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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 schoolmistress. 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.

TIME TO GO

By the simple and backward standards of the Behar community, a man and girl who took pains to meet very often must be in the verge of engagement. Philip and Sonia, announcing theirs, were mildly surprised to find it not unexpected. Mr. Gedge was evidently pleased. It did not occur to him that Sonia should be worried over the prospect of leaving him alone. Through the weeks of confusion after the earthquake, he had worked as if nothing could defeat him. It was clear now that he had been spending his reserves. He looked, suddenly, bent and shaky, and the arm which had been badly bruised in the collapse of the office remained weak. "Seemed to have no regrets for his own property. Once, when he and Sonia, who now lived in a small bamboo house, were looking at the wreck of the old indigo vat, he said, "It's as well they're gone, I didn't like seeing them stand idle in the season for manufacturing indigo. "You liked doing indigo, didn't you?" said Sonia. "Yes."

land for building my house." "Your house?" she said, with a shock of dismay. "Yes. A little shack like this one. When you marry, I shall sell up Mysapore." "Uncle Justin, you can't go so far away from everyone." "I'm far away already," he said simply. "There's no one in the district now who came till long after me. If you hadn't been here, I should have gone when Emily died. I've always wanted to live where I could see the hills." "Will you have enough to live on?" "I shall need very little. After this is sold, there should be enough altogether for that and something for you." "I don't want anything. Philip's salary is quite adequate." "Emily would have wanted you to have some money of your own." "This prudence for her, so unlike him, so true to Aunt Emily, made Sonia want to laugh, or cry. As he was determined in his trip, she could only see that Hosain took all he might need in case of malaria, and impress on him to send a message to her if Mr. Gedge were not well. She suggested going with him herself, but it was no use. "Go and enjoy yourself at Siswa. I shan't be long away." She spent the week-end with the Bluetts whose house, one of the two or three still standing, was now midway between the ruins of the old station and the new one which was growing up, on the other side of the lake around the polo ground. The following week passed without word from Mr. Gedge. Sonia had promised Philip and the Bluetts to go back on Saturday if he had not returned. Early on Saturday morning, she went to give out the day's grain, and was returning across the compound when she saw Philip coming to meet her. As soon as she was near him, she said "Uncle Justin?" "I've had a wire from Hosain. Sahib ill. Come quickly. He evidently reckoned on my driving out to you. How soon can you be ready? I told the servants to pack bedding and some food, which we can pick up on our way. You needn't take anything but your clothes."

TO CHILDHOOD SCENES

Before noon, they reached a desolate little junction on the northern railway line, which, to this point, ran with the border of Behar and Nepal. From near here the border went sharply North West towards the lowest range of hills and the forest on their slopes. A branch line and a road struck up to Bhika Thori, at the foot of one of the few routes into the guarded land of Nepal. The road then took them up into shaggy, uneven grassland with a tree here and there. Rocks cropped up in it and there were pebbles by the road. In spite of her anxiety and the weariness of the long, hot drive, she felt the little thrill which a new scene always gave her. In front, the wooded hills blocked out the horizon. The road dipped and brought them suddenly into an open

