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SONIA GOES EAST

By MOLLY THORP

Author of "STRANGER THAN FICTION," "WHY BE AFRAID?" Etc.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

SONIA LATIMER, having lost her parents in India, was brought to England as a child by her uncle and aunt and left in the charge of her schoolmistresses. JUSTIN GEDGE: Her uncle, a planter in Behar, India. EMILY GEDGE: Her aunt. RONNIE EASTWOOD: A captain in the Indian Army, who meets Sonia on her voyage to India to stay with the Gedges. PHILIP BRERLEY: A Deputy Commissioner of the Indian Civil Service, stationed at Sissa, in Behar. The characters in this story are entirely imaginary. No reference is intended to any living person or to any public or private company.

CHAPTER I

The West-going bus slowed down in Kensington High Street and Sonia Latimer, picking up her dispatch case, prepared to get out. Her neighbour, an elderly jeweller, tired out with his day's work, automatically cramped himself to let her pass and, as she did so saw her clearly for the first time. His detached and critical eye followed her as she crossed the street. "The perfect colouring for sapphires," he thought. "The chemists can't hit it off yet, not quite." He watched her turn off and speculated idly. "Home on Campden Hill. Comfortable but doesn't run to jewellery. String of small pearls, perhaps, pity." The bus carried him on. Sonia, thinking of anything but sapphires, walked up the hill. He was right about her destination, but it was not her home. She had, strictly speaking, no home, and not even the string of small pearls. She had hardly seen London till she came, four years before, to work under Professor Gilroy with the Galileo Society. The professor was its Honorary Secretary, and she lived with him and his wife in their little house in Peel Street. For the eight years before she went to her secretarial training college, she had lived between her school at Bath and the Cotswold home of the Misses Peake, her headmistresses, who, as she had no near relatives in England, took entire charge of her. She had been finally left at the school one autumn day, when she was ten, by Uncle Justin and Aunt Emily, who had brought her from India earlier that year. While they were at hand, the life and background of which they had always been a part remained real and comfortably commonplace. When they were gone, Sonia found herself without a soul to whom she could talk naturally about the things she knew best, which these new people seemed to find so surprising.

None of them had ever seen elephants or tigers, except in the Zoo. They didn't even know what a jackal was. No, she would say, it wasn't a dog. Then was it a wolf? No, it wasn't a wolf; it was just a jackal. She could seldom even talk about her ayah without having to stop and explain. "She looked after me." "Oh, you mean your nurse." Sonia thought of English nurses, in their caps and stiff white aprons, and of her darling fat brown-skinned old Lachminia, and gave it up. They only had her word that she had ever had parents. Sonia could remember clearly things her father and mother had said and done, but what was the good of that, when they could never be seen, like other parents, at half-terms and prize-givings? They had vanished, and didn't quite know how, one uneasy day in the monsoon deluge. She remembered the day, well; how the servants went about crying and kept her strictly in one part of the bungalow till Uncle Justin arrived and took her away; over broken roads and flooded rivers to his own home at Mynpore. Even her name was different here. It was really Sonia, which, in the language now quickly fading from her mind, meant "Golden." She found it easier to answer discreetly to Sonia. In time, she collected memories more like other people, of seaside holidays and Christmas pantomimes. She grew into the English life and might have come to believe the other a dream, but for Aunt Emily's letters. These came weekly, in a regular pointed hand, on thin grey paper with the reassuring heading, "Mynpore, Champaran, Behar." Their news fitted with her memories. Uncle Justin had shot a mad dog in the compound yesterday. The rains were very heavy this year. The floods last week had come into the cook-house and the cook had to manage for two days in the back veranda with a charcoal brazier. He and Hosain, the old bearer, sent their salaams, to Sonia Missahib. When Sonia opened the Gilroy's front door in Peel Street, this evening, one of these letters was on the hall table. A voice called, "Is that you, Sonia?" She went into the sitting room, where Mrs. Gilroy was working, under a standard lamp, at her tapestry frame. "What sort of a day? Did you get Dermot off to his lecture in good order?" "Very good. He had lots of time and went over his notes before he left." "Well done. There was a letter for you. Oh, you've found it." "Aunt Emily's written by airmail," said Sonia. "She never does that except for my birthday." INVITATION TO INDIA She opened her letter. After the first words, her attention contracted. Quickly reading it through, she looked up and said, incredulously, "Aunt Emily wants me to go out to India." Mrs. Gilroy poked her needle into the canvas and left it there. "Oh, dear, that sounds very difficult. Not by the next mail, I hope?" "This is what she says:— Your uncle and I have never said much about your coming out to Behar again, as we thought it best for you to settle down to your career without a break. Now you have been working steadily for four years. If Professor Gilroy can spare you and you wish to come, we should be glad for you to come as soon as possible. I have written to our bank to arrange provisionally for your expenses and fare. I am also writing to Miss Peake. I know this is a good deal to ask of you, but we are growing no younger and want to be sure of seeing you again. It will not be very exciting for you here with two old people, but perhaps you would like to see something of the life your year parents knew. If you think you would lose too much by leaving your work, we shall quite understand. We would never have parted from you after your parents' death if there had been anything like as good an education for you in India as you get at Home. I hope you now also feel

