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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 BRIERLY: A Deputy Commissioner of the Indian Civil Service, stationed at Siswa, 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 XI GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

When Mr. Gedge returned and heard of the crisis during his absence, he only said, "I must go and see Mahabir Singh and tell him I am ready to go to gaol for my forgetfulness."

Sonia looked at him helplessly. What was the use of mentioning the worry and suspense of the past few days?

"Mr. Macfarlane and Nursing Lal both thought his son might be trying to make things difficult for you, for some scheme of his own," she ventured to say.

"Possibly. I don't know the young man as I do his father."

While waiting for Mr. Gedge's authority, Sonia and Nursing Lal had gone into every means of raising quickly the amount due to Mahabir Singh, and had found it could be done if she used the money Mrs. Gedge had left in her hands.

Mr. Gedge objected, but Sonia was firm.

"I can put it in the pool again when you've had time to get in the rents owing to you. Aunt Emily meant it for emergencies and this is an emergency."

She had burnt her boats, but felt satisfied and determined.

Mr. Gedge's interview was pleasant and friendly, with no mention of legal proceedings. Sonia was left wondering whether it was he who saw more clearly than other people in refusing to believe in motives less simple than his own; or would the result have been different if he had not taken Mahabir Singh the money provided by the work of Nursing Lal and herself?

Her next step was to ask him if she might take a regular part in the work of Mysore. She did not say Mr. Brierly had suggested it. Instead, she explained her own need of more occupation.

"Certainly, if you'd like it, my dear," Uncle Justin said. "It's very kind of you to think of helping me."

After that, life became much more active and interesting. She was often at Dumraon, to ask advice and borrow books on soil and crops. Just now, while the parched earth gasped for the approaching rains, cultivation stood still, but Mr. Macfarlane had told her what country crops could be sown after the rains began, for a quick return in cash.

Meanwhile, she had enough to do, for Nursing Lal was coaching her in the intricacies of village accounts.

Each village had its official accountant, the patwari, and every statement of every patwari had to be checked by inside knowledge of the raiyats' affairs. It was a rule that no patwari should have land round the village for which he worked. If one of them seemed zealous in supporting the claims of ancient widows or other feeble persons to the best fields of the village, it was wise to find out, if possible, what his private arrangements with these people might be. Raiyats whose excuses for owing rent he earnestly supported were frequently his own relatives. Those whom he accused might produce some account of an old quarrel which gave a new twist to the endless detective story.

SONG IN THE RICE FIELDS

Early in June a few days of sudden, intolerable heat ended in a tearing windstorm and the first blessed down-pour. The rain fell steadily for three

days, with grey skies and a cool breeze, reviving life.

Women began planting out the rice seedlings which had been growing in scattered emerald patches among the bare fields. They paddled in mud and water with their saris tucked up to their knees and often wet through with rain. Their movements were rhythmic and graceful, and they sang long plaintive songs.

"What are they singing about?" Sonia asked Mr. Gedge as they passed one of these gangs. "It sounds so sad."

He listened attentively, and said, "It appears to be an account of how Nursing Lal eloped with their patwari's wife."

"Nursing Lal?" said Sonia incredulously.

"A pleasing fancy, that's all. At this work they often compose songs for the benefit of anyone passing. This one is meant to divert me."

Ronnie, who had written regularly to Sonia, all these months, had often urged her to come down for a visit to Calcutta. Now he wrote:

"I saw Myrtle Baker at the Saturday Club yesterday, and promised I would find out when you were coming to stay with them. Please come soon, Sonia. I can't get on any longer without seeing you. There was a girl yesterday with a voice just a little like yours, which seemed to make it suddenly much worse. You can't say I haven't been patient."

This was not Ronnie's usual, effervescent style. The change forced Sonia to stop and think. He had never really accepted her refusal to marry him. She had not been clear in her own mind when she made it, or for some time after. Now she knew she would never marry him, though she could not say just when or how the change came. She would have to tell him.