hollow at the very foot of the hill, with a broad, clear stream running over sand and pebbles, a village beyond and on the nearside, all by itself, a queer little white house built on timber piles with a ladder up to the wooden veranda. "The resthouse," said Philip. He did not need to tell her. The house and the valley were one of the pictures from her childhood. Hosain was up in the veranda. He had seen them, but did not come to meet them. As they hurried from the car to the house, he glanced through the doorway behind him. "Hosain, how is the Sahib?" said Sonia, from below. "By the mercy of God, he is living." "That was all that could be said. In a little, bare whitewashed room, with a plank floor which creaked under their feet, he was lying, covered with a brown blanket, on a narrow camp bed. His eyes were closed. "This face," Sonia thought, "is a mask. He isn't here at all." Philip stooped and felt under the bedclothes for her wrist. "Since the fever went," said Hosain in a whisper, "he is cold, though I have kept blankets on him." "How did he get ill?" Philip asked. "Two days ago, he went out in the early morning on the forest road. He did this every morning, returning towards sunset. That evening he did not return as usual. Before darkness came, I went to look for him. I knew all the ways he went, and I took the way to the hut of the Yogi. I met the Yogi coming here, with four men carrying the Sahib on a litter." "What Yogi?" "The whom the Sahib has known for a long time. He lives, when he comes here, in a hut in the forest, about two miles to the north. The Sahib was with him when the fever came on, very strongly. Seeing how ill he was, the Yogi brought him back and stayed to watch with me all that night. He sent the telegram for me from the station and returned again for last night, to let me sleep a little." "The telegram took over twenty-four hours," Philip said to Sonia. "I suppose one or two stationmasters on the line passed it on at their convenience, curse them!" "Can't we do anything for him?" she said. "We can fill some bottles with hot water and put them round him, to try and get him a bit warmer. There's nothing else, till Bluetts comes." "The fever was like a fire burning him up," said Hosain. "It broke only this morning before dawn. He has not known my face since he came back." He was weeping quietly. "You go and sleep now, Hosain," said Sonia. "You are tired out." Philip's servant, who had come with them, prepared a meal and served it on a table in the veranda. They ate it in turn, one staying in the room. Then Philip went to telegraph from the station for an Indian doctor from a place up the line, in case Dr. Bluetts was much delayed. After dark, Hosain came back, looking a little less haggard. Sonia and he were filling fresh bottles from a kettle on a spirit stove, when she saw him look to the doorway, where the curtain had been looped up for more air. His face lighted and he bent in a deep salaam, both hands to his forehead. THE FUTURE TOGETHER The dim light of the hurricane lantern, standing on a table near the bed, fell on a tall, gaunt figure in the saffron cotton robes of a religious devotee. His close-cropped hair was grey and his face had deep lines to the corners of the mouth. It was a worn face, but the eyes were intensely alive and dominant. Philip appeared in the veranda behind him. He turned and raised his hands, with finger-tips joined, in answer to Philip's greetings. "Hosain has told us how much we are indebted to you," said Philip, using the terms of respect. "I came to find if the Sahib's spirit had returned to him," said Yogi, in a level and gentle voice. He came nearer to the foot of the bed, and looked down on it for a moment. "He is no longer here," he said, without changing his tone. "Now you have come, Hosain will have help. The Sahib has no more need of me." He went as swiftly as he had come. In the clear moonlight they saw him cross the little valley and the stream, till he was gone into the shadows of the upward road. It was nearly midnight when Mr. Gedge's pulse quietly stopped. Hosain crouching at the foot of the bed, laid his forehead at his master's feet and broke into sobs. "Come, Hosain," said Philip, raising the old man gently by his arm. "You have served him faithfully. I am going to give you some medicine now to make you sleep. When he had seen Hosain settled with his bedding in one of the empty rooms Philip treated Sonia likewise. "There's no use in our both staying up," he said. It was only just light when she woke and dressed. The morning was hot and still. No one was moving in the valley when she came out on the veranda where Philip was reading at the table. "You look better," he said, as he kissed her. "Let's go down to that stream," she said. "I must get out of the house." As they stood watching its quick flowing, she asked, "Philip, do you think he used to come here to see the Yogi?" "Perhaps. I thought it was the road that drew him." "Why the road?" "It's an old, old way of pilgrims to the place where Buddha has died. They came from Nepal and even China through this pass. On the Behar side, there are still three of the pillars which King Asoka built to mark his pilgrimage, over 2,000 years ago. Your uncle only used to talk to me about the arch-

