IN THE P. W. D.

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BY

Gurú Purwar.

Thou art not for the fashion of these times,
Where none will sweat but for promotion

Shakespeare's "As You Like It,
Act. II, Sc. 3

The proper study of mankind is man

Pope's "Essay on Man,"
Epistle II., Line 2.

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Contents.

No. I.

THE DIVISIONAL ACCOUNTANT;

OR,

A Day Nightmare.

THE Executive Engineer's Accountant may be white, blue, black, or any other color, it does not matter, he is sure to be the poor Assistant's phantasmagoria. He is a man who hungers for information, but his hunger is an unnatural dyspeptic one—the result of inquisitiveness. For every voucher he will inquire in one breath, Which why where whom? Followed up with, To what head debitable? Rate, amount, total, grand total, witness, date. Surfeited with this information he will lie dormant awhile.

Meanwhile, if the wretched Assistant has deluded himself with the vain hope that he has appeased the cormorant he will find himself mistaken, for shortly all the vouchers are returned, and he is requested to further elucidate the subject by quoting chapter and verse of the code. Eventually the vouchers become a part and parcel of the shade himself, they are his mist, his fog, his haze—his all. He knows them as a father knows his children and only the grave can separate them.

If there is a slight error in calculating contractors' bills, or in other items, this demon in human flesh pounces upon it with fiendish delight. Under the signature of "Executive Engineer" he writes a cruel letter, requesting to be informed if the Assistant Engineer was ever taught arithmetic at school, and cautioning him that on the next occasion he will be reported to the Government of India for neglect of duty, carelessness and general inefficiency. Should the Subdivisional Officer be inexperienced in the ways of accountants a blank

despair seizes him. If experienced, he has relief in much profanity and his disposition becomes soured, if doubtful, he possibly retorts. Then follows a want of harmony between senior and junior officer, and often to the latter needless shame and disgrace. The Executive Engineer's Accountant certainly carries as big a load of sin on his back as Pilgrim did, yet he seems oblivious of the fact, and, moreover, never throws the load off.

The carnival for this bookkeeper occurs when some inexperienced subdivisional officer reports an error in the accounts of one pie. As the papers multiply the Auditor's jubilee increases, and this jubilee only ends when some one in sheer desperation writes —not eats—the pie off.

This hobgoblin's one aim and object in life seems to be, to offer a passive resistance to the rapid progress of work, and he certainly may be quoted as an example of a successful man.

The combined intellect of the Government of India issues certain forms for certain purposes, but Mr. Auditor disapproves of them.

By dint of perseverance and in process of time he will so modify these forms that scarcely a vestage remains. If his modifications had taken the shape of an algebraical decrease one could not object, but these modifications invariably make an arithmetical increase.

This evil genius is always communing with himself as though he was one of Rome's orators. *Si quid me ingenuim est O Judices, quod est exignum.* If I have any talent, O, gentlemen—and I know how small it is—or if I have any practice in the art of worrying, derived from the study and cultivation of the best offices, the credit of all these matters is due to my training. For when I look back into the dim vista of the past I can only behold in the foreground the noble outline of the Examiner of Accounts. He has been and still is the creator and maker of *all* my thoughts.

In office, this incubus is a cold-blooded, deliberate "Janwar," as we say in Hindustan, utterly destitute of impulse. You might as well try to put life into a stone wall or to

change the course of the Chenab River in flood, as to move him. But out of office he is a very ordinary mortal, with feelings and susceptibilities. In Bombay he has been known to play cricket, in Calcutta he goes to the "donse." What he does in Madras is not exactly known, he may possibly attend some of those beautiful temples we read of in company with vestal virgins, but it is more probable—he sleeps.

Just as the rose must have its thorn, so the P. W. D. must have its Accountant. If there were no difficulty in plucking the rose, its smell (pay) would not seem half so sweet.

No. II.

THE ASSISTANT ENGINEER OF A SUB-DIVISION;

OR,

By your Leave, Sir.

THE duties of an Assistant Engineer are supposed to be of a simple nature, embracing the details of a small portion of a public work, whether railway construction, canals or roads, but, by the supreme will and power of the Executive Engineer's Accountant, he has in course of time been provided with an office and is expected to be a full-bloom financier, statesman and treasurer. The sub-divisional officer will have to thank his constitution if eventually he does not become a raving lunatic.

The routine of an Assistant's life is get up and work, then tub and breakfast, afterwards more work, dinner and bed. There is very little respite, very little change of air or scene, and, what is almost insupportable, no society. Mr. Labouchere thinks that the Indian official is uncommonly well paid. Just let him do the duties of an Assistant Engineer even for one month and he won't envy the job. I knew a man who once had to act the lawyer, doctor, clergyman, shopkeeper as well as engineer. Some day I may write his history in detail:

> That in the course of one revolving moon
> Was buniah, coolie driver, doctor and karkun.

Pope is credited with having written his "Ode to Solitude" at an early age, now if, instead of sucking peaches at Twickenham, he had come out to India, he might have found the sequestered verdure of a mossy grave he longed for.

> Thus let me live unseen, unknown,
> Thus unlamented let me die;
> Steal from the world, and not a stone
> Tell where I lie.

The Greeks would have said that an Assistant was "ostracised," the Romans that he was "rusticated," whether for his own or for his country's good is not certain, sometimes for both and sometimes for neither. If this "Son of the Desert" has a taste for reading or is inclined for sport he may be saved, otherwise he is likely to sink into a low melancholy or, perhaps, even reach lower depths.

There are two kinds of Assistants, the fledged and the unfledged. The unfledged is just out from college, thinks a good deal of the cut of his waistcoat, more of the cut of his collar or the shape of his necktie, has all his linen nicely marked, and is brimfull of theory, which he longs to put into practice at the expense of Government.

"*D——n you, sir, for a stinker!*" at once betokens that the mellow age has been arrived at, this being the morning greeting to a contractor. The maturing may have taken place in the hothouse of the department or it may have been imported direct. The ripe imported fruit has been known to have a taint about it, but occasionally it has turned out

savoury. The difference between the two kinds of Assistants lies in the simple fact that while the contractor *finesses* with the unfledged the fledged *finesses* with the contractor.