that we did what was best for you." "It sounds very sad," said Sonia, blowing her nose. "Not at all like Aunt Emily." Any stirring up of these old associations brought her quite automatically near to tears. It was the only side left of the childish storms of misery, now sunk far below the surface of her mind. "What will Dermot say?" said Mrs. Gilroy. "He had got you so nicely into shape. Anyway you must find out first what Miss Peake has heard." "I'll write to her to-night." "It might be as well to 'phone," said Mrs. Gilroy, taking up her needle, again. The next Saturday Sonia travelled down to Bath. She arrived in the afternoon, but had very little chance at first to talk to the Misses Peake, whose private life, in term time, began about 9 a.m. At last she was alone with them in the familiar drawing-room where hardly a space remained for another old girl's water-colour or souvenir from foreign parts. The younger Miss Peake poured out coffee and offered Sonia a cigarette. "I still don't smoke, thank you, Miss Lucy," said Sonia smiling. The offer was made off every visit, a recognition of her independence. "Good child." Miss Lucy took up her knitting. Sonia was waiting for Miss Peake to mention her aunt's letter, but Miss Peake first poked the fire and then remarked, "I wonder how clearly you remember Behar?" "I have pictures of it in my head, very clear, but whether they're real or I've imagined part of them since, I don't know. I feel I could recognize places but I have no idea how I could find them." "You remember the lions and tigers, I expect," said Miss Lucy. "Leopards and tigers. There aren't any lions in Behar." "There, Kate, you see she can still correct me over a detail like that. I always said it was true." "You don't mean to say you didn't believe me, either in those days," Sonia exclaimed. "I should certainly have run away if I'd known you thought I was telling lies, too." "No dear, we never thought you told lies," said Miss Lucy with energy. "On the contrary, your frankness was sometimes appalling." "We had to remember you had gone through a great upheaval," said Miss Peake, "and in such circumstances, children's imaginations sometimes run wild. Lying isn't the word at all. Besides, we knew very little of the habits of leopards and tigers till you came. Our other Indian children were all from more Westernized surroundings than Behar." "But I don't think anyone ever ventured to doubt you openly, Sonia, after the time you fell upon Cynthia Elder with a hairbrush, in your bedroom," said Miss Lucy. "She laughed at your saying your ayah wore bangles on her ankles and rings on her toes, do you remember? Such an uproar! I had to take you away to my own room for the rest of the night, to get you at all quiet." "I do remember. It was like a nightmare to have everything I said treated as a romance. Half why I want to go back is to see for myself it was all true." "So you do want to go back?" said Miss Peake. "Yes. Wouldn't you, if you were me?" "Certainly. Now, I think I can show you your aunt's letter to me." END OF A CHAPTER She fetched it from her writing table with some other papers and handed it to Sonia. It was concise, and ended, "I know that I can rely on you not to influence Sonia to agree to my offer, as I want her to be quite free to choose as she pleases." "So that's why you didn't say, anything. You do want me to go, don't you, Miss Peake?" "No, Sonia, I can't say we do. But we'd have been sorry if you'd decided otherwise. Your uncle and aunt have given you all your education and this is the first thing they have asked of you. Still, we've had you a long time, you know. I expect we feel rather as Mrs. Gedge did when she left you with us." Till that moment Sonia had not stopped to think that travelling meant saying good-bye. This quiet room with the two elderly women in it seemed suddenly to hold a whole chapter of her life, which now must end. Miss Peake took the other papers from her lap and came over to sit beside Sonia with a briskness which cleared the air of all nostalgic waverings. "I got these sailing lists yesterday. Mrs. Gilroy said that the Professor was prepared to let you go in a fortnight. You could get your clothes ready in another week, couldn't you? Your aunt gives no definite reason for wanting you to start without delay, but from the way she writes, I don't think you should waste time. There's a passage you see, in the Casanova, the second week in November." The conventional business phrases of the letter went straight to Sonia's head. It was just as well that reason and filial duty pointed to her taking the passage in the Casanova. There was nothing in her mind now that weighed against the longing to take it and go.