TEN YEARS AGO IN TIMMINS

From data in the Porcupine Advance Files

At the meeting of the town council Thursday evening, February 22nd, 1934, Mayor R. Richardson presided and all the members of the council were present. Mr. Humphries was the spokesman for a delegation asking for an answer to a letter sent the council in regard to non-contributory unemployment insurance. Councillor Belc brought up the matter of the dismissal of the five members of the police force and asked why they had been discharged. He pointed out that it was understood that there was to be a new deal and all were to have a fair chance. Chief Rich was called forward and said that he had been given the right to root out all who did not fit into his plans for a re-organized force. He had intended to keep on all the old men, and had explained to them that they would carry on if loyal. He ignored the stories he heard and investigated cases for himself and found in some cases his confidence had been betrayed. He was not finding fault with the morals or character of the men, but they did not fit in to his plans. At the council meeting ten years ago, in referring to the acceptance of the resignation of H. R. Channen, assessment commissioner for the past seven years, Councillor D. Laprairie suggested that the total assessment for this year, as made last year was \$400,000.00 less than for the previous year, and this despite the fact that there were many new buildings erected during the year between the two assessments. From the councillor's statement many were inclined to gather the impression that there had been errors in the assessment as made the last year, or that some part of the assessable property had been omitted or unduly reduced. When asked in regard to the matter, H. R. Channen, assessment commissioner, said that there had been no errors or undue reductions in the assessment roll as made by him, and instead of being a decrease there was an actual increase of \$153,705.00. The total property assessment for 1933 was \$7,987,495.00. For 1934 the total property assessment was \$8,141,190.00. The following appeared in The Advance ten years ago: "Believing that Timmins and district are on the eve of great developments, the recently organized body of Timmins merchants are planning activities for the benefit of the town. They are considering a "Business Boosters" bureau, and industrial and publicity bureau to find and interest new industries for Timmins, and a "Better Business Bureau" for the establishment of better ethical relationships and standards. This will be in addition to the supervising and sponsoring the Porcupine Credit Association. The following appeared in part in The Advance of March 1st, 1934: "Last week a rink from Timmins won the noted Van Italie curling trophy for the year in competition starting last Thursday at Kirkland Lake and concluding on Saturday. The Timmins rink played with each of the other six rinks, winning five games and losing one and thus tying with New Liskeard. In the play-off Timmins captured the honours and the trophy for the season. The Timmins rink winning the trophy this year are: "C. Abrams, W. Rinn, J. R. Walker and I. A. Solomon, skip. The trophy was presented to the Kirkland Club last year by the Van Italie Co. of New York. It is for yearly competition. The Solomon rink is receiving all sorts of congratulations for this notable win." There was a good attendance at the regular weekly luncheon of the Timmins Kiwanis Club on Monday, February 26th, 1934, and the menu provided by the Empire hotel was an excellent one. Vice-President Arch Gillies was in the chair, and several visitors were welcomed, among them being Billy Brown who presided at the piano in place of Secretary W. H. Wilson who was still confined to his home following injury to his hand from frost bites sustained in the severe cold at the time. The speakers for the day were Gordon H. Gauthier, president of the Timmins-Porcupine Law Association, and Dean Kester, a prominent local barrister. Ten years ago there was very general

regret among wide circles in the death of Mrs. P. McAleavey, of 9 Borden ave. Timmins, who died at Workington Hospital, Cumberland, England, on Wednesday, Feb. 28th, 1934. Mrs. McAleavey was away on a holiday to the Old Land when death came. Word of her death was received here by cable. Among the local and personal items appearing in The Advance ten years ago were the following: "Miss A. Shields, of Schumacher, held a party Wednesday evening, Feb. 28th, entertaining the Catholic Women's League. The evening was spent in playing cards. First prize was won by Mrs. J. Fournier and the consolation prize by Mrs. G. Byers. Mrs. H. Smith won the door prize." "Gordon Black, manager of F. O'Hearn & Co's office here, was operated on last week at St. Mary's hospital for appendicitis and his hosts of friends will be pleased to know he is making the best of progress to recovery." "The following letter from South Porcupine to J. M. Belanger, secretary of the Timmins Curling Club, from Maxwell Smith, secretary of the South Porcupine Curling Club speaks for itself. The letter reads: "Please accept our challenge for Englehart Cup on Friday evening. Two teams are being arranged. Congratulations on winning the Italie trophy."

Rouyn Boys Go to Reform School for Vandalism

Two Rouyn lads, 12 and 14 years old respectively, were sentenced to reform school, one for two years and the other for three years, when convicted last week of serious vandalism. The boys were playing with snowballs near a house, the occupants of which were absent at the time. The lads first succumbed to the temptation of breaking a window or two. Next, they decided to enter the house and ended up by doing damage of amount \$150.00. They damaged the walls and ceiling, turned furniture upside down, broke a stove, threw linens and utensils all over the place, and spread cement, sugar and molasses around the house. The magistrate very properly considered the lads went far beyond boyish pranks and he dealt with them accordingly.