The typical Assistant is not a proficient at the vernacular. The (direct) imperative of the verb "To be off" or "To come quickly," together with a few substantives, form the sum total of his vocabulary. The (respectful) imperative is unknown to him, while futures, past participles or aorists are refinements of a bygone age. "We must teach the nigger English, sir," is his invariable apology. Somehow, too, the nigger does manage to learn English when instilled by a hunting crop and fines.

If a subdivisional officer is known to be just and considerate he will be the father of his people, the cherisher of the poor. His advent will be hailed with joy. He will settle as many cases in one day as the High Court does in a month and redress quite as great grievances as a judge upon the circuit. I am not exaggerating, I am stating plain facts. Hundreds of coolies will be up in arms against

the pilferings of the contractors, the contractors will complain of the rough handling of the European subordinate or of the demands for bribes from mistris. Then, again, these in their turn will show how the contractors are giving much trouble and worse work. A word of approval here, a cuff there, a pleasant smile in one place and a tone of firmness in another place, will soon set matters straight. If, however, the Assistant loses his head with the constant appeals and does not show discretion his subdivision will soon become an impenetrable forest or a tangled skein. Excessive bail must not be required nor excessive fines imposed, or there will as surely be a revolution as there was after the reign of the Stuarts. Moderation and tact must be his watchwords. These are really "ponderable substances" as we say in mechanics, they can be weighed against rupees and will not be found wanting. By tact, you can do good and cheap work, by tact, you can be happy yourself and keep those about you contented. When official pressure is put on an Assistant he should not pass it on to his

subordinates or contractors, or he will find that the former will take to drink and the latter will take to running away.

The subdivisional officer will soon learn to be a philosopher. He will find human nature is much the same throughout the wide wide world, that from the Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department down to the poor coolie, we all have our failings and our grievances. The intensity may not be uniform, but it will be proportional to the position or rank. It is true the powers of an Assistant Engineer are chiefly limited to carrying out orders, though really the whole progress of work depends upon the relation between subdivisional officer and contractor. If this relationship is satisfactory, the divisional officer is relieved of an immense amount of correspondence and unnecessary annoyance.

If the Assistant Engineer will take an interest in his work and not be above it, he will soon have the satisfaction of seeing, that his works will testify to his labors, as they have done for others, in all ages, and in all countries.

No. III.

THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER OF A DIVISION;

OR,

The Man of Bricks and Mortar.

WHENEVER you see a man in a pea-green or khakih coat with corduroy breeches, wearing a solah topi and carrying a hunting crop, you may be sure that he is the Executive Engineer of a division. The peagreen coat is for cheapness, the corduroy breeches because society requires that such impedimenta should be entertained, the solah topi to protect his burning cranium, and the hunting crop is intended to cave in the head of an obstreperous coolie or contractor.

In a station an Executive Engineer dons a black coat at dinner, puts on a white tie, shaves, and thus behaves like a man of the world. Sometimes, too, he can discourse well on science, literature, politics or art.

Next to the code, which is his Bible, and bricks and mortar, which are his Shakespeare, the divisional officer's *forte* is the classified list. He can tell you without hesitation how many men are above him, how he has been superseded, and if he sees you take an interest he will buttonhole you and pour all his grievances into your ear.

Some Executive Engineers live to make travelling allowance, or T. A., as they are pleased to abbreviate this extra pay. To do so it is necessary to adhere strictly to the service road and not to go across country, in the latter case one cannot expect to become a good horseman. At the end of the month, should the T. A. be for a decent sum, you will hear Mr. Dispatcher muttering to himself, "What *will* papa say? What *will* mamma say?" his mamma and

papa being the Examiner of Accounts and Superintending Engineer respectively.

The Government of India have lately published some new rules reducing T. A. to a minimum, so that the Executive Engineer of old is now a heartbroken man, as his only solace has gone. Apparently the Government of India does not believe in the doctrine "that it is more blessed to give than to receive."

The relation between Executive and Assistant Engineer is some multiple part or parts of the relation between tutor and pupil. Sometimes a discussion arises. Should the pupil so far forget himself as to mention "shearing stress" or "moments of inertia" he would be differentiated to the nth + ·1; there wouldn't be an integral left in him. He would be informed that the only moments of inertia his tutor knew were the afternoon nap, and the only shearing stress the distress of mind when worried by his mamma or his papa.

These cicerones of the engineering world are sometimes guilty of a piece of char-

latanism, they invariably pretend to be sportsmen.

"Off on survey," says Mentor to Telemachus. "What a lucky fellow you are, what lots of shooting you will have and no *dick* from office work."

"I don't care for shooting," replies Telemachus. "I have had so little practice and am such a poor shot."

"Ha! ha!" ejaculates Mentor, "well that is good! Not care for shooting, eh? My dear fellow, you must cultivate a taste. Life would not be worth living without shooting. Everybody shoots, the whole world shoots." Of course this language is only metaphorical, and you allow just as much percentage as you do to the veriest subaltern at mess.

The coach will then proceed to relate, for the edification of his pupil, how elephant or snipe, bustard or tiger, uriyal or hare, has fallen alternately to his gun or rifle. Grouse and black buck, quails and leopards, pheasants or panthers he leaves to his pupil. "They are scarcely worth wast-

ing good powder and shot on, my dear fellow," he will quietly remark.

I am not a poet, yet in a fit of agony I remember composing—

> But the bags that he made
> And the traps that he laid,
> The sportsman to be,
> Were quite painful for to* see.

Mentor's great word is κῦδος. When there has been an inspection of his work and no unsatisfactory report he fancies he has received κῦδος. Apparently a stock of κυδος is kept on hand to fall back on in time of bereavement. Just as Niobe suffered for her presumption so the Executive Engineer often suffers. She was deprived of her fourteen healthy offspring and could only live on the memory of having brought them into the world. So Mentor is deprived of his κυδος, lives on the memory of having received commendation, whereas, in fact, he only gets wiggings instead.

