

5813

Letters

For our mighty MPs, truth is unpleasant

TO guide letter writers like me, who are not seasoned journalists, some expert should tell us where to draw the line between "contempt of the house" and "freedom of speech". Further, if something goes wrong unintentionally, what is the worst that can happen to us, if found guilty by the privileges committee of the parliament and state assemblies. This is in relation to Left Front MPs demand that "privilege issue" be raised against Mr. Minoo Masani for his statement describing MPs as "a mob of howling hooligans".

We would also like to know whether this "privilege issue" also requires that the special privileges enjoyed by MPs cannot be commented upon, such as a rent-free(?) five-acre bungalow, 30,000 free telephone calls a year, unlimited first class trips any-

where in the country, 16 free "intermediate" trips anywhere by Indian Airlines in addition to free travel during the parliament sessions, authority to sanction 48 gas connections and 15 telephone connections — hold your breath — per year and a "privilege of breach" to reside in a bungalow for 25 long years including stints when one is not an MP.

If even Mr. Masani, veteran parliamentarian can be faulted, now can some of us, for whom Mr. Masani's *Mother India* was a text-book, dare the might of MPs? This episode makes me wonder whether "truth is unpleasant" or "the lady is protesting too much". A friend, still haunted by the days of Emergency, tells me not to even do the wondering till I am sure of the do's and don'ts of the "con-

tempt" for the "privileges". Was it Emerson who said, "Democracy becomes a government of bullies tempered by editors". Perhaps the editor in Mr. Masani was attempting a tempering.

Finally yet another privilege is making news. Dr. Jichkar has given a notice in Maharashtra State Council for breach of privilege against two protocol officials. The news report has it that Dr. Jichkar has alleged that these officials did not treat Mr. Jaywantrao Tilak, the council chairman like a VIP. Indeed, a hallmark of modesty.

—A.K.R. Hemmady,
304, Shree Ganesh,
Morya Nagar,
Virar (E)-401303.
March 20.

Points to ponder

YOUR staff reporter's account (March 17) of the felicitation to Mr. J.R.D. Tata, made interesting reading. One of the two things, which immediately struck me, however, was that, out of the 13 paragraphs devoted to this item, only two were allotted directly to the person who was the cause, and at the root, of the whole function! The second thing was that the inherent irony, of a Tata being feted in an Oberoi hotel, went unnoticed.

One other remarkable feature (though connected not with the function itself but with the event which motivated it) is that no one seems to have recognised (or, at any rate, commented upon) the fact that Mr. Tata was the second Indian pilot to get the nation's highest award — and, to make things more uncommon, within six months of the first pilot. There may be many, in fact, who may feel



■ Mr. J.R.D. Tata

that Tata should have been the first, and, in one way, he was the first — to receive it in his lifetime!

—J.E. Dastur,
"Dol-Bin-Shir", 2nd Floor,
69-71 Ghoga Street,
Bombay-1.
March 26.

A lensman of the old school

MR. WILLIAM COUTTO, who passed away at Jaslok Hospital, Bombay, on March 25, following a massive heart attack, was a press photographer of the old school — not flashy nor jumpy. He was dashing though, ever alert and responsive to the calls of duty. He was one of those cameramen who would not ignore the fallouts of disastrous events pictorially covered first and later neglected.

He was as good at taking action photos as those of "arranged" ones. "Any type of photographs, at any time, whenever and wherever needed," he used to say if one asked him what kind of "shoots" he preferred. He would rush to any trouble spot to click his camera and in this sense he was a daredevil lensman. Not afraid to go to any disturbed area and go straight to the "eye" of the disturbance, whatever the obstacles in the way.

He served *The Times of India* for nearly four decades, with devotion, dedication and loyalty. To strike a

death, let alone carry a brief biographic sketch.

If the policy of *The Times of India* is to shut out personalities belonging to it at one time or other from its news columns, as bruited about is true, all that I can say is that it is not a sound one. It is like the incomprehensible rule governing the second innings batting, when rain restricted play in the World Cup cricket contest which concluded the other day.

And if the policy is to take note of only "public figures", the late Mr. Coutto positively filled the bill under that description as his circle was large and he was known to thousands of people having been a "leg man" throughout his career, and not cooped in airconditioned cabins. He was a socialite in a way.