She tried hard to recall the feeling of that moment as she stood, three weeks later, on the deck of the Casanova moving into the Thames. A dirty brown drizzle and the growing dusk quickly obscured the little crowd of people on the docks, till the umbrellas of Sonia's friends melted into all the other umbrellas and it was no longer any use to wave a handkerchief. Still the people on deck strained their eyes towards the shore, isolated from each other in their private miseries of parting. Starting for India, Sonia could only think, "I'm leaving England." It was a little better down below, in light and warmth, among the new and exciting sounds of the ship's own life. Sonia found on her cabin door a name beside her own, "Miss Sybil Brent." The whole narrow floor between the two berths was heaped with luggage. She extricated her dressing case and was wondering how two people could possibly move and dress in such a small space, when the door abruptly opened. Miss Brent stopped in the doorway because it was impossible to get any further. She was a big, dark girl, very smart in a fur coat over a black suit. The make-up round her eyes looked as if she had been crying. "What an appalling hole," was her first remark. "I hope you're tidy," she added severely. "Extremely," said Sonia, with more spirit than accuracy. "Are you?" Miss Brent's eye fell on a large cluster of red carnations in the washbasin at the end, which had been unfolded to hold them. "You'll have to do something about those flowers. They can't stay there." It made Sonia feel much better to say, "They're not mine." Miss Brent climbed nimbly over the luggage and took them. Her face lighted up as she read a card which was in an envelope attached to them. "From my fiancé. Now you can tell me to throw them out of the porthole if you like." "I shouldn't dream of it," said Sonia. "They're far too lovely." The girl held them out for her to smell. "Clever of him to think of it, weeks ahead. To send a card by mail, too. Are you going to Calcutta?" "Yes. Are you?" "Martin's meeting me at Colombo and we're getting married there. I took this hearse of a boat only because he wanted to honeymoon in Ceylon. He's in a firm in Calcutta." "Is it a hearse?" "Oh, terribly old and slow. People go all the way round by sea because they've got masses of children with them and it's not so expensive; or they are going to out of the way places. Don't expect amusement. As we've got to take turns at the glass, we'd better start dressing for dinner. You can begin while I unpack."