The code endeavours to lay down rules for

* I don't like that "for to," it isn't good English, however, I claim poetic licence.

the duties of Executive Engineers. These duties embrace the safe custody of cash and stores, an immense number of returns. voluminous correspondence, and last, though not least, the execution of work. The result is that the work has to be entrusted to the subdivisional officer, who is sometimes an unfledged Assistant, and the Executive Engineer becomes an intelligent post office, passing on the orders of the chief to the subdivisional officer. Now, one of the points to which I wish to direct public attention is that the code orders that only one letter should be written on one subject to one individual. This is not done in private life nor in the commercial world, then why should it be done in Government service? Why should not Mentor write to Telemachus thus:—

Kindly reply to the following:

1. *Have you started concrete of bridge* 57*? Are the founds of* 83 *ready for inspection? Where do you propose to get building material for No.* 106*?*
2. *You have given too high a rate for grinding*

mortar. Remember that the fixing of rates is one of the most important duties of an Engineer. Never allow a native contractor more than 10 *per cent. profit, for he will generally make* 30 *per cent. by robbing the coolies.*

And so on.

A reply on the back of this paper will be sufficient.

The object of all correspondence is to give or receive information. Now, what I maintain is, that the information can be obtained with less trouble and quicker this way than in the usual manner. There is less sentiment and no redtapeism about my proposal. I am afraid, however, that the old *regime* will not be abandoned for a long time to come.

In these days of bustle and push Executive Engineers are getting to be remarkable for unreasonableness. They will order an infinite number of works to be completed in a finite space of time, regardless of the doctrine of limits and that the days of the immortal gods and of saints have gone by.

Executive Engineers on irrigation or on roads are rotund, while those on railways

are angular, presumably because the former drive and the latter ride.

Next to a contractor, Mentor's *bête noir* is a garden, because a superstition prevails that he who cultivates a garden shall not enjoy the fruit thereof, but shall be transferred to other spheres of usefulness.

Considering the constant transfers Executive Engineers undergo they manage to make themselves fairly comfortable and are hospitable to all comers.

Whatever else may be said about Mentor, it is an acknowledged fact that he is a hardworker. His devotion to duty is sincere. His work has told and is telling, so that he is becoming, though slowly, a power in the State.

No. IV.

THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER OF A LINE OR CIRCLE;

OR,

Mr. Hammer, C.E., and Major Sniggles, R.E.

THE Superintending Engineer differs from the Executive Engineer in the fact that he always lives in a station. There is the Royal Superintending Engineer and there is the Civil Superintending Engineer. Although both men do the same work the Royal Engineer gets higher pay. This, to the uninitiated, may seem an anomaly, but a good many other anomalies exist in India as well as in England. As the Royal Engineers are bonded by *esprit de corps* they have been able to monopolise the majority of lucrative

posts. Civil Engineers are now becoming alive to their interests and are determined to have their fair share.

When a man has arrived at this stage of his existence the Government of India expect that he will have *otium cum dignitate*. The Royal Superintending Engineer thoroughly appreciates the situation. The Civil Superintending Engineer sometimes abuses the easy trust thus placed in him. Having been a man of bricks and mortar, Mr. C. E. cannot separate himself from these ingredients. He is constantly imagining that the Executive Engineer is roaming about making T. A., the Assistant is shooting instead of attending to his duties, the subordinate drunk or is incapable, and that the only man who is master of the situation, is the contractor.

There is a common characteristic of all Superintending Engineers which I must not forget to mention. Mr. President endeavours to stir up honourable rivalry among his staff. This may be only "Fancy's pretty ways," but generally gives rise to envy, hatred and malice.

On visiting A.'s length Mr. President will express the opinion that the progress is not as satisfactory as it might have been. On proceeding to B.'s division he will calmly say that A. has got on very well and he cannot understand why B.'s work is so backward. When he reaches C.'s jurisdiction he will declare, with the utmost *nonchalance*, that A. and B. are sailing along gaily, and it is incomprehensible why C. can't keep up with his contemporaries.

Once upon a time, the story goes, there was a Military Superintending Engineer, by name Sniggles, every member of whose staff adored the very ground he trod on. There was also a Civil Superintending Engineer called Hammer, every member of whose staff sincerely wished, and had cause to wish, that the ground would open and swallow him up alive. If any of the staff became fractious Major Sniggles pooh-poohed the matter, talked the man over and earned his gratitude for life. Mr. Hammer treated the matter in the most serious light, reported the man for obstructiveness, and damaged his prospects

for life. Major Sniggles draws out his men and sucks their brains, Mr. Hammer suppresses them and sucks his own. If a youngster gives forth his views on things in general and the profession in particular Major Sniggles smiles at the buoyant enthusiasm. Mr. Hammer treats the man as though he was a bumptious upstart or an ignorant fool. It is not that Major Sniggles has less professional ability or is less of a disciplinarian than Mr. Hammer, but the difference in treatment lies in the fact that Major Sniggles is a much better judge of human nature. Major Sniggles' pleasantries are those of a man who has a relish for the good things of this life. Mr. Hammer's jokes are those of a soured misanthrope, he is never happy unless he can suspend a man, worry him, or debit some work to his personal account.

Every Superintending Engineer lives to do good, cheap and fast work, but no President of the line or circle has lived long enough to accomplish all. Assuming the first, the second and third quantities are the

reciprocal of one another, their product can never be equal to unity.

Major Sniggles casts cheapness to the winds and does his work. When the Examiner of Accounts worries he is politely told to mind his own business. The Examiner foams in the mouth, thirsting for vengeance. His day comes, the estimates are exceeded and Major Sniggles reported. The reply is simple: "I am very sorry, please forgive me." Then the paternal Government, which is always considerate, says, "We will forgive you this time for you have been a good boy and learnt your lesson, the Examiner of Accounts too is a good boy." So everybody is pleased and a big rejoicing takes place.