Be that as it may, all journalists, his friends and acquaintances, I am sure, will share the grief felt by his wife, son and daughters, and other members of his family.

—B. Sheshgiri Rao,
Flat No. 4, 1st Floor,
B Block, Usha Sadan,
Next to Colaba P.O.,
Bombay-400 005.
March 27.

It is a pity, and a shame, that the institution which the late William Coutto served so faithfully and with distinction — refrained from acknowledging his services with so much as an obituary notice. Hence colleagues and friends of William Coutto would like to express their thanks and gratitude to Busybee for capturing in his inimitable fashion, a complete picture of the man and the news photographer whose pictures, of floods, famine, fire, visiting royalty and cricket matches, were so much a part of *The Times of India* over three decades.

To me, William Coutto will be associated with the good days of Test cricket — not merely the batting feats and bowling records which



■ William Coutto: ever alert to the call of duty

personal note, I found him a willing worker, fully cooperative, ever ready to give a helping hand to his juniors among photographers in the

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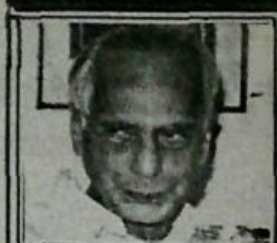
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11

TIME OFF



MANOHAR MALGONKAR

AMONG my papers is a letter nearly thirty years old, yellow with age and coming apart in the folds, its ink faded to a sepia colour. The handwriting is crabbed, uneven, spidery, as though the efforts of holding the pen was painful to its writer. For me this letter holds magic qualities. Whenever I feel a little depressed about my inadequacies as a writer, I fish it out and read it through. My abounding self-esteem comes bouncing back.

The letter bears a printed address, 'King's College, Cambridge' and it is dated August 2, 1963. The writer thanks me for my novel *The Princes* and tells me how much it 'interested' him. He adds that some of the incidents in it he found 'heartrending'. The letter ends with the words: "Yours sincerely, E.M. Forster".

For my part I have never ceased to think of it as a 'fan' letter; after all I had never met the writer or written to him; indeed I had not even sent him the book for which he was thanking me, for in the letter itself he made it clear that he was thanking me for writing it. Here was the most eminent man of letters of his times, giving me a pat on the back, as it were, even though with a hand that shook and its finger-joints were stiff.

A memorable luncheon

phoned Mr. Forster at King's College to ask him if the next morning between 11 and 12 would suit him to see me.

I have elsewhere written about our telephone talk. Here I shall only say that Mr. Forster was brusque to the point of rudeness. Our conversation ended by his telling me in so many words: "I don't know who you are and what it is that you want to see me about, but if you're bent on coming, I can't very well stop you."

Ordinarily, in the face of such a bad-tempered rebuff, I should never have made that trip. But when, in something of a huff, I told Mr. Hamilton, my publisher, about it, he explained that Forster had become a little hard of hearing and could not have known who it was who was proposing to invade his privacy. "After all, he is in his mid-eighties and remember, he has just got over a serious illness."

Mr. Hamilton advised me to write a letter explaining who I was and that I was to Cambridge only because Forster had invited me to visit him. In fact he helped me to compose the letter so that it should be a little cold and stiff to show how upset I had been by Forster's boorishness.

Winter days

So, as planned, I caught a train to Cambridge. It was one of those typical, early winter days in England, bleak and grey but with no rain and air filled with the scent of wet

seemed, focusing it, so that there seemed to be more light indoors than there had been outdoors. It was the room of an Englishman who had gone to India for there were recognisable Indian accents, a gold-bordered green shawl, and black-and-silver Bidar work trays and pots. There was a sofa and two arm-chairs, and on a low table and ostensibly for my reception, sherry and paper-thin biscuits. True, I had always admired Forster as a writer and a courageous man. I had read almost everything of his that was published and on my latest trip to America, I had given talks in some of the colleges on the subject of *E.M. Forster's India*. But I had not come to him as a starry-eyed worshipper, to tell him how much I admired his books and to ask for his autograph. Luckily, we had plenty to talk about, because by one of those strange coincidences that give an unexpected twist to our lives, I had known the same princely state which Mr. Forster had known, Dewas, and I was a close friend of the son of Forster's friend, Maharaja Tukojirao. In the palace of Dewas, I had occupied the same room that they had given to Forster. One of my prized witticisms was the retort I had brought off during my lectures on Forster. When someone asked me how well I knew Forster, I who had not even met him at the time, answered: "Why, we have slept in the same bed."

