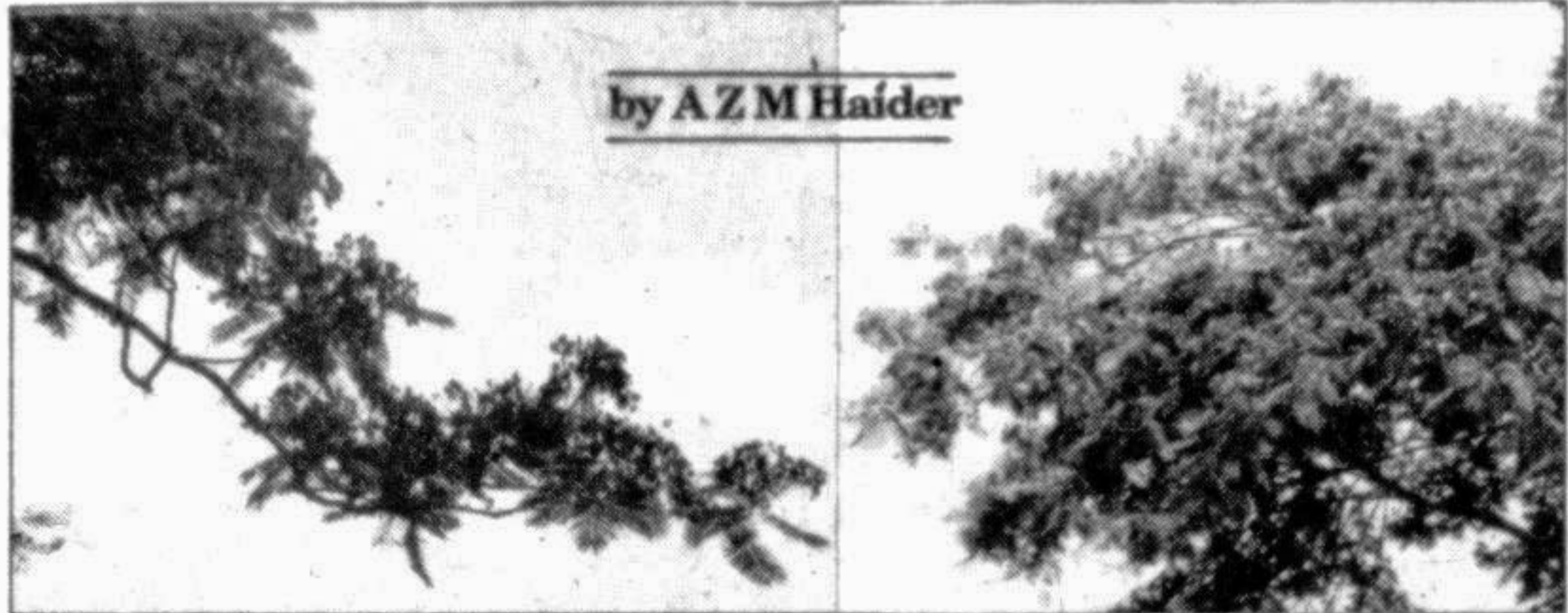


# Rhapsody and Rigmarole of a Spring Afternoon



by AZM Haider

THE winter this year procrastinated its retreat by a week or so due to a few spells of light shower which was accompanied by a cold wave last week. Spring is proverbially short in Bangladesh. But winter is not too long either in this tropical country.

The murmuring melancholy of the dying winter signals the advent of transitory spring with its wealth of blossoms and intoxicating fragrant breeze. The unpremeditated strains of cuckoo, whom Wordsworth calls Darling of the Spring, wafting from an 'unsubstantial fairy place', as it were, invigorates our sordid mundane existence with a spirit of ethereal joy.

Twitter of birds, sprouting of fresh foliage, variegated hues of nature — all these combine to contribute to the melody of spring that stimulates mind and soul with rapturous excitement. This excitement represents joie de vivre. Man is mortal, but spring epitomizes joie de vivre which is eternal. The joie de vivre or zest makes life worth living. It relieves life of its tedium and drudgery. Without it life would have been a prolonged and unmitigated agony. That is why Shelley rightly said in his inimitable style 'if winter comes, can spring be far behind.' In other words, spring is natural concomitant of winter as life and death, pleasure and pain, hope and despair are inseparable appendage of each other.