Meanwhile Hammer sticks to his cheapness and drivels. When the work ought to have been finished it has scarcely begun. Naturally, the Government of India thunder forth a reprimand. Hammer reports all his staff as inefficient—a great word of his—and eventually his work costs more than Major Sniggles' because it has to be rushed. On the Rari-Phizpur line, Hammer had a staff

of which most chiefs would have been proud. The work was done, but several men applied for transfer rather than serve such a capricious, vindictive and unscrupulous chief.

Hammer considers Sniggles "a poor weak thing," he little fancies that his own excessive strength is the cause of his unpopularity. It is not given to all men to have *bon homie*, but the Government of India expect chiefs to be considerate to those under them.

Hammer's *chef d'œuvre* is the under-estimate. He will consume valuable time fixing rates at which it is impossible to do work instead of leaving these details to his staff. When they reply that the rates are not sufficiently remunerative to prosecute the works with vigour, he will snub them and threaten to have them dismissed. Hammer allows 5 per cent. for contingencies, when he ought to know that this item often costs more than all the work put together. It has not exactly been ascertained why, but nevertheless the fact remains.

Mr. Hammer, C. E., lives in perpetual

dread of floods. He is constantly under the impression that the foundations of a certain bridge have not been carried down sufficiently low, or that indiscriminate scourings are taking place all over his line or circle with the express intention of ruining his reputation. Major Sniggles, R.E., does not live in dread of anything except his liver, and of that only when he cannot drink his beer at dinner. If a huge scouring does take place, washing away a few miles of line, Sniggles just issues a mild wigging to keep matters straight and orders the damage to be repaired.

One would suppose that perfect knowledge would cast out fear, but with Hammer it only brings on fear. Such a characteristic did not make a Smeaton or a Brunel.

I have taken these two men as types because they were well known in their day. As they worked near one another the difference between them was strongly marked. I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the fact that there are many Civil Engineers who are reasonable and tolerant like Major

Sniggles. Unfortunately, too, there are Royal Engineers as narrow-minded and as easily prejudiced as Mr. Hammer. As an example, I might note Mr. Pillaghan, C.E., and Colonel Chesnut, who were also notorious in their day.

If Superintending Engineers would only "doff" a little of that dignity which they carry about with so much difficulty, they would not require Pope's words to be applied to them:

> Great lords of all things, yet a prey to all,
> Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd,
> The glory, jest and riddle of the world.

No. V.

THE EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS;

OR,

Sundries Dr. to Sundries.

WHAT the Executive Engineer's Accountant is to the poor Assistant, the Examiner of Accounts is to the Executive, Superintending and Chief Engineer.

Such terms as a "Man's honour" or an "Engineer's veracity" are unknown to him, and he must have a *balance* in everything. Take an example. An Engineer has to carry out work in an unexplored country, and is consequently compelled to become his own purveyor, in order to supply his labour with the necessaries of life. Dear reader, I ask

how you would like to be compelled to keep an account of flour, sugar, lard, spice and one hundred and one other articles which your customers might require, especially when no profit was allowed to be made, and even if any did accrue you were not given a share? At any rate, I think you will admit that in retailing the wholesale amount some was likely to disappear in weighing, but the Examiner of Accounts cannot see that an algebraical equation should not hold good. I knew a man who had to pay out of his own pocket because the balance did not exactly tally. No doubt if the matter had been referred to the Government of India it might have been settled, but Engineers do not give unnecessary trouble, and will rather suffer an injustice than complain.

The public labour under the impression that the Examiner of Accounts' time is taken up with those "awful figures," including summation of series, trigonometry, mensuration and differential equations, but the public are liable to err. If society could only see Mr. Bookkeeper smiling in his

sleeve there would not be the slightest compassion felt for him. The real fact is the Auditor's time is taken up in reconsidering matters which he himself has multiplied *ad-nauseum*. If ever there was a *circumscribendi* office it belongs to the Examiner of Accounts. Thus, an applicant sends in a travelling journal, the greater part is disallowed *à priori* pending further explanations. In due course these are given, when a dribblet is sanctioned. The applicant then sends a second explanation, on which a second dribblet is sanctioned. This re—re—re—reconsideration goes on till the applicant dies of old age and leaves the greater portion of his T. A. as a legacy to the Government of India.

I am informed that the Examiner of Accounts has the audacity to lay the flattering unction to his soul that he is a hardworked individual. My experience of his daily routine is this, Comes to office at 11 A.M., reads the paper and smokes, quizzing everybody all round. Clerk enters to say that Mr. Kankar has sent in a bill without previous estimate being sanctioned.

"Send it back for explanation," replies Mr. Auditor.

It is now time to do a few calls.

Tiffin being announced, if the claret is not sufficiently iced Mr. Bookkeeper's temper gets ruffled, and so he writes a few of those scathing letters for which he is famous. Then comes afternoon tea, lawn-tennis and a pleasant evening.

It must not be supposed that the power wielded by an Examiner of Accounts is by any means small. By the mere stroke of his pen he can convert a profit into a loss, a deficit into a surplus, float a railway or condemn a canal. He can thus disturb the slumbers of the Government of India or he can let those slumbers be light and sweet. No wonder the chieftest of Engineers shudders when he beholds the magic wand.

"Sundries Dr. to Sundries," which has often addled the brain of experts, is nothing to him. Mr. Auditor just grasps the monster by the throat and lays him low. Besides this, the Comptroller is a master of the mysteries of budget heads, a subject on which many

an Engineer has, for the time, entirely exhausted the phosphorus of the brain. Did not Goldsmith write?

> Atta he could measure, Budget Heads plumb,
> And even the story ran that he could sum.

That the Examiner of Accounts, though provided with a horde of bookkeepers, is not infallible the following incident will show:—

An Assistant Engineer coming down to the plains from Darjeeling took an advance of 350 rupees and left a voucher in the Examiner's office. The advance was repaid in six monthly instalments at the Divisional office in the plains. About a year after this the Executive Engineer wrote to say that the Assistant might have a refund of his 350 rupees as the voucher could not be traced. Like a man of honour, the Assistant declined to take back his money. He was only sneered at by the Executive Engineer and the Examiner for his squeamishness. Now, I wish to ask, suppose similar errors occur in other offices, are these errors ever found out in the Accountant-General's office?