She had often thought of asking him to Mysore, and it occurred to her now. Her next thought ruled it out. Better end this quickly, even if it seemed harder to him and though she wanted to see him again.

She took a long time in the evening over that dismal letter and her thoughts followed its journey. Life was not so gay that she could easily do without Ronnie.

In this subdued mood she had a letter from Mr. Brierly, reminding her of their proposed expedition to their old home. He asked if she would like to come before the rains had made the weather steamy and the roads uncertain.

"When she told Mr. Gedge, he said: 'Why didn't you tell me you wanted so much to see the place? Ask Brierly if he can come here for the night. You could start early together, and I'd like a talk with him.'"

It was rare for him to express a wish to see anyone.

A STRANGE EXCITEMENT

The talk lasted late into the night that Mr. Brierly came. Sonia was out of her depth most of the time. He and her uncle seemed to know their way in a Behar going back 2,000 years; a country of great kings and famous pilgrimages, whose monuments still stood and stirred them to endless arguments and speculations. She began to understand why rents and cultivation were hardly real to Uncle Justin.

While the light was still grey, she and Philip Brierly sat out on their long drive to Khyri, the Piggotts' factory, where they were going to call on the way to Sureya.

"The day is going to be just what I hoped it would be," he said. "One of those soft grey days, almost like England."

"There are rather too many of them in England," Sonia remarked.

"You won't think that if you stay out here for a few hot weathers."

After a moment, he said "You're not going away just yet, are you?"

"No. I couldn't leave Uncle Justin, and I'm much too interested in the work. Thank you for putting the idea in my head that I could do it."

"It was your own tenacity that made me think of it. You were so severely businesslike when you came to see me about that case."

"That's just what I thought about you."

They both laughed. The drive seemed quite short, after all.

At Khyri they had a welcome even warmer than usual, and the inevitable tea. When Philip said they must go on, Mr. Piggott made a jovial fuss.

"I can tell her much more about Sureya than she'll see of it now. You go and take a look at your school. Brierly, if you must, and come back for a meal. We'll look after Sonia."

Mrs. Piggott quelled him with a look which made Sonia want to laugh and say, "It's quite all right—there's nothing to be thankful about."

Philip told her when they were in the old Sureya dihat. She didn't recognize that part at all. Sudden growing excitement made her feel quite cold. She didn't know what she expected to meet out of the past.

As they crossed a little river, she said: "I remember this. There's a big bamboo plantation, and when you get round the corner, you see the house."

Philip said: "The house is gone, you know," but she hardly heard him.

They turned the corner. The thick bamboos were on the left of the road, and on the right, among ricefields, a big hummocky stretch of grass. In its centre was a shapeless, overgrown mound, and beyond that, one old spreading tree, shading a well with a broken masonry edge.

Philip stopped the car and they sat silent, looking at it. Sonia could hardly see it for the tears in her eyes.

Philip glanced at her.

"We'll go on. It was stupid of me to bring you here."

"No it isn't that. Let's see it," she said.

She couldn't explain to him just now that her tears were not for the ruins, but came from the old tangle of emotions that always rose with any vivid reminder of her childhood.

They walked between two broken stumps of brick which had been gateposts, along the drive, just traceable by the different colour of its grass. A bush or two grew irrelevantly beside it, with tiny red flowers.

"Look those are hibiscus," said Philip.

"They've survived, but the flowers are so small now, you can hardly recognize them."

"They used to grow all along the drive. The mound it where the house was."

"Don't go too near—there are sure to be snakes among the old bricks."

They walked to the well, and she sat down on its edge.

"Now I know where I am. I used to love looking down this well. The tree was here then. That's two things the same anyway. I wonder why they let them be."

"Both useful. They wouldn't cut down such a fine neem tree. The oil from its berries is healing. Now turn round and look at something else that's the same."

She followed his look to the northern horizon, where a wall of misty blue with a jagged edge stood up from the plain. Above it, just defined against the pale sky was a line of sharp, pearly snow peaks.

"The Himalayas don't change, do they? You must have seen them like that often. They begin to be visible up here when it's clear enough."