Thus paradoxically enough, spring, which is an epitome of youth, beauty and freshness of joy, is also reminder of the

inescapable reality that they are transient. In this evanescent world of ours nothing is immutable. Flowers blossom only to wither away. The aromatic soft silken spring breeze dies away in silence forcing us to bear the brunt of oppressive heat wave of summer. Youth grows pale, spectre-thin and dies. Green leaves ripen and finally fall.

In one idle afternoon week before last, as I was rambling about leisurely inside Azampur graveyard, my aimless wandering was obstructed by falling leaves from undulating branches of a tall tree rustling in a gentle breeze. The fallen leaves made a mound on the eternal resting place of my 'Phantom of Delight'. She will no more frisk about like restless sparrows or chase butterfly on the wings of romance as she used to do in the spring-time of her life. During her short-very short life span she was a poetry, an exquisite lyric, infinitely more exquisite than Tagore's Labanya. She was a half woman and half imagination. I do not have the pen of a poet like Gray to write an elegy on my beloved who will never respond from the dark dismal world of death to the sigh oozing out from the inner-most depth of my anguished soul. With tears glistening my eyes, as I cast my long lingering look across this wilderness of despair and death, I was struck with timorous and sombre emotion. Side by side a feeling of deep depression and pessimism had a chilling effect on me. At that moment of emotional crisis, the immortal lines of Shakespeare kept striking my

mind with a cruel bang 'life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing'. Sitting beside the grave of that adorable creature I was brooding over the hollowness of our mortal existence when the entire desolate place, all of sudden, transfigured with a celestial halo. In that golden haze I saw my Phantom of Delight beckoning me to something in front. I stood up in a trance, as it were, and started following her. I felt like Dante who in his Divine Comedy allowed himself to be led by Beatrice from hell to purgatory and from purgatory to heaven. After a while, my reverie was shattered to pieces by shrieks and squawks of automobiles on the road before me and I returned to my senses only to find myself away

from Deaths dark kingdom and face the fleeting life with all its beauty and ugliness, cruelties and compassion, pleasure and pain. I discovered the meaning and purpose of this ephemeral life we are blessed with. It has its hopes and frustrations, rewards and futilities, loss and gain. Hopes would have been rendered less desirable if there were no frustrations in life. Rewards would have been reduced to nullity if there were no futilities. Likewise, gains would have been made less acceptable if there were no losses. Life would have turned into a drab unexciting monotony if there were no deaths. But death is not the end of life. It is only the end of our mortal existence. Death merges our finite existence with infinite which eternal.

Let me, therefore, sing the glory of life, as resurrected with all its joie de vivre in spring which comes after winter every year in a cyclic order.



If it is not in the realm of riches, the East Germans have at least proved their superiority in the communication of their love or love motives. The god of riches, Mammon, might not have favoured them, but Aphrodite or Venus did. They kept at least one goddess pleased.

If kiss, at any rate, is indicative of the depth or dimension of love, its profusion among the erstwhile East Germans suggest that they love more ardently and kiss the beloved in higher frequency than their cousins in the other half, formerly West Germany. Cynics however have their own interpretation about this variation in transmission of love among the same people, though politically they remained divided and estranged for about half a century. They say that the communists in East Germany did not have anything else outside home to love. So they showered their heaped love rather generously on their consorts and lovers. That's why all their love moved homeward to give only lip service to wives. They considered it as good capital which yielded big domestic returns and multiplied silently like *das capital* without being detected by the Marxist-Leninist watchdogs. This explains why communist lovers were serious in love deal. This however runs contrary to what comrade Mao Tse Tung professed. Before BBC discovered his group sex episode, Mao told followers to consider sex like a glass of water, easily found, drunk and forgotten.

On the other side in the

## Distant Drum

M N Mustafa

Western affluent half of capitalist Germany, the Germans found that work outside home fetches more wealth which keep wives and lovers happier than transient and moistened kisses.

Kisses, they claim, lose their traces by every wipe. They discovered that power of money and capital is much more solid and sumptuous than work of the lips and therefore they wisely reduced its landing frequency on the cheeks or lips of wives or the woo-eds.