Another Welsh Worker Winning Fame as Singer

That well-known Welshman, Mr. T. Thomas, of Timmins, who is always keenly interested in anything Welsh or in anything musical — and everything Welsh is sure to be musical — found double interest in a recent issue of "Illustrated," a magazine published at London, England. "Illustrated," which as its name implies, is largely given over to pictures, publishes many photographs of Howard Jones, a fitter in the Ablon Colliery, Pontypridd, Wales, who is winning fame as a singer. There are two full pages of photos showing this worker singing underground for the pleasure of his fellow workers, who delight in his fine voice and his pleasing expression. Mr. Thomas himself worked at Pontypridd before coming to Canada, and he says that nearly everyone there has a true ear for music and if they acclaim Howard Jones as a singer, then he must be a good vocalist. "This is borne out by the fact that he is in constant demand for special engagements at events not only in Pontypridd, but all through the district and beyond. "Illustrated" points out that this Welsh worker promises to win high fame by deserving it. He catches a train once a week to go up to London for singing lessons. He makes this weekly trip of 350 miles for an hour's singing with Maizo, the impresario who has trained so many stage stars. He gets back at midnight and goes back to work the next day at 7 a.m., often working overtime to offset the days lost travelling to and from London for that hour's tuition in singing. He is popular with his fellow workers because of his outstanding musical talents, and esteemed by the bosses at the mine because he is so good a workman at his trade.

Fireside Club Enjoys Interesting Talk on Education

Pleasant Programme at Meeting Held Last Week. Last week's business and programme meeting of the Fireside Club in the basement of the United Church was a very interesting one. Mrs. W. H. Burnes presided. The various conversers gave reports that were of special interest. The Red Cross report showed 30 articles completed in the month. Arrangements were made for a supper meeting on March 20th. Numbers by Mrs. D. Coombs, Miss E. Austin, Miss E. Richardson and Miss T. Williams was much appreciated, as were also two numbers on the piano by Mr. H. Treneer. Miss H. Carthy's address on "Education Phase of Post-War World," was both interesting and valuable. Mr. Treneer led the sing-song for the evening. Mrs. Gordon extended the thanks of the club to those who had taken part in the programme. The event closed with a social hour.

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Motorists! Apply NOW for your New Gasoline Licenses and Ration Coupon Books On March 31, the present gasoline licenses and ration coupon books will expire. After that date no gasoline will be sold except on the presentation of a 1944-45 ration book. In his own interests, every vehicle owner is asked to apply at once for a new license and ration coupon book for each of his vehicles. Application forms must be completed in detail. Commencing April 1, under the 1944-45 rationing plan, the operation of which will be basically the same as that now in effect, all non-commercial vehicle owners will again be allowed a basic "AA" gasoline license and ration coupon book, containing 40 units for a passenger car, or 16 for a motorcycle. Similarly, owners of vehicles eligible for a "Special" category, who can prove their need, will be granted an extra vocational allowance, fixed in advance for the year ending March 31, 1945. In determining the extra allowance — which will be measured to individual needs — the previous category and mileage of the car will not necessarily be an important consideration. The extra vocational coupons will again be issued in books labelled "Special", and each book will contain not more than 60 units. To permit constant review of the needs of each category applicant, only one "Special" book, or portion thereof, will be issued at a time. The Oil Controller also has the right to refuse any application for a "Special" category, or to suspend any ration coupon book for an infraction of the regulations. The shortage of gasoline is still acute. Do not apply for a "Special" category unless your need is urgent. Gasoline for commercial vehicles will again be rationed. To assure themselves sufficient gasoline to carry on normal business activities after March 31, operators of commercial vehicles are urged to complete at once and in detail the required application for each of their vehicles. On and after April 1, service station attendants will not accept gasoline ration coupons unless the license plate number of the motor vehicle for which they were issued is written in ink on each coupon. Every motor vehicle must also display on its windshield a 1944-45 sticker indicating the category of the coupon book submitted at the time of the purchase. If the owner of a motor vehicle sells, transfers or disposes of it in any way, it is his obligation to see that the gasoline license and ration coupon book for that vehicle is returned immediately to the nearest Regional Oil Control Office. To obtain a gasoline license and ration coupon book, secure an application form at your nearest Post Office. Study the form and follow carefully the instructions contained therein. When you receive your 1944-45 gasoline ration book, guard it carefully. Do not leave it in your car. If, because of your negligence, it is lost or stolen, it may not be replaced. THE DEPARTMENT OF MUNITIONS AND SUPPLY Honourable C. D. HOWE, Minister CANADA IS SHORT OF GASOLINE - USE YOUR COUPONS SPARINGLY