THE MAN WHO KNEW The faces Sonia had seen so strained and absorbed on deck looked quite different, wearing their social expressions under the lights of the dining saloon. She picked out several people she thought she might like to meet, but Sybil remarked in her ear, "What did I tell you? I thought I wouldn't know a soul." As they went on deck after dinner, a pleasant-looking girl, standing near the companion doorway, came over to them. "Miss Brent? I thought it was you in the saloon. We met in Calcutta last cold weather at a tennis party of the Langleys. You had just got engaged to Martin Clifford." "Oh, of course," said Sybil vaguely. "I'm Myrtle Baker," said the girl, smiling. "My husband's just gone down to see if our small boy really has gone to sleep. He was terribly excited at going to bed in a bunk." Mr. Baker soon appeared, a shortish thickest man with vigorous black hair. Most of the passengers were now on deck, watching the passing points and clusters of light that marked the dark shore. The party moved over to stand by the rail. "Where are you bound for?" Mr. Baker asked Sonia. "Behar. Do you know it?" "She's dying to meet someone who does," said Sybil. "She doesn't know a thing about it herself and I've told her that no one will, except that it's inhabited by planters. No one civilized ever goes there." "Don't listen to her, Miss Latimer," said Mr. Baker with energy. "I believe she's the sort of girl who thinks Calcutta is India. I only haven't been to Behar myself because my firm works me so hard. There's sure to be some one on board who has, and I'll scour this ship till I find him for you." "May I save you the trouble?" said an amused voice. "I've been in Behar." Sonia turned to find herself facing a tall fair-haired young man, with a particularly attractive smile. (To be Continued)

There were about 1200 votes cast. This was a good showing for votes in those days, and especially when the mayor (Dr. McGinnis) had been elected by acclamation. Those elected for the 1924 council were:— E. L. Longmore, H. Charlebois, Geo. S. Drew, J. H. Bacon, F. M. Wallingford and J. Morrison. There were fourteen other candidates including:— T. Blackman, S. A. Boutin, J. P. Bartleman, A. J. Downie, Val English, T. F. King, Geo. Kenty, D. Laprairie, M. Maltais, J. E. Morin, N. McEachren, L. S. Newton, S. B. Rawlinson, E. Wadsworth. The public school trustees elected were:— C. G. Kemsley, E. H. Hill, and Mrs. A. J. Shephard. A dance held twenty years ago by the A.S.D. Club was referred to as an unusually pleasing one. The event was preceded by cards and other entertainment. There was a large attendance and as usual everybody had a happy time all evening. Figures given by The Advance twenty years ago showed that the payrolls of the mines of the Porcupine ran around \$20,000 a day. For the province the payroll of the mining industry totalled close to \$50,000 per day. Other statistics given showed that around \$40,000,000 was expended yearly for supplies, machinery, etc. "It looks like good business for the rest of the country," said The Advance. On Wednesday evening, Nov. 23rd, 1923, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Van Syckle, of Timmins, was the scene of a very pretty wedding when Rev. M. R. Hall united in marriage their only daughter, Dora Aleatha, to John G. Archer, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Archer, of Timms, formerly of North Bay. The Advance at the time gave a description of the decorations of the house, the music, the dresses, the gifts, etc. Mr. and Mrs. Archer left on a honeymoon tour of the South, after which they took up residence on Maple street. The death at the hospital in Timmins of David Oswald, of Schumacher, was a shock to wide circles of friends here twenty years ago. The late David Oswald had been on the Bank of Commerce staff at Schumacher and Timmins, later joining the staff of the McIntyre Mine. He was crushed by a piece of falling rock while at work. While making good recovery from the injuries thus sustained he developed pneumonia and died despite all that could be done for him. He was a member of the Schumacher church choir, the Timmins Male Chorus, the Caledonian Choir and other organizations, as well as being a member of the Schumacher Tennis Club and other groups of sports. He was very popular among all who knew him and greatly respected by everyone. The remains were taken to Toronto for interment, Frank Parker accompanying the body of his dead friend to the city. An article in The Advance twenty years ago gave a list of all the mayors and councils for Timmins from the time of the establishment of the town. The first four councils had been elected by acclamation. Four other acclamations had occurred in the history of the town up to 1923. The late W. H. Wilson had been mayor of Timmins by acclamation for the first five years in the town's history. There were only five elections in the story of the town up to 1923, and only three mayors, W. H. Wilson, J. P. McLaughlin and Dr. McInnis, up to that time.