The Comptroller's spleen is, however, not

limited to the Engineering Department, it is sometimes vented on a brother Examiner. When the "Transfers" and "Miscellaneous Advances" of one province do not agree with those of another we have the meeting of boss with boss, and as both men are castigated by the Accountant-General the Philippic gets circulated.

From the nature of the work the Examiner's office cannot be ahead of its time, but why should it be geologic ages behind? When a job has been completed, handed over to a company, washed away or fossilised, the accounts of that job just begin to be exhumed and the vouchers tested. Meanwhile the incumbents have been changed several times over; and the present retainer is called upon to explain certain details of which he is as innocent as a new-born babe.

The position of the Comptroller of Accounts in his office is that of a good and virtuous man in this wicked world—he is among them but not of them. His presence is really only necessary just before the 1st of April and the 1st of October to sign his name. The rest

of the year he might be taking a Cook's excursion round the world and recruiting his health after his arduous—not exactly labours—but perhaps—late evenings.

Some people wish to be Premier of England. Sir Ali Baba's ambition was to be a Political Agent in a Native State. My desire is to be Examiner of Accounts, first class, first grade. Oh! when will that time come?

No. VI.

JO(E) HUKM,

The Petty Native Contractor.

THE man who is guilty of a genuflexion, and with folded hand says, "having heard your honor's name I have come from a far-country," is a petty contractor. There is no chance of mistaking the man, his very tone of voice betrays him. If you wish not to be outdone by his flattery reply in the vernacular, "My name must indeed have spread far when it reached *your* country," or you may add, "Great is my good fortune that our four eyes have met, whether I live or die is now of no consequence." If

either of those expressions does not act as a cordial, kindly let me know. The rejoinder is almost sure to be "Jo Hukm." The following is my interpretation of this sentence :—

I swear upon my bended knee by whatsoever is sacred—Ganga, Jamna, Brahma, Vishnu, the twelve Imams or Mohamet—that I will put your orders on my head and consider them inviolate. I will carry out the said orders to the best of my ability and give no trouble in doing so. I will never grumble whether I lose or gain by the contract, but if I should happen to fail in some small detail I hope you will be pleased to forgive me.

Philologists tell us that the English language is redundant, it certainly appears to be deficient compared to the Persian.

Excuse a foreign slipshod now and then,
If but to show I've travelled, and what's travel
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil.

There are several kinds of petty contractors. A weasened, half-starved old man, with scarcely a waistcloth round his loins, will come and say that he wants a contract. He will be given a small job. This he will

do, and do well. He will then be given a bigger job, this he will also do well, and so on. In a year or two he will go away with as much money saved as many a high official in the Government service. He is an example of a workman combined with thrift.

Another man will come dressed in a red coat, with a blue and gold pugri, riding on a pony, accompanied with rag-tag and bobtail. You will say to yourself, "Here is the man I want, he will do all my work and give no trouble, a very nabob, a capitalist, a man of resource." On being given a job this man will almost immediately ask for a bill, stating that cash is on the road and he requires only a temporary loan. His request will be refused on the grounds that his work is not good. By some manner of means he will get hold of a sleeping partner. Things will go from bad to worse. In time you will notice that he disposes of, first his servant, then his horse, then his red coat, and then, with much reluctance, his blue and gold pugri, eventually working as a labourer on the original job he took up,

disappearing later on to try the same game somewhere else. He is an example of neither workman nor thrift.

There is another kind of contractor to whose employment I object, I mean the lambadar, or head man of a village.

This man cannot distinguish a foot from an inch, and has as much knowledge *of rates* as he has of flying. Yet he is sometimes given a job because it is believed that he can get plenty of labour. The result is generally disastrous to himself. His imagination had conjured up a countless horde of rupees, but he finds to his astonishment that the bill is for a small amount. So he declines to take it as being inaccurate and appeals to the Small Cause Court. On losing his case he abuses the Engineer in "good set terms." Indian village tittle-tattle may not be as poignant as English scandal, yet I never knew a man who could afford to have his character blackened. I am afraid we Engineers are more or less sinners.

Fortunately the Public Works Department

can find a few men who understand their work and have, besides, some capital. Such a contractor knows more about real "*Work*" than a senior wrangler. His forces are represented not by lines but by legs and arms, his masses and momenta are not the ideal, but the real. His coefficient of friction is not that contained in a tabular statement by General Morin or Professor Vitruvius, but is the friction of a spade against the soil or of a pick against the rock. His mechanical advantages are produced by such insignificant objects as an inclined plane, a pulley or a lever. It is really remarkable how soon the face of nature can be altered in a country almost unexplored. Mr. Ram Bakhsh will burn lime, collect ballast, build bridges and do earthwork at rates which ought to bring a blush to the cheeks of a Thomas Brassey or a Morton Peto. To an experienced Engineer the *modus operandi* is simple enough—have a keen eye to the main chance, keep the money rolling, apply gentle pressure, encourage with a few useful hints, and never let Ram Bakhsh's energies flag.

The invariable accompaniment of a native contractor is a 'dolly'—not a wax figure—but a peace offering of a few oranges and some native sweetmeats.

In dealing with native agents the Hindu should be distinguished from the Mussalman. With the former moderation and little or no physical force is necessary, while with the latter firmness with sometimes a good display of biceps is required. The contractor's ideas of his employers are peculiar, yet fairly correct. The Subordinate is "Sargeant Sahib," the Assistant "our" or "Chota Sahib," the Executive "bara" or "Kaptân Sahib," while the Superintending Engineer and Director-General are not supposed to have anything to do with the work except draw the pay.

Native contractors are easily discouraged if the work does not progress satisfactorily. I knew a bridge the wells of which gave a great deal of trouble in sinking, and when they did go down the sinking was so rapid that the steining cracked. The natives at once said that a devil—not a woman—was at the bottom of it. Sacrifices had

to be offered to propitiate the deity and many coolies ran away in fear. When work went on again smoothly the natives believed the wrath of the deity had been appeased.