A recent survey by the Wicket Institute in Germany discovered that East German couples kiss on average 9.74 times a day compared with their neighbours on the West of the reunified country. The West Germans just embrace 8.56 times a day.

Besides this variation in the quantum and frequency of kissing due to geographical and political reasons, the fundamentalists, legists, grammarians and disciplinarians have set rules for the landing of kisses and their right and timely anchorage. Since it is a lip-to-lip affair, dermatologists can claim that they are the right people to set and demarcate the boundaries and wharfing procedures. It already created a controversy in no less a place than the French cabinet. In 1991 the out-going Prime

Minister of France, Monseigneur Michel Rocard, kissed on the cheeks of his female successor, Madam Edith Cresson.

Since the kisser and the kissed belonged to the opposite sex, representing the fire and fuel, the event sent a ripple across Paris media which assumed the role of the accuser, approver and executioner. This time generosity prevailed upon it and it dismissed the issue as normal since cheeks were considered as greeting zones.

Still there are some set rules of business. The grammar must be followed. If lips are considered as extension of the skin, the kiss is a dermic act and dermatologist can prescribe the rules of business. But there are other contenders like dentists and cardiologists. Dentists claim that in every kiss the jaw, gum and teeth play a significant role and hence kissing is also a dental act. Cardiologists advance their own argument more convincingly when they say that the urge to kiss originates from heart and it also reacts during and after the kiss lands. Once the impulse to kiss the beloved is created by heart, the heart beating increases to the detriment of good health, the higher the beating the bigger the danger. It appears that it is the heart which originates, enjoys and suffers because of the

kiss. Poets modern, medieval or ancient who elevated kiss and kissings to an exulting performing art with or without amorous import have gone in favour of giving and receiving kiss. Ovid, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Khayyam, Hafiz, Saadi, Tagore and Nazrul portrayed kiss as the physical transplantation of invisible love. We leave aside poets minor denomination. Rabindranath Tagore in his sonnet entitled kiss dissected the anatomical composition of kiss:

(Kiss is) The language of one lip to the ear of another; The two drink the heart of the two; The two love leave home On pilgrimage to the confluence of lips. The two waves of love Rise by love's urge Break and dissolve in two lips.

After Tagore, it is useless to write more about kiss.

Mr. Gilbert Stuart, the celebrated US portrait painter, once met a lady in the street in Boston who saluted him and said, 'Mr Stuart I have just seen your miniature and kissed it.' 'Did it kiss you in return?' asked Mr Stuart. 'Why, no,' replied the lady. 'Then,' said Mr Stuart, 'It was not like me. I always return lady's kiss.'

In genuine love kiss is just like a pre-paid business reply Card. If it does not respond and reply, the other party is undecided. Press on, and silence here is suicidal.

## People and Places

*Continued from page 9*  
Nizamuddin (son-in-law of Abdul Qutub Shah), Premamathi et al. The architecture of these tombs exhibits a unique melange of oriental styles and the Hindu motifs such as lotus-leaves and buds, chains and pendant designs, protected caves, cruciform capitals, and so on. The most imposing tombs are those of Sultan Muhammad Quli and Abdullah Qutub Shah.

Another attractive spot in Hyderabad we paid visit to was Charminar, which was built in 1591 AD. Located in the heart of the city, Charminar, or the four minarets, is a magnificent square edifice built up on four granite arches facing north, south, east and west. It is built

of lime and stone which are exquisitely decorated. The height of each minaret from