Among the local and personal items in The Advance twenty years ago were the following:— "Mr. and Mrs. George Carson, of 460 Decarie Boulevard, Montreal, announce the engagement of their third daughter, Helen Mariam, to Fred, erick J. Wolno, of Timmins, son of W. J. Wolno, of Hamilton Ont., the wedding to take place quietly on the second of January, 1924." "H. Lafonde, of Pembroke, spent the past week in Timmins visiting his sister, Mrs. J. O. Kennedy, Tamarack street." "Born — In Timmins, on Saturday, Dec. 1st, 1923, to Mr. and Mrs. D. Laprairie — a son." "Mr. and Mrs. Geo. S. Drew were the hosts at a delightful party on Friday evening given in honor of Mrs. Drew's sister, Miss Pearl Hart. There was about twenty couples present and a very enjoyable evening was spent at bridge and dancing." "Mrs. Chittenden returned last week from a week's visit to her old home in Sudbury. She was accompanied here on her return by her mother, Mrs. Van Syckle, who will visit here for a few weeks." "J. G. Bridges, late of the Military School of Music, London, Eng., has opened a music studio at Prof. Schroeder's, 46 Balm-sam street north, and will teach the violin, mandolin, cornet trombone and all wind instruments and traps. He has been for some time a member of the Timmins Citizens' band, is a musician of outstanding ability and with a wide and varied experience in musical circles." "All will regret to learn of the serious illness of Mrs. F. C. Evans, of South Porcupine, who is at present in an Ottawa Hospital undergoing treatment. Mr. Evans was called to Ottawa some days ago on account of the illness of Mrs. Evans, and her sister, Mrs. Thos Hardy, of Timmins, also went down for the same reason. Latest reports from Ottawa are most favourable and innumerable friends here will hope for a continued improvement until Mrs. Evans recovers her health and strength."

Wishing to test the general knowledge of her class, the teacher was telling them how often we find things in pairs. "For instance," she said brightly, "you will generally find birds where there are trees, and worms where there is earth. Can anyone tell me what we might expect to find where there is fish?" Up spoke the bad boy of the class: "Chips, miss!" — Sudbury Star.