Before State railways were started the rates were so good that a contractor did not object to a good deal of ill-treatment, but now that the rates are kept low Mr. Ram Bakhsh has a habit of running away as though he were coy. On enquiry it will be found that he has consulted the nearest Magistrate.

Perfect straightforwardness, with a dignity of character—a dignity which is neither proud nor over-lenient—will always tell with all contractors.

In these days to be a successful working Engineer in India requires not so much book-learning as an acquaintance with the customs and religious beliefs of the people of the district in which work is going on. These beliefs vary in all parts of the country. Then, again, one should endeavour to be tolerant at all times. To possess even these two qualifications in India is to possess what Bacon would call POWER.

No. VII.

THE DICTATOR MINOR;

OR,

What to have for Tiffin.

ONE fine morning the Government of India awoke to be informed that its "toy railways, its bath-tub channels, its sun-trap barracks" and its kankar roads were increasing so rapidly that it was quite impossible for one man to bear the weight of such a volume. The Government of India, which can at times be reasonable, said, "Here is a real grievance, let us remedy it." So a Dictator Minor was appointed to each of the principal and intermediate points of the compass. The resolution, as usual, was arrived at in such a hurry

that sufficient time was not given to define the jurisdictions or limit the prerogatives of each Dictator Minor. Meanwhile men were chosen who had passed through the ædilship, prætorship and consulship, in other words, who had been men of bricks and mortar, professors of floods and estimates and so on. A *magister equitum* or personal assistant was allowed to each, together with the usual horde of lictors in the form of chuprassis.

The Dictator Minor was so called, *quoniam dictis ejus parebat populus*, as all the Engineers and subordinates had to knuckle down to him. When this ruler went on a tour of inspection it was very fine to see with what pomp and glory he was heralded about by the lictors who shouted, "Behold the '*lat*' sahib cometh; go ye out to meet him." The Superintending Engineer accompanied the Dictator and each of the Divisional officers met him in his length. His lordship's discourse on the nebula hypothesis, the Seismic vertical, Denudation or the clashing of atoms, was probably worthy of being recorded. Unfortunately no shorthand writer was allowed

to be present. Everyone was so quiet you might have heard a cigar ash drop.

I am Sir Oracle;
When I ope my mouth let no dog bark.

The reverential awe, with which the whole staff including the coolie listened, was sublime to a degree. Suddenly a loud hosannah rends the air. What is the matter? Only the poor coolie is imagining that the *lat* sahib is ordering his rates to be raised. Poor fellow, you are doomed to disappointment. The lat sahib is the very last man in this world to raise your rates, he would like the work to be done for nothing, in order to take the whole of the credit to himself.

When the inspection was over the Dictator Minor would write a voluminous report full of abstruse details, to the effect:—

That a chow kut 4 feet 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches was really not sufficient to admit in an erect posture a full-sized Englishman 6 feet 2 inches in height in his stockings, but that if the Government of India desired for the sake of uniformity that the standard Dimensions should be enforced, he would certainly be most happy to carry out their wishes.*

* Door or window frame.

At stated intervals the Dictatores Minores used to hold their comitia or meetings, and then what sumptuous repasts were provided at the State's expense! Pomphlets, oysters and mangoes from Bombay,' pineapples, bananas and confectionaire from Pelitti's; these, with French wines and English stores, should have satisfied the greatest of *bon vivants*. The diet would certainly not consist only of worms, but there would be worms (cheese) at the diet.

If these meetings had led to nothing worse than tiffin the Government of India would have been under the impression that the Dictator Minor was a hardworked and much abused individual. Unfortunately, however, a *fracas* sometimes ensued after tiffin which commenced by being impersonal and ended by being very personal indeed.

At last the noise of these bickerings reached the upper regions, and as a new Ministry had just come in, who saw here a glorious chance of easing the taxpayers' pocket, the whole *sab chiz*—as we say in India—was swept away. All the Dictatores Minores are

reduced to one red-coated chuprassi, two badly used quill pens, a green-baised, ink-stained office table and no stationery. There is not much work to do, but even that remains undone, because the Government of India declines to sanction an increased expenditure.

How the Dictator Minor must regret the rashness, which in a moment of impulse drew him away from his tiffin, to attend to the details of business.

No. VIII.

MRS. EXECUTIVE'S COMPANION;

OR,

Who is She?

AS the Executive Engineer is often away, devoting his zeal and ability to his profession and at the same time coining T. A., his wife is left much alone.

Sometimes there are children in the house, always an ayah, in addition, too, there may occasionally be found a companion in the shape of a buxom lass.

When the Assistants A., B., C. come on a Saturday to Mrs. Executive's badminton or lawn tennis they find a young lady exulting in the name of Miss Beaux or

Miss Low, or something equally poetic, and are duly impressed with her charms. Miss Beaux or Miss Low is a *pucca* European, so she must have been imported direct. The earnest endeavours Messrs. A., B., C. make to pick up Miss Beaux's shuttlecocks or balls sometimes result in disasters. While A. rushes about his centre of gravity—as we say in Mechanics—becomes unstable and he measures his full length on the ground. Miss Low, with a merry little laugh, says:—

"Really, Mr. A., I am so sorry for you, I hope you did not hurt yourself *very much*."

A. mumbles out something to the effect that he would not mind hurting himself all over permanently, if this act would give Miss Beaux the slightest consolation.

Then those horrid B. and C. wink to one another.

When the game is over the Assistants learn further that the young lady rejoices in other names equally poetic, for Mrs. Boss says:—

"Ethel, dear, your play was shocking, where could your thoughts have been?" or,

"Maud, darling, I think we will now go in, as I am sure these gentlemen would like to be left alone to smoke."

No sooner have the ladies turned their backs and Mentor disappeared than those uncouth A., B., C. begin their remarks:—

"Who the deuce is she, A.?" asks B.