Qutub Shahi Tomb

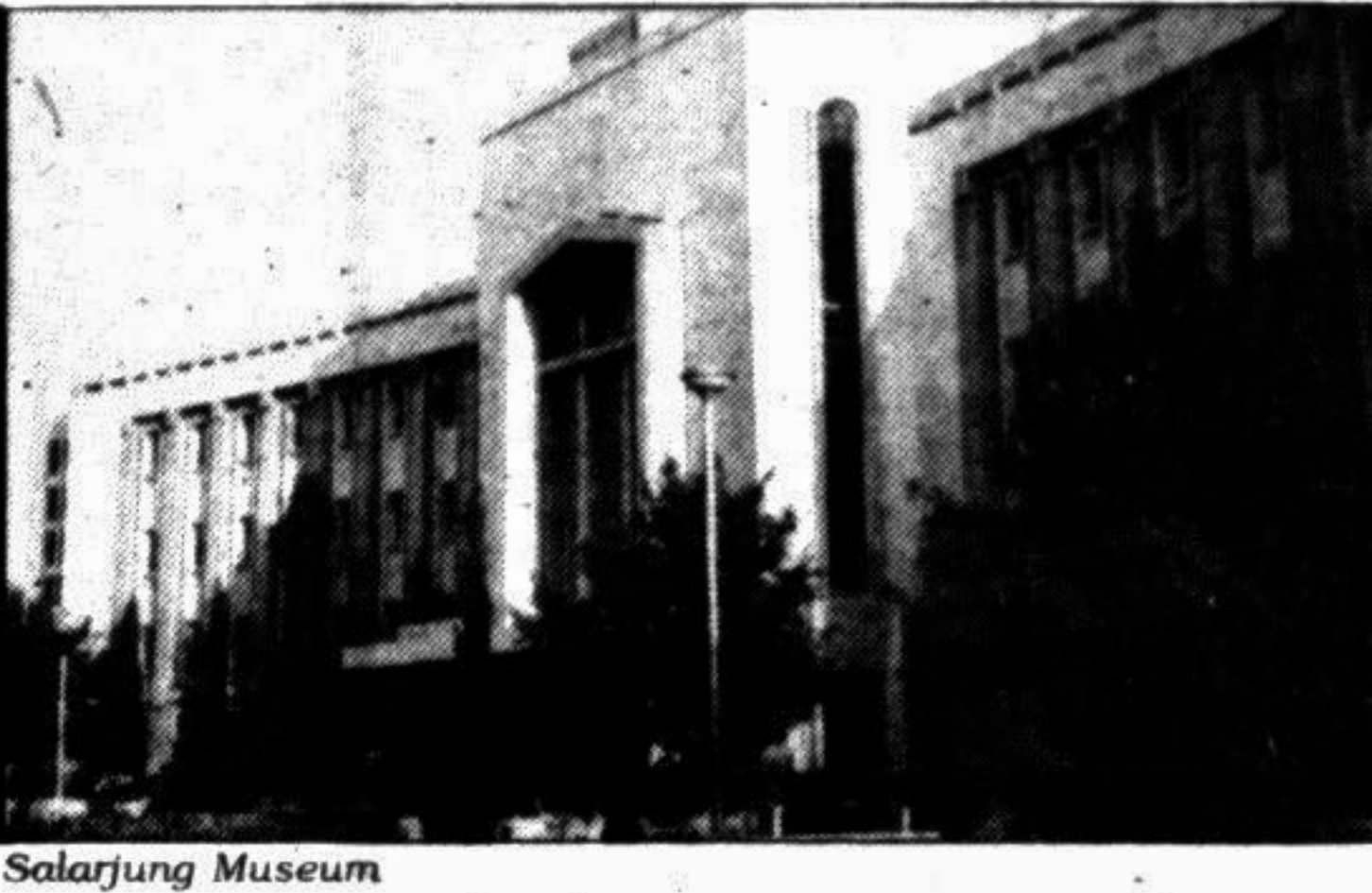
the ground level is 180 feet. Other places of interest we visited included the High Court situated on the right bank of the river Musi; Nehru Zoological Park which com-

bines the lyric of the lush green with the hardness of rocks and granites, and which has many kinds of birds and animals; and the Salar Jung Museum named after Mir Yusuf

Alli Khan better known to the world as Salar Jung who devoted his time and resources to collecting art-treasures from every walk of life. This museum is divided into differ-

ent sections such as art, painting, statues, potteries, glass-ware, jade, gold, silver, and weapons of the Mughals.

The American Studies Research Centre and Hyderabad, taken together, may be metaphorically described in terms of a perennially beaming smile, the kind of smile that I saw spreading over those faces I met — those ones who unstintingly extended warm Indian hospitality to us, making our stay in Hyderabad a pleasant one. Shouldn't I speak of Ms Eunice Rao — that attractive, bright young woman from the English Department of Osmania University, doing her research on the poetry of Adrienne Rich — who was so warm and friendly, who filled our moments with gossip, jokes and stories?



