

# RISING STARS

## True Friends are Forever

by Adeeb Z Mahmud

**H**E was from Assam, although his ancestral home was probably somewhere around Sylhet but his family had recently moved to Dhaka and settled here permanently. He hadn't yet quite got hold of the English language and his Bangla was a mixture of anything and everything but Bangla.

Since our school rules required everyone to speak in English during school hours, one can conceive what an uphill task it was for him to communicate with others. Still he was a bright boy otherwise and I suppose he must have convinced our principal to admit him in the middle of the year.

I don't remember the exact date but one gloomy morning in June, Mrs Khan, our class teacher came into the class leading with her a tall, urbane boy looking a bit confused but not the least nervous. "Class, I want you to welcome Adnan Quadri, who will be studying with us," she said in a tone as if he was an outcast.

I looked up at him. He was a meager yet meticulous person. The weather was so dull, the class so boring and the atmosphere so depressing that everyone had suddenly become poetic. They were all trying to make the best use of literature for their pastiches, all except me. Mrs Khan's eyes glanced over all the boys in the first row until they found whom they were looking for. "Adeeb," she called out inevitably. "You don't seem to have anything to do. Why don't you help Adnan a bit with his studies so he can catch up with you?"

Well I figured it wouldn't hurt to make a new friend. The problem was that I myself wasn't exactly getting straight A's in all subjects and what's more there were those weekly tests and of course monthly parties. So I didn't actually have all the time in the world

no matter how true it looked. But who was going to explain that to Mrs Khan? So for the next two weeks Adnan and I sat down after school and each day I became his tutor for each five minutes.

We were progressing like a worm. I could sense that he was feeling guilty and wanted to repay me in some way. One day, during our session, some of my friends came over to us. Naturally, I was surprised to see them there at that hour. "We've been practicing," Farooq explained. "We have a football match with the Vagabond Club next week and we're still hot of two strikers."

That evening Adnan called me. "Adeeb," he said. "You helping my study, I repay, playing for football school?"

"You play football?" I asked. "I play quite better."

"All right. I'll introduce you to our Games Teacher tomorrow. Next afternoon, on the field, we found out that 'quite better' was actually the best our school had ever seen. He seemed to be born to play football. Please to have person in front of goal. I kick from here," he said to Mr Huq, our Games Teacher. So Mr Huq sent our goalkeeper, Zayed, to block Adnan's shot.

The ball was about forty yards away from the goal post. Adnan was looking at it as if it were his sole enemy on the face of the Earth. "First right foot," he said and then we saw the action. The football was no longer a football - it had turned into a cannonball. Zayed was not dumb enough to risk his life by standing in the way and the ball almost split the net.

"Zayed," cried out Mr Huq "the idea is to block the ball." "And get killed?" Zayed

replied. Adnan was taking his position again, this time with his left foot.

"You can block it this time, Zayed. He's using his left foot," encouraged Mr Huq.

However, the next shot was a blur which Zayed did not spot until it was behind him in the net. Mr Huq walked over to Adnan. "Welcome to the team," he said. Finally the big day arrived. It turned out that we were still one striker short and there were no other players left. At last Mr Huq had to take that dreaded decision which neither he nor I liked. "Adeeb," he said in a stern voice. "I'm taking you because there's no one else. But we've got Adnan on our team this time. If you can prevent yourself from putting the ball in OUR net, we just might win this match."

The Vagabond Club has been quelling us for three years in a row but not this time. Two hours later they were on the short end of a 5-1 match and glad to go home; thanks to Adnan who scored three goals. What was most surprising though, was that, not only had I not messed up but I myself had netted one of the goals. Well actually, I had been fortunate enough to stand in the path of one of Adnan's shots and the ball whammed off my head into their net. My head felt like it had been hit by a comet and for five minutes, I lay flat on the turf wondering who I am and vowing never to touch a football again. Mr Huq came running towards me. He help up a pile of fingers before me.

"How many do you see?" he asked.

"Seven," I managed to squeak out.

"Well I guess that's close enough," he said and helped me walk to the sideline. After that Adnan became a hero in our school. He himself was very modest. "What big deal, only a game, no?" However, his grades hadn't improved. Grades which had first been C's then B's transforming into D's then F's. If the trip down the alphabet continued, there wasn't going to be any Adnan in the football team any more.

I tried my best to help but we were getting exactly nowhere and after a week, I saw that this extra duty was hampering my own studies as well. After all, if he himself didn't try hard enough, how could anyone else help him? Then one afternoon, I was just fed up and realized that a flasco my efforts had been. How can you be so stupid? I yelled at him and marched out of the room.

