

LIVING

Glattons, and How to Deal with Them

THEY kept on eating and, they hardly talked. And when they had swallowed a fool's fill, they sat back and panted endlessly. Who? the gluttons, that's who. People who rejoice in the name of relatives, friends, well-wishers, etc. They were eating me out of house and home at a death anniversary at my place. They had probably skipped lunch that day. They eat sparingly at home, and enough for six outsiders.

One held up a hand with a half eaten "chom-chom" in it, and said to me, "Don't grieve for your 'Dadi', she's in heaven right now." I offered him another "chom-chom" at once. He took it with a twinkle in his eye.

Later, the guests dutifully complimented my heartbroken family on the food — which, incidentally, is always excellent at my place, even if I say so myself — and belched appreciatively, despite the long faces, suitable to the occasion, when the last guests had staggered off home, my house was in shambles. When relatives like mine come to offer their condolences at a funeral feast, the house is not expected to survive the occasion.

A sage once said, "People don't die, they kill themselves." People who would be horrified to throw away their lives at one go, don't mind throwing it away in pieces. People literally eat themselves to death. Think of a splendid table laid out at a party. Whole chickens ooze on beds of "basmati" rice. Giant lobsters, roe prawns, piles of delicious meat dumplings tempt and beckon. Tubs of salad, swimming in tomato juice, roast beef and pickled chilli, and a variety of tasty tidbits warm your heart and dazzle your eyes.

Now think of the terrible diseases lying waiting among the dishes. Think of the fashionable hairdos, as they descend like locusts on the food, and they continue to gobble, and gobble and you'll see what I mean. Respect your stomach and eat sparingly, or outraged Nature will revenge herself. But of course, such advice is thrown away on the "bursting bellies." And that brings us to a willing victim — my mother, who is an inspired cook. She shops intelligently in the bazaar, and cooks like an angel. Every Friday she gives us a feast, her speciality being a hell fire tomato sauce which she is famous for. It takes the roof off your mouth, but the taste is divine.

Almost every other Friday, an uncle would land on my door-step. He paid for his food

with the most outrageous flattery, as he popped the goodies swiftly into his mouth. As I watched him shovelling in the food, busily picking a great many bones, grunting, gasping, panting, and murmuring compliments between mouthfuls — I had often wondered what to do. A friend suggested hiding his false teeth, but he never took them out, worse luck!

Then, I had an idea. Like many good ideas it was surprisingly simple. It was such an obvious solution, that I wondered why I hadn't thought of it before. Why not launch an offensive myself? Pay back the old

and played the role of "pagalpeer" to perfection. But as I found out later, he was perfectly sane, as monsters often are.

I took one look at his paunch, and knew at once that this was a well-fed specimen who was more interested in the stew-pot than the soul. Then I decided to try him out and expose him. I told him my business had dashed out a concocted story: "Help me, give me a 'phook'," I said.

He put his hands on my head in a manner quite paternal, and gently blew into my face. "I knew about your bust-

that never materialized. He's a ..."

Now that I knew what I had to deal with, I swung into action. Things quickly moved to a fascinating climax. I rounded up the crowd, and both I and the rickshawpuller told our stories. I told them about the baby pigeons, the "chom-choms" and the "shagor-kolas," I told them about the cock-and-bull story I had told this fake, and how he had pretended to know about it.

In five minutes, I had swung the crowd against him. The "pagalpeer" got to his feet hurriedly, abandoned his wares on the pavement, and tried to slip away. But the crowd had turned nasty, and was fully aware of his tricks. They caught him by the beard and his bushy hair, and landed a good dozen punches in strategic places.

Then there is this thieving cook of mine, who looks like a fat goose. If I step into my kitchen suddenly, I always find him tucking into a snack to keep going. He jumps like a startled thief, trying to struggle to his feet with a fawning smile, and hide my bottle of chutney at the same time. Firing him would not help, as I've learnt to my cost. The next one would probably be worse.

Professional cooks always look so well-fed. All the cooks that I have hired and fired have done themselves proud. Each was an enterprising and formidable glutton. Each stole. And each ate better than I did in my own house.