Here in Cambridge, we chatted about Dewas and the people Forster had known there. Over sherry and biscuits, I remember thinking how Forster

recent illness. At the restaurant he ordered trout for both of us, to be followed by trifle pudding and coffee. "Do you think we'll be able to manage a whole bottle?" he asked me when he was ordering the wine. And when I, mindful of the sherry I had drunk, hesitated, ordered it anyhow, a white wine of his choice.

We dawdled over the meal. He hardly drank two glasses of the wine, so it was up to me to finish the rest of the bottle. On the way back we took a different route because Mr. Forster was determined to show me places of interest in and around King's College. We wandered among the empty Victorian-Gothic squares and peeped into buildings: the Chapel and, I think, a library which had a newly painted portrait of Forster's. Then we got into a courtyard and walked up a very narrow, dark staircase. My guide

scribed it for me:

Manohar Malgonkar
From E.M. Forster
On the occasion of his greatly
valued visit to Cambridge
on December the 12th
1963

When, well past 2.30 we said goodbye on the landing of his staircase, we did not shake hands but, spontaneously, I think, we embraced, Indian-style, first one shoulder and then the other.

In the sudden chill of the streets,



March 26,
D.N. Road, Bombay-1.
The Times of India.
Former Sports Editor,
—K.N. Prabhu.

are diminishing.
loyal colleague, the likes of whom
ready for early mass. He was ever
room, lest he disturbs me, as he got
the moving silently through the
Christchurch, the sound of church
abroad, especially at Adelaide and
the Vellankani shrine. On trips
Test at Madras to pay his homage at
used a chance to break away after a
practising Catholic and never mis-
after everyone's welfare. He was a
call Bombay late at night to ask
by. As out-station centres he used to
"Willie" was devoted to his fami-
where we could find cheer and

give a line or two as news about his
did not even have the courtesy to
paper complex he was linked with
of by *The Times of India*. The news-
others, have not been taken notice
referred to his employers and had
professional and personal, he had
It is a pity that his services, both
contacts in society.

thousands of friends and had wide
ever on the move, he had cultivated
photographer of long standing and
novus, but delicate. Because as a
police or other situations, not se-
ceiving "love cards" from the traffic
pickles such as created by their re-
good offices to extricate them out of
official chores. He had also used his
tors, which did not form part of his
cluding proprietors, directors, in-
for those at the helm of affairs, in-
sions carried out photographic jobs
must have on innumerable occa-
ated with for such a long time, he
In the organisation he was associ-
family man.

generous, hospitable. Essentially, a
was unsophisticated, kind-hearted,
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MILAN (SANTACRUZ)

(ANDHERI) NEW ERA (MALAD)

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NATRAJ (CHEMBUR) ODION (GHATKOPAR)

DECCAN-NISHAT (PUNE)

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GANESH

(Lalbagh) 4 shows

GAIETY

(Bandra)

RUPAM

(Sion)

DARPA

(ANDHERI) NEW ERA (MALAD)

SONA (KANDIVLI) SHIKETAL (KURLA)

NATRAJ (CHEMBUR) ODION (GHATKOPAR)

DECCAN-NISHAT (PUNE)

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MINERVA

CAPITOL

SUNDARAM

SHARDA

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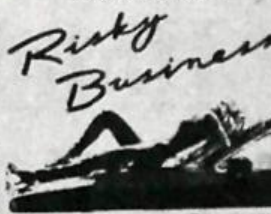
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CITY 3

J.J. group of hospitals

■ contd. from p. 5

shell out Rs. 700, they wouldn't be here at all. The man was refused, we couldn't treat him and he died."

