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Dhru Bridge  
Bengal  
18th Oct. 98

no 26

My dear Pippa

The chief amusement  
I had at Simla was going to  
see Dick in the part of Uncle  
William in "the Home Secretary".  
He was called Mr. Thorpe Didsbury  
and was the doddering old hus-  
band of the fast lady. He was  
a most beautiful combination  
of Uncle William and Lytton  
~~as the~~ in his wondrous performance  
of the ancient party in La Bou-  
jee. Among the other perform-  
ers was Mrs Flood hurraay  
(the H.H.) who I am glad to

Say was extremely feeble.

After the Home Secretary they had the Mountebanks - Grace was to have been the waxworks Ophelia but unluckily had a bad sore throat so couldn't sing - Her part was taken by Miss Bensford Lovett daughter of General de: who is a retired R.S. who lives at Simla -

Charlie & Aggie were also there and many pals, particularly Mr. & Mrs. Blythe whom I once stayed with in Kutehari. Unluckily I only discovered them on the last

day I was up there but I find they live at Bankipore which is ~~quite~~ close to Dehri on the E.R. so no doubt we shall meet again - They are among the many people who have read the Highland Lady with joy - There was one dance while I was there given by some people called the Knights of the Black Heart. It was a semi-masquerade ball viz females in masks & dominoes men not which was rather idiotic.

This letter has missed the mail without doubt.

I saw Oliver on the way down he seems to be

getting on all right and is  
perhaps coming here for  
the Poojals

W<sup>r</sup> loving

Ralph

Fawcett Library  
27 Wilfred Street  
London S.W.1.

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## SIMLA.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

31st July.

This month has closed in rain and mist, quite of the typical monsoon kind, and we expect that August will take its revenge for the frequent spells of fine weather in July. But we can have no cause of complaint, for our rains have been unusually light, and in meteorological phrase they have been "well distributed," at least in the matter of time. Scarcely a tennis-party has been spoiled, and excursions to Mashobra and Mahasu have been possible in spite of threatening clouds. Showers at odd intervals instead of constant downpours have marked the season since the end of June, and in this respect Simla seems to have been more fortunate than other hill stations. Almost every day in the week football or hockey has been played at Annandale, and our golfers have also their turn on odd mornings and evenings. The football-ground, by the way, is showing signs of wear, and as it is still six weeks to the Durand Tournament it might be given a rest. Ordinary practice games should be played on the lower part of Annandale, clear of the cricket ground. Perhaps the General Committee which regulates sports will look to this. A little forethought now may save complaints hereafter when the tournament begins.

Your readers must be tired of hearing constantly about the Simla waterworks; and yet residents who remember the dusty roads of May and June and the trouble about closed hydrants are deeply interested in the question. By some curious want of good-luck—the word must be forgiven for I can find nothing so expressive—the new works on the catchment area practically came to a standstill a few days ago. It was all a matter of financing, and where the original blunder lay no one outside the Local Government and the Municipality can say. Several lakhs are being spent in this, the latest extension, and the money has to be provided from somewhere. The question at issue seems to be as to whence it is to come. The Municipality made an advance from their cash balance, but this came under the heading of "recoverable" in these accounts, and they certainly have no more funds to spend just now with their special expenditure on sanitation. The Local Government, of course, find the money if the Lieutenant-Governor is disposed to sanction the outlay, but there are many other claims on the Provincial Budget. To stop the works would mean heavy losses, as contracts have been given out; and moreover it is admitted that the scheme must be carried to completion if Simla is to be safeguarded against a water-famine. So various high officials have been discussing ways and means during the last few days, and some solution of the problem is likely to be shortly announced. Meanwhile work will be continued and rupees will be disbursed to contractors and coolies.