Salarjung Museum



## The British Council Language Matters

### The Intro

This week's column has the first of a series on the use of articles ('a', 'the', etc) in English. There is also the usual Wobbly Words puzzle and a Word Processor.

One item that may interest those who would like to improve their reading skills is

the reading puzzle. If you read the text carefully you should be able to work out who lives on each floor and what that person's job is. One tip: you must use your powers of deduction. If Susan lives under Dan, then you only need to find out which floor one of them lives on and you will automatically have the answer for the other one.

### The English Article System

This is a particularly problematic area: which article do I use - definite or indefinite? Or is there no article at all? Unfortunately, the rules which apply in your mother tongue do not necessarily translate to English. This is true with Bengali, and the result is 'Benglish' - a Bengali version of English.

Use of the 'wrong' article is not a serious problem; it's hardly likely that it will interfere with communication (which is what language is about, after all), but persistent use of the wrong article can have a stigmatic effect, so it's worth making the effort to tackle the apparent randomness of the English article system. In fact, there are clear rules, and once you've learnt them, there should be no problems!

This is the first in a series of pieces about the English article system. The first three weeks will be for information and reference (so keep them handy), and after that there will be a number of tasks for you to do. This week, the focus is on the indefinite article.

There are five different uses of the indefinite article. With the examples in each section, there's a space for you to give your own example:

1. 'A' is used for individualising. This is the most common use of the indefinite article, and is used to refer to one individual member of a class.

Eg \* The tracks of a Bengal tiger were seen near Hiron Point yesterday.  
\* A woman showed me where the library was.

2. 'A' also has a numerical function, and in this case can be replaced by the word 'one'.

Eg \* There's a tiger in the zoo.  
\* She bought a kilo of rice.

Note that if it is the numerical use of the indefinite article, then the plural will probably be a number. The sentences above could be changed to something like 'There are three tigers in the zoo', or 'She bought two kilos of rice'. Compare this with the class examples below, which would change to 'Tigers eat meat' and 'Women's work is never done'.

3. The indefinite article also has a distributive use. When this is so, 'a' can be replaced by 'each', 'every' or 'per'.

Eg \* A tiger sleeps for 16 hours a day.  
\* She earns 4,500 Taka a month.

\*

Note that in Bengali-English, there is a tendency to avoid the distributive use of 'a', and to use 'per' instead. This is fine - it's 'correct' and your meaning is clear - but it's not common in modern international English. So if you want to get a bit closer to the international standard, make an effort to say 'a' every time you think of using 'per'.

4. 'A' is used for classifying - to put something into a class with other things. The sentence pattern here is subject + verb 'to be' + complement.

Eg \* This tiger cub is a male.  
\* Shumona is a good student.

\*

5. Finally, it can be used when talking about a class of things. It shows that the noun refers to every member of this class.