"How could I have forgotten that I might see them to-day?" she said.

"Now I don't mind about anything. Let's have our picnic here, looking at them."

"I was afraid you weren't going to feel like a picnic at all," Philip said with relief.

When they were leaving, she took a last look from the car.

"You won't wish you hadn't come?" said Philip.

"Oh, no. I couldn't have been content till I saw it. Now I have. I know it doesn't matter that it's all gone. I've had the best of it, and no one can take that away from me."

"You're a little like your uncle, aren't you?" he said smiling.

He left her at the Bluetts, with whom she was staying the night at Siswa, and returned later for dinner. Dr. and Mrs. Bluetts took a friendly interest in their expedition, and Philip and Sonia gave an account of it. The account sounded quite complete, but neither of them touched on the real experiences of the day.

(To be continued)

Funeral at Cochrane of Late Chas. J. Gardner

Recent references were made in The Advance to the death in Toronto at Christie street hospital of Mr. Charles J. Gardner. Last week's issue of The Cochrane Northland Post had the following paragraphs in reference to the funeral at Cochrane on Saturday, Feb. 12:

"A large number of townspeople gathered in St. Paul's United Church on Saturday afternoon in tribute to the memory of Stoker Charles J. Gardner, whose sudden death occurred on February 2.



A WEEKLY EDITOR LOOKS AT Ottawa

Written specially for the weekly newspapers of Canada (By Jim Greenblatt)

Welcomed by the Bench and Bar when he presided over the Supreme Court for the first time on February 1st, Chief Justice Rinfret said the new feature "Might bring new relationships between the individual and the state which would call for development of new concepts of jurisprudence by the Bench and Bar."

The Swedish Minister to Canada still has no headquarters in Ottawa other than rooms at the Chateau Laurier. Still in the "idea stage" consideration for which was recommended by the reconstruction committee, is a national zoological garden for Ottawa.

Because they were fed up last session on the difficult eating problem in the capital, Chas. Johnson and Robert Fair, Social Credit members from Alberta, brought their wives along this time.

A standing committee of the House will work on simplifying and speeding up business. The Munitions Department plans buying 30 buses in the United States for resale to essential transportation services, with deliveries likely for 1944 or early in 1945.

The faintest star yet known, a mere 114,465,559,600,000 miles away though reported by some larger scopes, can't be seen by the Dominion Observatory in Ottawa with its telescope lens only 15-inch.

The low death rate of less than 25 per 1,000 Canadian soldiers during the official malaria season in the Mediterranean area can be traced, Canadian Army officials say, to Mepacrine Tablets. Over two million of the little yellow tablets were issued. These are among the little things you don't hear much about in the big flurry of war.

Recently movie big-wigs were in Ottawa to preview "Madame Curie" for Dean C. J. Mackenzie, Acting President, National Research Council, and staff at the National Research building. Plans are about ready for the gala premiere of the great film in Ottawa this month.

Stars are, of course, Greer Garson and the Canadian-born Walter Pidgeon. Canada is now the world's largest producer of radium, so we are especially grateful to the Curies. The government is lending its name to the premiere. Walter Pidgeon will be remembered for his help in putting over Canadian Victory Loans.

This should help for the post-war. Under Order-in-Council the Department of Labour now has authority to extend assistance to provincial governments to pep up apprenticeship training.

This is designed to relieve in any way the responsibility, primarily, of industry and trade unions. An apprentice is defined as: "a person at least 16 years who enters into a written agreement with an employer to learn a skilled trade requiring a minimum of 4,000 hours continuous employment and which provides a programme of practical experience and related technical instruction for such person."

For the fiscal year 1944-1945, the Dominion fund available for provinces is not to go higher than \$250,000, but for later fiscal years is to be raised to a million dollars a year. Suitable trade training for young folk, is the idea behind it all.

You help me and I'll help you. Munitions & Supply reveals that the temporary restrictions on the delivery of coal have been suspended in the four western provinces. It has become possible to ship greater amounts of western domestic coal to shortage areas in nearby western States to relieve pressure on their mines.