After they had pinched and hogged, they sang while stirring things in saucepans. If only they had kept quiet, I might have tolerated the wretches — but this was too much. And since they were ugly too, I told them to get lost. Finally I've learnt my lesson and got stuck with one, and he gets healthier every day.

There are some people who call themselves my "friends." I fear them more than my open enemies. With "friends" like these, who needs enemies? They come to eat me out of house and home which reminds me of Voltaire. His friends drifted in, and stayed on for months at a time. "God save me from my friends," sighed Voltaire. "I can take care of my enemies myself."

Delicate hints do not work, so, when these "friends" drop in, I tell my servant to tell them I am not home. For old sinners, the really determined ones, I have a slightly different message. "He has just left, but you'll catch him if you hurry down the street." And off they go on a wild goose chase Ah, but how sweet is revenge!

Of the Carefree Days

by Shahpar Selim

O KAY I admit it. I couldn't believe it either. I am of course, talking about the day that changed the course of my life, the way I see things, the way I feel, my whole conception of the universe. The day when I was finally accepted into MGD School. One of India's premier schools (India's answers to prep schools). I didn't expect them to take me seriously, and yes, okay, I am boasting that they did. I had heard so much about the magical land of Rajasthan and there I was, going to spend two years in Jaipur, the state capital, with its marvellous castles of marble in the sands, the peacocks, the "ghagraas" full of colours and charm, the jodhpuris, and the jewel of them all, the ephemeral Maharani Shahaba herself, one of the six most beautiful women on earth! All this and heaven too! I was finally going to start my life in the Maharani Gayatri Devi School for Girls.

I am, an unashamed worshipper of rain and am probably on the verge of establishing a sect for fellow rain fanatics everywhere. So you can imagine how I felt when I saw that as I landed in Jaipur, it was pouring. But the rain, somehow just wasn't the same. The etherising smell of the wet earth was missing and along with that, all its charm. I suppose that expresses my entire experience at school.

The first night in the hostel was a terrible as they get. I wouldn't wish it on anybody, not even a dog. I for one have yet to shake off the feeling of total desolation that enshrouded me then and there as I watched my father's bowed



Young children enjoying themselves at school

head disappear into the behemoth like hedges. You just wonder if all this is someone's idea of punishment for your past mistakes. You recapitulate and then you start doing something that you never thought you'd do in public — have a fit.

The girls were very sympathetic as they had seen all this before and worse, felt it all themselves. They took me from my empty dorm to their assur-

ing one, which had something I was desperate for, the old girl feeling. I was quick to ensconce myself. The girls were very very interested in me, but then, through the kaolin labyrinth of reason I realised their desperation for new company. And that was all. And thus began my 24 hour a day struggle for survival. It was the girls against the establishment, us and them against the outside world, and

me against everybody else. The new girls had a comfort zone of a security blanket-anonymity. This I lost after being dragged into doing things like the "biji" dance and then being crowned (yes, literally) "The Best New Freshie". So how do I get on with my new catapulted lifestyle and status?

Pretty well, I'd say. You just have to learn how to hustle at the dining table, how to get the seat in the shade with the best view, etc. These small things count a lot and you just have to hope on to the running train because there is no next one.

And if you miss it, there is nothing more lachrymatory. You just learn to swallow heaps of insults, rude innuendoes, and disappointments. You get up in the morning, see the face of a person, whose death would be worth your life sentence in prison, and you smile, and wish her a good morning, why you do this is the lacuna of your reasoning. But you have to survive and then again, it does not matter anymore, anyhow.

Don't get me wrong, life is not all hard compromises and sacrifices. We have our share of Micawberism. Hostel life is like rain. Your tears can be hidden, even washed away and you smile and face the downpour. The dares we do and the compassion we share at unexpected times can be mighty or a mignonette, is not without enthusiasm. I am proud to be MG Dian. A fifty-year-old school which is no longer grape juice to me, but vintage wine. As the school song goes, "Come let's sing of MGD and of the carefree days..."



buffer in his own coin. I targeted a day when he threw a feast at his place. I starved myself for a whole day. And my loyal band of nephews and nieces did likewise. We fasted more religiously than we had even in Ramadan. Then we paid my uncle a visit. He never came visiting on a Friday again.