"How on earth am I to know," replies A. Probably a nursery governess or a lady-help, but she is nyum nyumy.

"None of that," interrupts C. "There is nothing plebeian about her. I expect she is a retired colonel's daughter or a globe trotter or a countess in disguise, a regular knock-me-down patrician I expect."

"Well, boys," says Mentor, coming out of the house, "and what do you think of my young lady, eh?"

"Oh quite too awfully nice," reply A., B. and C. simultaneously.

"Got some money, too," adds Mentor aside to A.

When A. goes home on Sunday evening to his solitary bungalow in the jungles he finds that Miss Beaux's image fills the room. She

accompanies him on horseback. He is afraid that her name will appear in official correspondence, and he almost murmurs Maud or Ethel when worrying a contractor. Miss Low's matchless form at first enters his head, and then gradually works its way down till it reaches, not his boots, but—his disordered liver. Being unable to bear any longer the delicious tingling sensation he rushes off and writes:—

Augilious maid, whose cruel scorn
Is nathomical to say
Would be too more audacious to be borne
Than in an oppertaneous way.
Let me coacervate a few
Ambageous words emarulent,
Leudificatory but true,
Ere I become so masulent
That without voice to eueulate
My loved one's lact a sonious praise.
* * * * *
Ah no! I am but bolery and clay
And in one fixed advolution roll.

Most considerate of readers, how do you like that eueulate? Are not ambageous and leudificatory enough to tickle a young girl's fancy?

Next week when Messrs. A., B. and C.

again meet at Mrs. Executive's party they find that Miss Ethel Beaux or Miss Maud Low is no longer there. Messrs. B. and C. are put off with some trivial excuse, but for A. is reserved the gentle tap on the shoulder by Mentor with, "So we have driven Miss Beaux away, have we? We sent her such a nice valentine." A. falters out that his intentions are strictly honorable and so on. "Of course, my dear fellow, we all thought so, they could not have been otherwise."

Next week Miss Beaux or Miss Low appears again on the scene, with such radiant smiles that even those unimpressionable B. and C. are captivated. She had been urgently required to see a cousin or a niece or an aunt who was born, got married or died, and none of these domestic occurrences could possibly have happened without her invaluable assistance.

The preliminaries are soon arranged and Mr. A. marries Miss Maud Beaux or Miss Ethel Low, and then breaks off the acquaintanceship with those horrid B. and C., who are still bachelors.

The weekly lawn tennis meeting is now no longer held, centres of gravity are no longer unstable, the merry little laugh of Maud Beaux or Ethel Low is no more heard. The place that knew all these things knows them no more, for the railway has been completed and all the parties are scattered.

When B. and C. do happen to come across one another they refer to the past history of A. They wonder what he is doing and if he is happy as a married man. And thus, while B. or C. smokes his solitary cigar or drinks his solitary peg on a Saturday evening, he is still held in thraldom by the mystery of

WHO WAS SHE?

No. IX.

THE EUROPEAN CONTRACTOR;

OR,

Strict Veracity.

A NEW work had just been started. Mr. Alpha was the Assistant in charge while Mr. Omega was the European Contractor who had taken up the whole job. One fine morning they met. After a friendly greeting Mr. Alpha said, condescendingly, "I suppose you have done this kind of work before?" "Bless my soul," replied Omega, "call this work, I call it child's play. Now you should just see my bridge over the Brahmaputra, 10,000 feet span—more accurately 9987 feet 9¾ inches." Mr. Alpha lifted

his eyebrows and then added that he had been up that river but had neither seen nor heard anything of this remarkable structure, which apparently was a giant to the Forth Bridge, moreover, that he had journeyed the whole distance that steamers usually take. Mr. Omega suggested that the bridge might have been passed during the night. To which Mr. Alpha replied that steamers on the Brahmaputra anchored during the night, and that he had employed the cool leisure in gambling and playing billiards with the skipper. Mr. Omega's next insinuation was that perhaps he (Mr. Alpha) had slept during the day as he had been awake during the night. Mr. Alpha was compelled to own that such had frequently been the case.

"Ah," added Mr. Omega, triumphantly, "that accounts, sir, for your not seeing my bridge. I can assure you I began engineering when I was *that* high—pointing to the calves of his legs—my first lessons were learnt on the Niagara Falls Bridge."

"Crosses over the Niagara Falls, eh?" interrupted Alpha, wishing not to show him-

self backward in engineering details. At this the ruthless Omega sneered and, turning slightly the upper lip, replied contemptuously, "Not at all, sir, the Niagara Falls cross over it."

Alpha was dumbfounded, flabbergasted, and bowled over. He had only just sufficient strength left to murmur that in such a case it seemed to him that a tunnel was the proper method of overcoming the difficulty. Omega however cut him short with :—"My dear sir, that was all calculated to the nearest dollar. The bridge was a stupendous structure of cast iron, one span being nearly four miles across. The centering consisted of Whipple-Murphy trusses. The mortar used was what WE Engineers call rust cement. Everything had to be ready by a certain date to pass over the President of the United States. The keystone was an enormous block of iron weighing about $133\frac{1}{8}$ tons. Now, when everything was ready and only the keystone had to be dropped in, it was found that this could not be done. The intense summer heat had elongated the arch

and the keystone was too large. Here was a fix. The American Contractor, however, is a man not easily knocked over by trifles. Train upon train loads of ice were brought up and the arch covered to several feet in thickness till it resembled a glacier. The refractory arch contracted, the keystone was slipped in, and the President with members of Congress passed over in perfect time and in perfect comfort."

"By Jove, that was a glorious undertaking."

"I tell you what, Mr. Alpha, you shall yet see some fine works in India if I can only float a few of my projects on the public."

"What are these?"

"Well, one of these is to bore through the Himalayas and open out a new trade route with Thibet. You see the importation of praying machines would alone pay the capital, for the English Church could be disestablished. The shares would reach a premium from the sale of animal hides, and a handsome interest would accrue from the constant journeyings of sportsmen."

"Have you been to Thibet?" asked Alpha.