But in view of our still heavy requirements in Eastern Canada for coal from the United States this reverse movement in western Canada is quite a pleasing development.

Of interest to farmers, etc.: Ontario's Agricultural College reports that many cases have been encountered where piglets had died, due to having received excessive doses of iron given for the prevention of anaemia. Sheep shearing comes about the latter part of May in the West, a little earlier in the East, and the Department urges those having shearing equipment to coddle it properly.

served on ships from Halifax and Newfoundland.

"He was much interested in sports, and during his residence here won popularity as a hockey player. He also played hockey in North Bay."

"Surviving are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James J. Gardner, of Cochrane, one brother, Bombardier Jim Gardner, now stationed at Victoria, B.C., and five sisters, Mrs. J. Hamilton, of Schumacher; Mrs. William Tolek, of Sudbury; and Mrs. Cecil Ramsay, of Sault Ste. Marie. Mrs. Charles Knight of North Bay and Mrs. A. Walker, Montreal."

"The body was brought to Cochrane under escort from Toronto and lay in St. Paul's United Church until the time of the funeral. The service was conducted by Rev. J. A. C. Kell. Pallbearers were Joe Bernier, Paul Bertrand, George Gorman and Neil MacLeod of Cochrane; George Monahan, of Timmins and Jim Hamilton of Schumacher."

perly, owing to metals shortage; those who intend to purchase same next spring should order without delay, and it is necessary to have a permit from the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. . . . Starting plants early enough in the Spring by sowing seed indoors in window boxes or hotbeds is important, and as a rule from six to eight weeks prior to time when such plants can be set out in the field will be about right, says the expert at Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa. . . . The Wartime Food Corporation has re-established central control over shipment of potatoes from Eastern production areas, similar to that prevailing in 1943. Carload lots will be diverted to deficiency areas and allocated by the foods officer, or local representative, at point of delivery.

A little of this and that. Restrictions on certain metals used for builders' finishing materials like cabinet locks, padlocks have been lifted, and this now applies to glycerine as well. . . . It is announced that all troops who moved to Kiska last August are back in Canada. . . . National Selective Service regulations, amended, now provide that all civilians who were required to change their occupations for more important jobs will eventually be back in their original jobs if they want to do so.

Throughout the nation, in a large some of them will be needed in the ting with the educational campaign launched by the Division of Venereal Disease, Department of Pensions and Health. In Saskatchewan, for instance, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, with its many affiliations is spearheading the attack and organizing committees everywhere. Undisguised facts of the terrific scourge which exists everywhere are going to be brought into the open, in a way never before attempted, and it is hoped the cold, stark light of publicity will prove the old adage that "Prevention is better than cure."

A brief summary of some of the most potent features of the James Report on Reconstruction tabled in the House of Commons, includes the suggestion that every private enterprise be encouraged to develop a long-range programme of capital expenditure; and the recognition that labour has a tremendous stake in the national economy. The Report doubts the merit of consumers' sales tax. Controls designed to restrict consumption should be abandoned as soon as possible at the end of the war but the committee feels that price controls, some of them, will be needed in the transition period. They think wheat should be made a free-trade commodity throughout the world and that there should be promotion in increased export of Canadian wheat and its products: new markets for farm products should be developed, and research on utilization thereof developed. It is suggested that there be training of 15,000 men a year in the next five years, and a Dominion Forest Act to extend forest research and management. Visioned is creation of a National Development Board to co-ordinate construction projects. These and many other things give us a fleeting glimpse of what may be after this war. Some of the features may not be implemented, but we're making a start now by planning and thinking, as people in the communities,—in the smaller sphere of things—are doing.

Greatest Untold Story of German Ship Scharnhorst

Clipped from London Dispatch by George Wallingford.