You would think that one meal that I and my friends had at my friend's place, huge though it was, wouldn't be payment enough for all the free meals he had at my place, and that he escaped rather lightly — well, almost. Strange are the ways of justice. I have heard that all his teeth are falling out presently.

Then there was this hypocrite that I came across. This was a grasping scoundrel, who pretended to be a saint, and was doing good business on the pavement right outside my house. He was a healthy young rogue. He had bushy long hair, a flowing beard, an interesting paunch, and lively intelligent eyes. He wore a "kurta" and "lungi", sat on the pavement,

ness before you told me, 'bhog bilaashe shorbonash', I mentally cursed him twice and handed him over to the devil.

"Amar phookay shorgobash," he said I offered him a taka. He turned it down quietly. "Bring me two plump baby pigeons, some 'chom-choms' and 'shagor kolas'. Then I'll give you another 'phook'. You'll then see what happens." A little crowd had collected by now, eager for some "tamasha". A man gave him a packet of cigarettes, and he was puffing away serenely com. A rickshawpuller brought him some chicken "biryani" the kind that are left overs from wedding feasts, and sold on footpaths. The shark pounced on it like ten devils. His fancy fingerwork made me almost dizzy.

I was watching this scavenging closely, when another rickshawpuller came out of the crowd, and began talking to me. "About a month ago, this devil took 20 'shagor kolas' and a half kilogramme of 'chom-chom', from me. All this in exchange of for false promises

BEAUTY TIPS

It is important to give your feet the best care you can since they are responsible for taking the weight of the entire body, for maintaining balance, and for facilitating movement. They also get a lot of exercise; the average person takes about 15,000 steps a day, or about 70,000 miles in a lifetime.

Almost everybody is born with perfect feet, but by the time they reach adulthood about four out of five people have developed some kind of foot problem. Most of these are due to lack of care or wearing the wrong shoes. Daily washing, a weekly pedicure, and wearing proper shoes will ensure that your feet will look their best and will help to prevent any problems developing that may later cause considerable pain and discomfort.

The Basics

To maintain the health of your feet you should wash them every day and scrub the nails with a soft nail brush. Always dry the feet thoroughly, paying special attention to the area between the toes. After drying, apply a moisturizing cream or talc.

If you have a problem with foot odour you may need to wash your feet more often. There are also special antiperspirants and talcs on the market to treat the problem, as well as special deodorized insoles that you can put in your shoes.

Check the condition of your feet daily, and immediately treat any corns, blisters or bunions that you find. If you have any problems or worries, consult your doctor or a chiropodist, who is a doctor that specializes in treating foot problems.

Try and sit with your feet elevated for a short time each day and, if possible, walk around barefoot as much as you can to let your feet breathe. To improve the circulation, keep your

feet warm with socks and boots in the winter, wear socks and stockings made of natural fibres, and change your footwear daily. It is also important to buy shoes that fit and if you wear high heels, change the height of your heels at least once a day to avoid any problems developing.

If you have been standing or walking for a long period of time, your feet may be sore and ache. To help relieve this, give yourself a footbath. Dissolve 1 Cup of Epsom salts or baking soda in warm water. Soak your feet for about 15 minutes, then dry them thoroughly.

You should exercise your feet regularly to keep them limber and supple. This is especially important if you often wear high heels. It only takes a few minutes, and can be done almost anywhere.

First, stand barefoot with your feet together. Raise yourself up on the balls of your feet slowly, then lower yourself slowly. Repeat this ten times. Sit on a chair with your legs stretched out in front of you and your feet raised from the floor. Move your feet up and down, working from the ankles. Another good exercise to strengthen the muscles in the feet is to practice picking up a pencil with your toes.