One always likes to hear of children enjoying themselves here, for their elders have plenty of gaiety and amusement during the season, and it is only fair that the little ones should have their share of pleasure in a harmless way. They dearly love fancy-dress dances and one such gathering took place yesterday afternoon at Craig Din. The hosts were Masters Kenneth and Herbert Carnduff, who appeared as a barrister-at-law and a Courtier of the XVIII. Century respectively, both excellent dresses. Some 60 children were present, and the balls of the afternoon was unquestionably Mrs. Sykes's charming little daughter in a white Empire frock, while Miss Ruth Higham as "Pansy" looked very sweet. Among many really good costumes the following were, perhaps, most noticeable:—"Folly" (Miss Euld Elliot); Empire dress (Miss Kathleen Gamble); "White China" (Miss Reynolds); Turkish Lady (Miss DeCane Smith); 5th Lancers (Miss Violet Anderson); Bo-peep (Miss Marjorie Phillips); "Golden Butterfly" (Miss Higham); white poudré (Master Alec Maitland); Hongkong Regiment (Master Barrow); Afghan Prince and Royal Horse Gunner (Masters Claude and Jack Hawkins); Life-Guardsman and Coldstream Drummer (Masters Harold and Gerald Watkie); Jack Tar (Master Youngusband). The children had a very merry time, Mr. and Mrs. Carnduff seeing that all should be well amused, while parents and friends looked on enjoying the fun almost as much as the youngsters. As they themselves during the week had shared in a very cheery dance at the Grand Hotel and a ball at Viceregal Lodge they could well afford to play the part of spectators.

The *White Elephant*, which is the play now running at our little Gaiety Theatre, is a three-act comedy with a distinctly farcical flavour about it. Watching its progress one cannot but be struck with the absurd situations which come about as the thin plot thickens. The dialogue is good all through, and quite smart on occasion. Here is the story briefly told. Joseph Ogden, tea-broker, has taken to wife the Lady Gwendoline, daughter of the impeccable Earl of Rowcombe; and amid her accustomed surroundings Lady Gwen feels that she is a kind of white elephant in the household. She is a languid, good-hearted soul, peaceful to a degree, but events so turn out that she is harassed and worried; and were it not for the appearance of a scamp of a cousin, Stacy Gillam, who brings to her a whiff of her old aristocratic life and helps her to unravel some of the mysteries which puzzle her, she would be in danger of collapsing altogether. Her husband, in his salad days, has on one occasion only "seen life"—in company with an American widow, Mrs. Cyrus N. Dowker. As he explains he tried to see what "going to the devil" was like. He went to Paris, as a matter of fact, and Mrs. Dowker shared the "high old time" which he had there. They were photographed together in the dress in which they figured at a disreputable ball, and the photos are not of a kind that a respectable tea-broker who has settled down to matrimonial felicity would like to have produced. Mr. Ogden confides in his head-clerk, Robert Pople, and thereupon come many complications, for this gentleman has secretly married Lotitia Ogden, the tea-broker's sister, a lady rather mature in years but of a sentimental disposition. As Stacy Gillam has met and is engaged to Mrs. Dowker, whose money is to redeem him from his chronic condition of indebtedness—he is "stony broke" in his own expressive language—it will be seen that much misunderstanding is possible. Further as one Charles Glenthorne, a handsome youth with only a slight acquaintance with Joseph Ogden, is making love to his ward, Emily Rowston, and "burks" about the house to snatch stray kisses from the young lady,

and her face

the general confusion becomes worse confounded. A pert French maid assists everyone in turn in their efforts to get out of trouble; there is plot and counterplot, with much mystification which seems unlikely to be cleared up. All the principal characters finally travel up, more or less eloping in pairs, to London, and strangely enough make for Mr. Ogden's town-house. They cause much perturbation in the mind of the old housekeeper, there who packs them away in different rooms, and finally Mrs. Dowker turns up just to make the party complete. I cannot enter into all the details of the closing scene, it is sufficient to say that Lady Gwen behaves like a brick; that Joseph Ogden is relieved from the fear of his little escapade in Paris being revealed; that Mrs. Dowker swaps the photographs for some letters; that Peplie holds his tongue discreetly and thus obtains forgiveness for having married Letitia; and that the elopements are satisfactorily explained. Stacy Gilliam it is to be presumed will do his best to make the smart American widely contented as her object in life is to scrape acquaintance with the British aristocracy, while the weary "white elephant" will at last have some rest.