TRUE ENOUGH  
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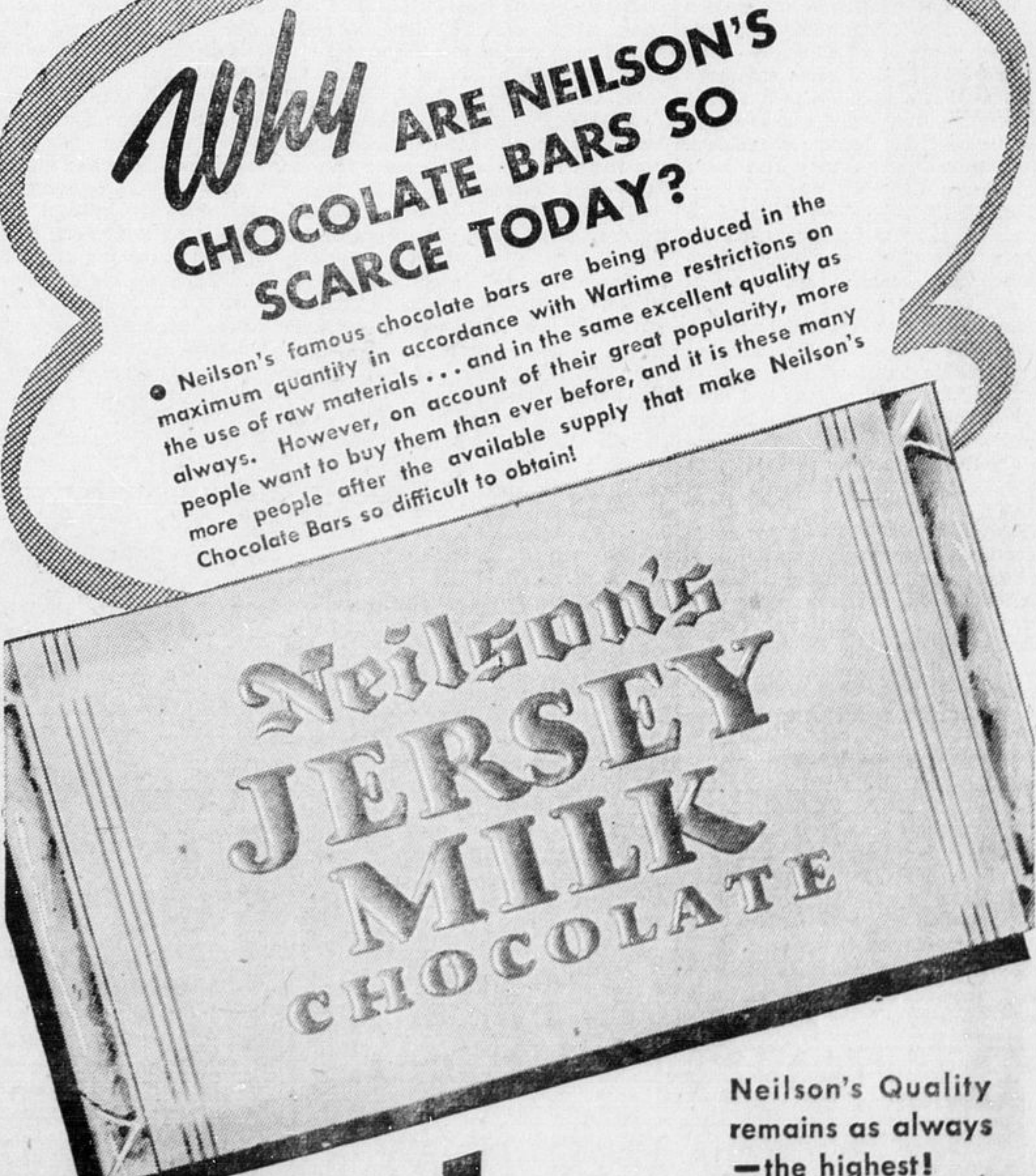


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Less Nut-cracker Music in Canada This Christmas  
Montreal, December 8. — Nut-cracker music will be less in evidence at Christmas festivities this year than in previous years, according to officials of the Canadian National Railways' freight department, in discussing a possible shortage in walnuts, Brazils, pecans and other favorite brands of the nut family, so much a part of the holi-

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Twenty Years Ago  
From the Porcupine Advance Files  
Attention was called twenty years ago to two places on the road to South End where repairs were badly needed for the public safety. In Whitney township Geo. D. Hamilton was elected reeve for 1924 by acclamation. The councillors elected on vote were Meesters, Howie, Mills, Young and Wilson. The Advance twenty years ago gave some space to reference to Cleaver township. A mining expert was quoted as saying that sooner or later Cleaver township would be recognized as even richer in promise than the main part of the camp. In the Dec. 8th issue of The Advance twenty years ago announcement was made of a Christmas treat for the school children. The treat included a free picture show and other entertainment at the New Empire theatre. It was noted as to be held on Dec. 21st, under the auspices of The Advance and the New Empire theatre. Rev. J. Marion Smith, of Emmanuel Baptist church, Toronto, preached at the anniversary services at the First Baptist church, Timmins, twenty years ago. There was not room enough for the crowds turning out to the services. He proved not only a powerful speaker, but also a singer of outstanding ability. At the election for councillors in the town of Timmins twenty years ago