Massage also helps to soothe sore and tired feet by improving the circulation, and can relax tense or tight muscles. Apply a liberal amount of cream to the feet, and start by massaging the ball of the foot with both hands using firm, circular movements.

Then massage the instep and the heel. Press each toe firmly between the thumb and forefinger of one hand, then press

firmly between the bones at the base of the foot, again using the thumb and forefinger. Clasp your toes with your hand and bend them towards you. Then release them and repeat. Use both hands to pull each toe gently away from the one next to it.

The Perfect Pedicure

During the summer your feet are usually on show, and most women give themselves a pedicure so that neat, polished nails peep out from their sandals. But just because your feet are hidden away for the rest of the year doesn't mean they should be neglected.

A weekly pedicure year-round will keep your feet look-

ing their best. The ideal time for this is after a bath, as the skin on the feet is already softened. If you give yourself a pedicure at another time, be sure and soak the feet for a few minutes.

The first steps

Remove any polish with cotton wool soaked in polish remover. Cut your toenails with proper clippers rather than scissors, and cut the toenails straight across rather than into the sides; this will avoid ingrowing toenails and prevent the nails from digging into the skin on the surrounding toes. Don't cut toenails too short; try to leave a rim of white at the edge. Once nails are cut to the proper length, file them lightly with an emery board. Then massage in a little cuticle cream to soften the skin in the area.

(to be continued) MS



Parading in western type clothes

Chicken Pineapple Curry

- 1 kg (2 lbs) chicken
- 1/3 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1/2 cup finely chopped pineapple
- 2.5 cm/1-in piece cinnamon, 2 sticks
- 3 cardamoms
- 2 cloves
- 1 bayleaf
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons sugar

- 1/2 cup cooking oil

1. Cut chicken into eight pieces. Combine ground spices and make paste with 1/2 cup of water.
2. Except pineapple place all ingredients in a saucepan. Add a little water just to make meat tender. Put lid on and cook over a moderate heat till meat is tender.
3. Fry meat stirring constantly for 5-8 minutes. Add pineapple and keep over a low heat. When oil separates out remove the curry from heat.
4. Makes 8 servings.

Chicken Choice

- 2 spring chickens
- 2 teaspoons shredded ginger
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 teaspoons ground cummin
- 4 whole red chillies

- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 bayleaf
- 2.5 cm/1-in piece cinnamon, 2 sticks
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1/2 cup cooking oil

1. Cut chicken into 8 pieces. Place all ingredients in a saucepan. Mix well, cover and cook over a low heat for about one hour till meat is tender or put the covered pan in the oven at 180°C/350°F for 1-2 hours.

Cookery

- 2. Serve with porota or bread. Makes 8 servings.

Coconut Chicken

- 2 (1kg/2 lbs) chickens
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground garlic
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder

- 1. Cut chicken into 8 pieces. Except coconut milk combine all ingredients in a saucepan, mix well. Cover and cook over a moderate heat for about 25 minutes.
- 2. Add coconut milk. Cover and keep over a low heat.

Chicken Vegetable Korma (Subveg)

- 1 kg (2 lbs) chicken
- 2 turnips
- 1 kholrabi (knol khol)
- 2 potatoes
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons ground garlic
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon ground poppy seed

- 2.5 cm/1-in piece cinnamon, 3 sticks
- 4 cardamoms
- 1/2 cup natural yogurt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon keora water
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 3/4 cup ghee or soya-bean oil

1. Make eight pieces of a chicken. Peel vegetables, cut into 5 cm/2-in or medium-sized cubes.
2. In a saucepan place ingredients and mix well.
3. Make dough of 1 cup of flour and 1/4 cup of water. Put lid on the saucepan and seal the lid with dough so that the vapour can not come out. Cook over low heat for about 2 hours.
4. Serve with pulao, or porota or bread. Makes 12 servings.



- 1. Cut chicken into 8 pieces. Except coconut milk combine all ingredients in a saucepan, mix well. Cover and cook over a moderate heat for about 25 minutes.
- 2. Add coconut milk. Cover and keep over a low heat.