Many resident doctors reportedly dig into their own pockets for the CAT scan to be done on high-risk patients. When, in reality, they shouldn't be paying at all! The dean, however, has complete authority to sanction a CAT scan as per his discretion. But, as one doctor states: "We have a patient here who has been with us for over a month and who was admitted with an acute case of paraparesis — gradual degeneration of strength in the lower limbs. He needed a milogram, essential X-rays plus a CAT scan, or else he could very soon become paraplegic. We appealed to the dean time and again, we sent three written intimations, all of which were ignored. Somehow, we managed to acquire the dyes required for his milogram and X-rays, but the CAT scan was vital. It took days of trying and a personal visit by one of the honorary doctors before the dean finally sanctioned a CAT scan free of cost. But this patient was only one of the few lucky ones."

To make matters worse, no major operations are being conducted in either Cama or the J.J. Hospital and, as far as G.T. and St. George's are concerned, there are no X-ray plates

available here either. "For any major operation like hernia or intestinal anastomosis, the first requirement is that the patient undergo free operative X-ray and investigation to test if he has a history of hypertension, blood-sugar, plus his anaesthetic fitness must also be monitored. "But the operation theatres themselves are void of basic equipment. So many times, we have to suture a patient without any proper strong suturing material. This is very dangerous. More so, because a patient suffering, say, from hernia, if not sutured with that specific material, can develop the disease all over again. And who is to blame for that?" the doctor asks.

The pathos of the situation seems an irony of sorts. On the one hand, the hospital authorities complain about the lack of funds to meet the demand for blood, equipment and the like, and on the other, they sanction an irrational proposal like closing down the main operation theatre in G.T. Hospital from April 4 in order to renovate it with marble flooring! "It seems an absolutely laughable suggestion. What is the priority here? Equipment or flooring? They have no qualms about spending lakhs on fancy flooring, but no money to buy better equipment. Their game is obvious. When we were on strike, they were happy. They could easily pawn off the inefficiency of the hospital function-

ings on us. But now that the strike is over, they are forced to buck up... something they obviously cannot do.

So what do they do? Close the main operation theatre, restrict admissions and reshuffle all emergency patients to the various other hospitals," he remarks.

In fact, two women's wards (No. 7 and No. 8) have been closed 'for repairs' for over a month, due to which

patients have been transferred to adjacent verandahs, where they lie like someone else's excess baggage — neglected and unwanted. And about the only 'work' taking place in these two wards, of ten units each, is the welding of beds and shelves.

Another recent addition to the lethargic set-up in G.T. Hospital is the Apex Unit for accident and emergency patients, where trauma victims are meant to receive immedi-

ate attention. A tour of the room revealed little — no equipment, no signs of any coming in either. "Money has been sanctioned for this unit but it is anybody's guess when it will see the light of day," says one of the doctors of the hospital.

When contacted, the dean of J.J. was 'unavailable' for comment. Meanwhile, thousands of patients at these hospitals continue to suffer. Bureaucracy seems to dictate their fate. In the hope of reliable treatment, they flock to Bombay, India's mecca of medical research. But what they eventually find is an eternal struggle to survive.

Megastars of Cag show

■ contd. from p. 4

the judges' unanimous choice for 'Photographic Campaign of the Year'. However, the award was presented by proxy to a member of the Lintas coterie.

The other ad agencies in the spotlight that night, included HTA Delhi, Enterprise, Mudra Communications, Karishma, Nexus Equity, Sneha Sadan Graphic Services, Link Ads, Red Garden, Interact Communications, Four A's Communications, Pratibha Advertising, Contract Bangalore, AAY's Advertising, Clarion Advertising, Redifussion and Chaitra Advertising.

However, just as everyone present eagerly awaited the winners of the most coveted categories of the even-

ing, it was announced that no awards were being presented for the Designer of the Year and the Copywriter of the Year. But there was still hope. Sunil Mahadik, whiz kid art director, was unvalued for the choice of Art Director of the Year and the grand finale of the evening that had, by then, turned into night, came when Cag declared its nominee for its prestigious Hall of Fame — the utterly, butterly, delicious man, Sylvester Da Cunha! The Amul man who honoured and made it apparent when he took the stage.

The stars had disappeared behind a film of clouds. Those who had been honoured would probably never forget their moment of glory. But the Cag awards promise to be back with due fanfare next year. To make up for the lack of it this time round.

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