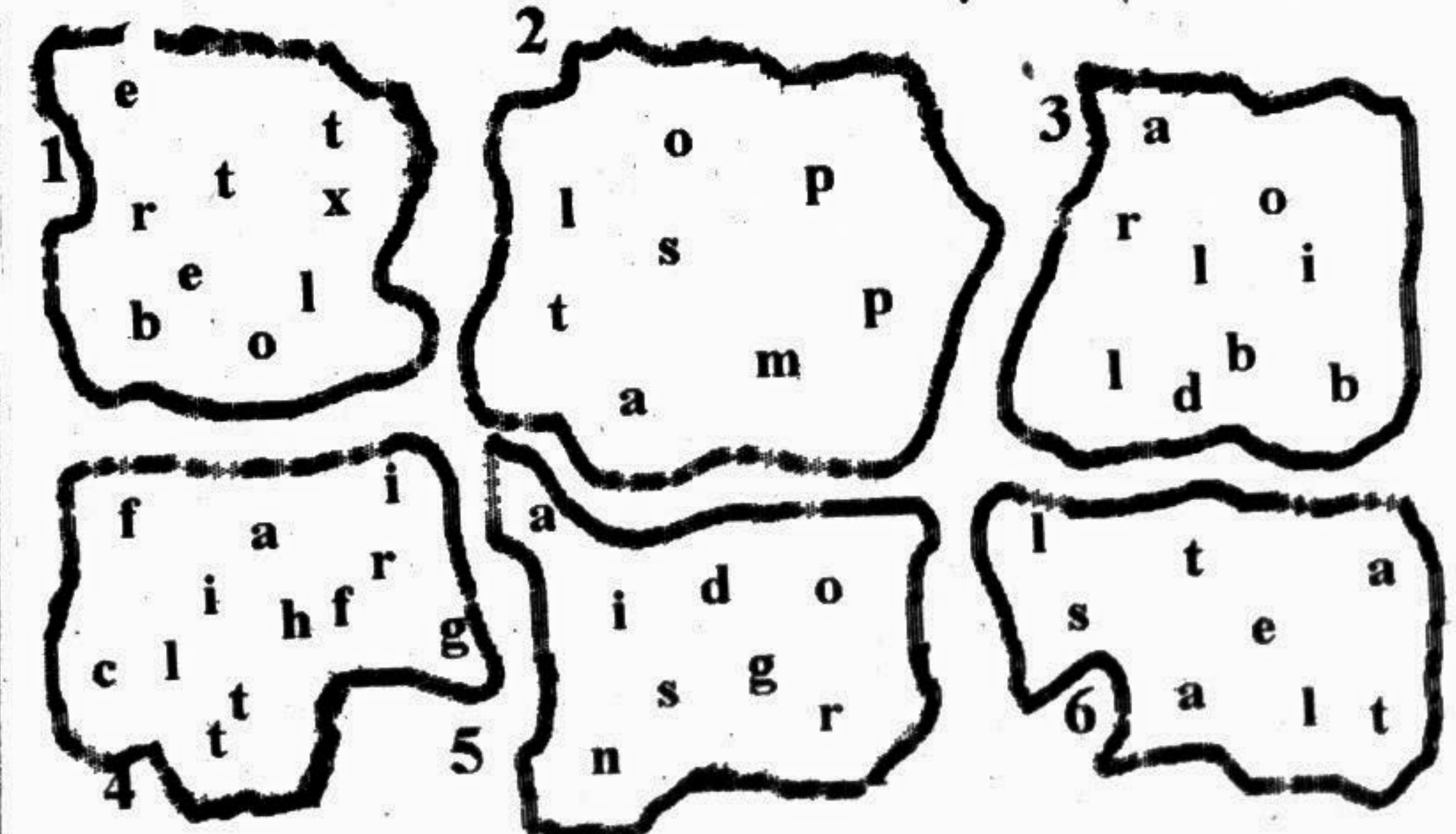
Eg \* A tiger eats meat.  
\* A woman's work is never done.

\*

Next week: The Definite Article.

### Wobbly Words

Try this word puzzle. In each shape the letters are jumbled up. Put them in the correct order. What do they all have in common? Be careful. Some shapes have more than one word.



1. .... 2. .... 3. .... 4. ....  
5. .... 6. ....

### Good for a Game?

Who lives in Banani? And what do they do? A reading puzzle.

In Banani there is a block of flats which has five floors. Three women, and two men live in the flats; they are a teacher, an artist, a doctor, an engineer and a photographer. The teacher lives on the ground floor. The photographer, engineer and the doctor are women. John is not an artist. Jane lives on the first floor. Susan is not a doctor; she lives under Dan. Dolores is an engineer; she lives on the floor above the artist.

Use the information above to complete the chart.

| NAME | JOB    | FLOOR |
|------|--------|-------|
| John |        |       |
|      | Artist |       |
|      |        | 4     |
|      |        |       |
|      |        |       |

Answer to reading puzzle:

| NAME    | JOB          | FLOOR |
|---------|--------------|-------|
| John    | Teacher      | G     |
| Dan     | Artist       | 3     |
| Jane    | Doctor       | 1     |
| Dolores | Engineer     | 4     |
| Susan   | Photographer | 2     |

Things found at the side of the road!  
5. road sign 6. tea stall - they are all  
4. traffic light  
3. letter box 2. lamp post 1. billboard  
Wobbly Words

Answers:  
Contributors: Marina Burns, Dolores Long, Dennis O'Brien, Janet Raynor, Robert Shrubhall