With regard to the acting of the play our amateurs had a most sympathetic audience on Saturday and even the smallest points were appreciated. Mrs. Deane as Lady Gwen carried off the honours, her rendering of the part being good all round. She is one of our best actresses, and everything she does bears marks of close and careful study. So thoroughly did she identify herself with the part that, at times, she herself could not refrain from laughter at the humorous turn of the dialogue. It is no idle compliment to say that she "made" the play, for the acting on the whole was rather uneven and some of the scenes had a tendency to drag. Several of the actors did not apparently realize that in a piece of this kind, with the farcical element only thinly veiled, everything must go quickly if full effect is to be secured. Mrs. Strachey made a first appearance here as an impresario, but the part of Emily Rawdon is a rather colourless one and does not offer opportunities for clever acting. It was easily and naturally rendered. Mrs. Craigie as the love-sick Letitia made the most of the amusing scenes with Peplie, the stage business between the two characters being well done. Miss Waterheld as the maid Celestine was excellent, her pretty broken English interspersed with scraps of French being cleverly managed. Celestine was just the quick-witted and observant little person that one would have expected to see. Mrs. Anderson as Mrs. Cyrus N. Dowker had only to appear in the last scene. She looked the smart attractive widow to the life, and I wish I could describe the pretty frock she wore, for it was quite too fascinating. Her American accent was, perhaps, overdone, but it is difficult to know where to draw the line in such cases. Mrs. Dowker must be of the type of American ladies who use strange expressions and pronounce the words with a drawl; that is, according to the author's idea; and Mrs. Anderson stuck to the text very consistently. Quite one of the best bits of acting was Mrs. Vane Agnew's Jaunty. The old housekeeper might have been translated from a town-house to the Scotch boards. Every detail was admirable, and the bye-play first-rate. As to the male characters, there are seven in all, and Major Strachey's Stacy Gilliam was the best. It is some nine years since we have seen Major Strachey here, but he has lost nothing of his old ability. He acts with ease and full knowledge of stage requirements, never making a mistake. Mr. Kennard as Joseph Ogden did not quite realise the idea of the vulgar tea-broker, but he worked out his own conception of the part skillfully enough, and in the scene when Ogden tells the story of his escapade in Paris he acted particularly well. Captain Hellway as Peplie did much to make the great fun of the play apparent; Captain Annesley in a small part was a good stage-lover; while Sergeant-Colonel Bourke as the Earl, Captain Vane Agnew as Bigsby, the butler (the archbishop as Stacy Gilliam calls him), and "Mr. Jones" as the genty old Mr. Tweed, filled the other parts satisfactorily.

7 m 11

Wah Wah!

The monument which has been raised close to the Observatory on the crossway of the Boulevards Port Royal and Montparnasse, Paris, to the memory of the explorer, Francis Garnier, was inaugurated on July 18th. M. Trouillot, Minister for the Colonies, presided and was supported by M. de Myre de Vilers. The monument consists of a bust of Francis Garnier raised on a pedestal, at the foot of which are three female figures, one presenting an oak branch to the explorer, and another representing Indo-China offering her treasures to the town of Paris.

The London Cabby likes the motor car less than ever now, says the *Globe*. A wedding procession is one of those things that the crawler dearly loves to cut into, taking his place with imperious solemnity in the angry row of befavoured coachmen. But on Wednesday a wedding procession of forty vehicles travelled all the way from Victoria Park to the Hotel Cecil, and arrived unbroken. They were all motor cars; and it is one thing for the London Jehu to gull his horse and cab across a high-stopping pair and brougham; but "these—motor cars" do not leave room, and they have no knees to cut. That is why cabby loves the motor car less than ever now.

Within the last few days the *Clarina* has received a gift which merits something more than passing notice. It consists of a shawl of Chantilly lace, about three yards long by one in breadth, but wrought of polythrene threads like Venetian embroidery instead of being in one colour only. Round the edge runs a border of narrow exactly counterfeiting the delicate hues of nature. This encloses two sprays of red and yellow roses, which meander intertwined along the four sides of the rectangle, the central space of which is dotted all over with little lilies on a ground of the finest point of *Albino*. Lastly in each corner the monogram of Alexandra Feodorovna, surmounted by an Imperial Crown, is worked in gold. The idea of this charming gift and the design of the pattern emanated from the hands of Félix Aubert, the artist, who, while sketching in Normandy, watched the peasant women plying their delicate trade—now, alas! fast dying out since the introduction of machinery—for a gain of little more than threepence a day. It struck him that the introduction of a novelty, and the prestige attaching to an Imperial gift, might revive this beautiful but decaying industry.