In his letter elsewhere in this issue, George Wallingford, formerly sports editor of The Advance until his enlistment, refers to a clipping which he thought of interest. George was always able to pick the items of interest. As his letter shows he could write them too. Here is the clipping he enclosed in his letter:

The Greatest Untold Story of the Scharnhorst

A valuable Allied convoy is now unloading in Russian ports, and the German battleship Scharnhorst, which set out to blast it from the water, is herself lying on the sea bed. But it is not generally remembered that once before the Scharnhorst went out on such an errand, and according to the Germans sank 22 ships in one convoy. The reason why she did not sink the entire convoy—a vastly greater number—has never been printed. But here is the fantastic though strongly vouchered-for account which was told at the time by ships captains who escaped.

It happened in March 1941. The Scharnhorst intercepted an Allied convoy in the Atlantic and one by one merchantmen were hit, set on fire, and left sinking—though probably not to the German estimate.

It soon became obvious to the gallant men of the convoy that unless something happened quickly there was no reason why the Scharnhorst should not go on sending the entire convoy to the bottom.

But something did happen. Suddenly a great spout of black smoke poured upon the horizon. The Scharnhorst's commander saw it, gave the order to disengage—and fled. The story of why she fled became the current joke on the lower deck of the British Navy.

This is the story the sailors tell: The hero of the occasion was a dirty old Greek steamer. The captain's name was Demitrius. Whether in the Arctic or the Tropics, it was declared, he always wore a seedy leather golf-jacket, a very greasy pair of grey slacks, and Carpet slippers made of real Turkey carpeting.

He lived on the bridge of his ship—

an ancient British-built coal-burner which had long lain idle until the captain and a syndicate of his family had bought her. His wife and mother-in-law both had honoured quarters on the bridge with him. His uncle, a seafaring man who lost all his teeth but none of his command of the foulest words in half a dozen languages, was first mate and the uncle's son was second. The rest of the crew was made up mainly of the men of a vast family of poor relations from Crete.

The ship, in fact, was run more by hard words and family feuds than any impartial orders.

The reek of garlic mingled with other domestic smells to give the ship an unenviable distinction even when lying to leeward in the howling Atlantic gale.

Anyway Demitrius sailed his ship with the Atlantic convoy. As sometimes happens with old coal-burning vessels long past their prime, it was difficult for the family in the engine-room to keep up the knots that the family on the bridge declared she could do. And from merely being out of station in the convoy she became a straggler, lagging more and more astern each day. Finally, the day dawned when the captain on the bridge could see nothing at all of the convoy ahead of him.

He was alone in the Atlantic when suddenly a noise, ominously like the reverberations of guns, rolled over the water towards him.

The good Greek captain all at once felt very unprotected. Another fearsome roll of cannonading was heard. A family conference there and then decided it would be better to try to make the protection of the convoy even at the risk of the boilers bursting.

The deck hands were hustled down into the stokehold and plied the fires lustily. A pillar of filthy black smoke mounted heavenward. And—

The Scharnhorst busy at her "kill," saw it. What could there be on the seas, short of a British battleship mounting 14-in. guns, which could be hurrying to this scene of destruction so urgently?

The Scharnhorst abruptly ceased fire against victims on which she was moving.

BOY SCOUT WEEK FEBRUARY 20-26. This Generation Is Winning the War Help the Next Generation to Win the Peace. Includes illustration of a boy scout.

Commandos March Better on Tea Than on Water. Commandos march better on tea than on water. This fact has been demonstrated by an official test recently carried out in Great Britain. A Canadian battalion was undergoing a 12-days course of battle training. The last six days were devoted mainly to marching, and during the period the foot-sloggers covered more than 280 miles. As an experiment, three out of four platoons were allowed to get all the water they wanted. The member of the fourth platoon were kept entirely off water and were served only with tea. Their "water platoons" made good use of their water bottles, but the "tea platoon" was the only one to finish the course intact. Which only goes to show that there must be something in the soldier's traditional liking for "a cup of rosig lee." —Extract from the "Tea and Rubber Mail."

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SILLY QUESTION When a British sailor at the Hollywood Canteen complained about a sore throat, a solicitous hostess asked: "Have you ever tried gargling with salt water?" "You're asking me—who's been tormented three times?" —Powassan News

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