientist in the field of theory. He is also a pioneer in the

practical field of the application of science to industry. Early in his career he realized the primary importance to India of chemical industries. His nationalism made him stake all that he had in starting a chemical enterprise which he called The Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd. Like all things great, it had the smallest beginning. The trifling sum of Rs. 800/- contributed by Sir P. C. Ray was its original capital. Now he has the satisfaction of seeing its development as the largest concern of its kind in India, with a paid-up capital of over twenty-five lacs.

The practicality of Sir P. C. Ray's scientific genius has led him to different fields of social service. He has proved himself to be a past master in the work of organising measures of relief at the time of famines or floods. He will always be remembered for what he did for the Khulna famine in 1921 and the devastating floods of North-Bengal in 1922. For the flood-relief he set up a stupendous organisation which collected in a short time over seven lacs of rupees.

As an example of his remarkable scientific achievements, one must remember his monumental *History of Hindu Chemistry* in two volumes. In it he assumes the double role of a Scientist and an Indologist and Sanskritist. The work is the fruit of more than fifteen years of strenuous research in an untrodden field.

It has been stated that one crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name. Sir

P. C. Ray has had one crowded life of eight decades. For more than 60 years, he has been working in his laboratory regularly from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. with only an hour's interval for eating and resting. The volume, variety and value of his achievements in so many spheres of national life, in the realm of thought as in the realm of action, can hardly be overestimated.

Radhakumud Mookerji
Aryan Path (*Sept. 1941*)

WESTERN INDIFFERENCE TO INDIAN CULTURE

It is a sad fact that many British people living in India are indifferent to the cultural environment : but such are usually of the type who are unappreciative also of the arts nearer home. It is idle to expect those who are deaf to the beauties of the English Madrigal School and Palestrian's *Madrigali spirituali* to turn an eager ear to Tansen and the sublime hymns of Thyagaraja. Those whose literary interests are confined to the files at the office and the adult equivalents of *The Boy's Own Paper* are unlikely to find solace in Tagore and the *Ramayana*. The less reputable celluloid products of Hollywood do not provide adequate preparation for the pictorial delights of Ajanta and Badami. Vague memories of

Sunday-school cant—" The heathen in his blindness bowing down to stocks and stones "—are not the proper spiritual background for a study of Hindu temple sculpture.

Only the foreigner who appreciates art at home is capable of taking an interest in Indian Art. Therefore, the Hindu or Muslim nationalist, who smarts under the indifference that the average Briton in India displays toward Indian culture, makes a mistake when he regards this indifference as a deliberate slight. In nine cases out of ten, it simply means that the Briton in question takes the attitude that he has no time to waste on the arts, whether of the East or the West. In the tenth case, it may be that the offender has a racial superiority-complex which is tantamount to saying that he possesses no innate culture ; rather, an acquired vulgarity. Neither class is deserving of arraignment : the first should be educated, the second gently ridiculed.

The latter century pioneers in Indo-English letters —William Jones, Kinloch Forbes, Edwin Arnold, and that strange genius Henry Derozio — were appreciative of Indian culture. They have their counterparts to-day : but, unhappily, the Indian scene is not graced with many such. There are too few scholarly enthusiasts like Stella Kramrisch, who has worked for twenty years to acquire first-hand knowledge of the subject and to propagate it. There has been too little support for The India

Society, which has toiled indefatigably for a quarter of a century to promote better appreciation of things Indian. The West as a whole still lacks understanding of the East.

—Dennis Stoll

Hindustan Review, August 1941

GREEK THOUGHT

The strength of Greek political speculation lies in its recognition that politics are and must be founded on ethics. Out of the soul of man proceed his states and empires, his national and personal ambitions, and if his soul and mind are corrupt, the political world he creates will be worthless too. The very opening of the "Republic" shows Socrates destroying with blows of formidable logic the crazy doctrine that "justice is the interest of the stronger," put forward by a famous Athenian sophist, who anticipates the whole philosophy of totalitarian unscrupulousness and is forced to admit that his principles would be the ruin of human society. What just dealing really is, and what ideals it implies in the soul of man, are drawn out in the subsequent parts of the great discussion, with a penetration, a subtlety and a delicacy of moral observation that provide a magnificent tonic for those who today are discouraged by the apparent renunciation of all principle or care for truth and fair dealing over a great part of the earth's tormented surface.

Nevertheless to the present writer the golden gift of Greek thought to our own age remains its religious inspiration. Mention has already been made of the humane quality of Greek paganism, but the educated Greeks were just as alive as the philosophers of our own time to the fact that myths and legends and tales of marvel handed down from the cradle of the race, can have only a symbolic value for the clear thinker however precious that symbolism may be. The basis of religion must be more firmly built than that, and it is the highest glory of Greek thought to have laid for all time the foundations of that idealistic interpretation of the universe which played a central role in the formation of Christian theology; was afterwards taken up anew by Kant and the German metaphysicians; and remains the only firm ground upon which religion can resist the criticisms of the materialist and the sceptic. It was a work accomplished by Plato and his successors through sheer, determined mental labour, without reliance on legendary tradition or alleged "supernatural" communications. They demonstrated in perpetuity that the so-called "external" world in which man lives and acts, and which materialistic science would bid him consider the only certainty and only reality, is itself unintelligible and unreal except as the expression of spiritual and mental principles which bind it together and give it its shape and character. If Plato's doctrine of the Eternal Ideas which underlie our ordinary experience and give in it its meaning and

consistency is today only studied and comprehended by philosophic students, the heart of it is known to all the Christian West through the long chapter of theology that opens with the Fourth Gospel. Dr. Inge has remarked that " A history of Greek philosophy, instead of ending with the Stoics, or even with Aristotle, ought to include St. Paul and St. John, Plotinus and Proclus, and the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers." We may add that it should have for Epilogue Hegel and such English disciples of his as Green, Caird, Bosanquet and Henry Jones, and for Appendices Spenser and Wordsworth and the other poets who have seen in the visible frame of things only the veil of the invisible reality and the Eternal Godhead. Of all the gifts of Greek thought to Western man that is surely the greatest, the richest and most lasting.

—D. L. Murray
Aryan Path, Sept. 1941

A NEW ROMANTICISM

Much fine poetry is written in a minor key, with its own provisional doctrines social, philosophic or creedal; and it would be foolish to deny to such its peculiar, if limited, values. But there is a greater poetry : and we are lucky if, once in a generation, a poet arises who " by sovereignty of nature " not only turns out his own " burning atoms of inextinguishable thought," but reveals those cosmic energies

and significances prisoned within the most trivial and atomic experience; not so much generating as releasing power and the spirit of wonder wherever his muse wanders, like Keats's moon "with silver lip kissing dead things to life." He alone, "warming," to use Landor's famous phrase, "both hands" before the fires of existence and touching at every point the universal heart, can properly handle the apparently greater issues and relate truly the actions of nations to the ultimate destinies of mankind.

—G. Wilson Knight
Poetry Review

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