"Certainly, and a very fine country it is too. Would you like to hear some Thibetian?"

"I should very much."

"Well here you are. Mago—lygyd—arg—arli—ging—ly—go—veged—thi—gi—schi—g—ild."

"Ah," sighed Alpha, as though he were much relieved, "I did not know Thibetian was so easy."

"What do you mean, sir."

"Only this, that it seems to me—of course I do not know Thibetian—that this Oriental language is only a modification of what in my schooldays WE used to call the 'G' language. In this you double each syllable. I would translate what you have just said, 'Molly darling loved this child.'"

"Can't be, sir. This, I assure you, is one of the Thibetian prayers which I learnt when I was up there. But as I was saying, there is the beautiful yak, far more comfortable to ride than the ordinary horse or camel, the mountain sheep, from whose tail you can get at any moment four or five seers of ready-made suet."

"Surely not."

"Upon my word. Shall I show you a photograph with the sheep in the act of having the suet taken out?

"Well, have you any other projects?" asked Alpha in despair.

"Yes, there is a tramway of mine from pole to pole to prevent the unpleasantness of circumnavigation. You see, in this case the preliminary expenses would be nil, as we could follow one of the meridian lines and use one of the zones as a base of operations. The most symmetrical would certainly be the equatorial, but on account of its excessive heat it would probably be advisable to use one of the intermediate ones. Another of my projects was to make railway carriages of *papier maché* and rails of glass. But I find that an American Contractor has got ahead of me and has already taken out patents. The advantages are obvious, namely, original cost small and changes of temperature cannot affect either much."

"That reminds me," said Alpha, looking at his watch, "it appears to be breakfast time.

By the bye, on the next occasion we meet we must do a little more work and a little less talk. So good morning."

"Certainly, sir, good morning."

On returning to his solitary bungalow in the jungles Alpha swore like a trooper at the babu, khansama, coolie and chuprassi. Nothing could satisfy him for two whole days.

It is a wonder he did not smash up the furniture in his wrath. When Alpha met Mentor he declared that Omega was the biggest liar in creation. "If the man would only move a muscle to show that he was telling a pleasant falsehood one could not object. But his statements are made in such a matter-of-fact fashion that he really wishes you to believe them."

Then Mentor only smiled and added,

"Fine fellow, Omega, I wish we had more like him."

No. X.

THE OFFICE BABU;

OR,

A Compendium of Useful Knowledge.

THE Office Babu has sometimes a retentiveness of memory which would do credit to a Macaulay or a calculating boy. As a rule, however, he is unable to write a simple docket without dictation, as he will not adopt his ideas to the circumstances of the case. The Head Clerk who can draft a good letter gets well paid—as he should be. One of the most remarkable facts about copyists is their good handwriting. It is strange how impressionable the Oriental is. In British India the natives write very much in the

style of Englishmen, while I have noticed in Pondicherry that there the natives write *á la Francais.*

It must not be supposed that Divisional and Sub-divisional Clerks have no influence, the fact is they keep the subordinates and petty contractors in a good wholesome state of trepidation by constantly nagging at them. I sometimes wonder if the Office Babu is descended from the "scribes" of Central Asia. If the Government of India wishes the History of India to be recorded in greater detail than at present a few cargoes of Bengali scriveners might be shipped to ferret among the cellars of the India Office. What an index we should have to be sure!

For some years there was a tendency on the part of native penmen to become machines, which went on smoothly only so long as the machine was oiled. I am glad to find that now we are beginning to get a better class of men. The India of to-morrow will shortly differ from the India of to-day. I will give an example of the India of to-day:—

"Babu, where is my $\frac{98\ 65\ \text{P.S.}}{43210\ \text{N.B.}}$ of 1861?"

says the Executive Engineer, in a stentorian voice.

The Clerk fumbles among the papers.

"Your honor took it away in camp and we had not time to register it."

"But what was it about?"

"Sar, it stated that as the Government of India was prepared to sanction estimates the Sub-divisional officer was requested to state how many crores he could spend during the next three weeks and to give the details under each head."

"Ah! yes, so it did—very good."

After a short pause the master thunders out:—

"Babu, where is the Deputy Commissioner's ·0001 of 1984?"

"Sar, there must be a topographical error, for 1984 has not come yet."

"I'll topographical error, you—, fetch the document."

"Sar, your honor put it into your honor's pocket as your honor was going in the train."

"Well, tell me the *mutlab* (purport) of it."

"Sar, the Deputy Commissioner said that

your honor could not have ballast from that quarry as the hill was dedicated to Siva, but that if you did take ballast you must not make a railway bank or cutting or any other modern innovation."

"Oh, he did, did he? Would the Commissioner like to tell me when to eat my dinner? Yes, that will do. I can now answer his letter."

Presently a gruff voice roars:—

"Babu, where's my $\frac{735\frac{1}{2}}{64}\ \frac{\text{E. C}}{\text{S. W}}$ of 29th February 1791?"

The recorder plunges among a heap of *débris*, but cannot find the document and says so.

"Confound you!" bellows his master, "if you don't find that docket in five minutes you will be fined half a month's pay. What's the use of having men who keep the office in such a mess?"

A blank despair seizes the Clerk.

"Sar, may I leave the office? I have one call of nature."

"Certainly not. Find that letter and let the call of nature take care of itself."

"But your honor, I am one family man, and the call of nature is connected with this same document."

"All right. For heaven's sake go—and look sharp."

The Babu goes off and presently returns, wearing a sickly smile.

"Sar, when your ancestor was in charge of this office."

"Predecessor, I suppose you mean."

"Yes, Sar, precursor. Then all the papers were burnt in the temporary quarters. Then this same Bhup Narayen, he send in one claim for damage to his land by railway bank. He was paid and acknowledged same, but now he remit claim for double amount."

"Yes, I remember the case now—you may go."

Soon afterwards the lord and master treads into the Clerk's compartment and says:—

"Well, Babu, I have finished up all the correspondence, and shall report my departure on furlough to-morrow at noon."

"Then your honor will soon be going over the fish-teeming sea?"