I had a science test the next Sunday and I was so busy with my studies during the weekend that I hardly had any time to think about Adnan or anything else. Sunday morning saw me wide awake at dawn and I could guess that something was wrong. I looked at my table clock to check the time. From the position of the hands, I could see that it was quarter past seven but why were the numbers so blurred? Suddenly, a dreadful thought occurred to me. I had fallen asleep the previous night while studying Newton's third law and the physics book was lying innocently on my bedside table. As I picked up the book and looked inside, I realized with horror that my fears were

coming true - I couldn't read any more. I didn't understand a word that was written; it was all Latin to me. As a last resort, I glanced at yesterday's Bangla newspaper on the table - it was only a jumble of lines and dots of which I could make out neither heads nor tails. Shaking in panic, I somehow got out of bed and ran straight upstairs to Dr Reza, our family doctor, who lived on the next floor. He was surprised to see me at that hour. "What's up? You look like you just had the worst nightmare."

"Worse Doc. I don't know what it is but I can't read anymore. English, Bangla - I don't recognize any letters or words."

There was a pause. Then the doctor spoke up. "I suppose you'll have to start learning all over again. Let me know how you're getting along."

"How I'm getting along? I couldn't believe my ears. When? In another seventeen years?"

Look, there's nothing I can do. Why don't you ask Adnan to help? He's far ahead of you now. I'm sure he'll help you though you called him stupid. I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me now...

"But Doc... Are you going to sleep all day? My mother's voice woke me up. Are you sure your feeling okay or do you want me to call Dr Reza? she asked. "No Amma, I quickly replied. I just saw him... I mean I'm feeling quite all right. I grabbed my physics book and opened it with shaky fingers. Never before had I been so much relieved and overjoyed at the sight of the description of Newton's third law. You know, the only nice part about nightmares is the feeling you get when you wake up.

"I can read. I can read!" I shouted out. My mother gave me a strange look. But I couldn't waste any time now - I knew I had to spill it out to someone. I changed as quickly as I could, ran downstairs, grabbed my bike and pumped as fast as I could to Adnan's house.

He greeted me with his usual smiling face. I was ashamed and apologized for my obloquy. "Is no problem, pal," he said and began shaking my hand until it was about to come loose from my arm.

Adnan, between the two of us, I'm going to tell you something, and I told him everything about my dream.

"Very strange," Adnan remarked. "But now you see how is like when reading not easy."

"I sure do. I don't realize how difficult it was for you."

"My fault also," he said "I study hard now." "Come on, let's go to school. And from that day, the amity began to amass.

Next week, there was an English test and Mrs Khan was handing out the test papers. "Adeeb," she said as she came over to me. "I see you've done a pretty good job with Adnan."

"We've still got a long way to go," I said. "I think I'll stick around and show him a bit more." She looked at me as if I was toad that turned into a prince.

"Frankly, I thought both of you were barely going to pass," she said. "But now it seems that you two have certainly earned a B plus. In fact, you're both so close to A's that I am... 'B is quite fine..." Adnan was trying to be polite.

## How Watt 'Repaired' Newcomer's Model

by Tasneem Ayub

October 19th, 1764

My master James Watt has just locked himself up in his study after his routine exercise and breakfast. Lately he has found an exciting and interesting job. He has been hired to repair a model of Newcomer's steam engine.

I began to wonder why I came to work for Watt. He makes me work like a serf. I hate baby-sitting him all day.

In fact, when I looked at him sitting there by the window, I found him messing around with the model as if it were a toy. I already knew that my master never ever invented "his" instruments and that his two assistants contributed a lot; but that was to be kept a secret. Now both the assistants were away, as Watt did not pay them adequately for keeping the secret. I knocked on the door and he came up and opened it. After a slight delay I put his coffee tray down and watched what he did. He was sitting on the carpet, working his brain out. Suddenly he had got himself into a mass and had made the model worse than it could be. He started sobbing like an infant. I went over to him sympathetically and offered him comfort. But he would not be comforted unless the model of the steam engine was put right. "I want to put it right. I want to put it right, sob, I can't, sob, I... boo how," he said in tears. The sobbing had stopped but now he was waiting!

Although I always used to malign him secretly, now I somehow felt pity for this overgrown baby. I went over to the ruins of the model and carefully put it back to its old form again, seeing a plan of the machine. I found out that the defect was in the rump rod, after a lot of hard work. Watt was simply overjoyed when he found his model repaired and he started crying again, but this time for happiness!

The world knew that Watt had put Newcomer's model right. His former assistants came to inquire how he invented it, but it was a secret, so nobody would know.



I retired as James Watt's baby sitter after that incident. I would have no more of his stupidity. Ten years later, 1774

I heard that Watt has invented a better steam-engine. He was in the news lately. I can't help wondering how he did it. I felt inquisitive like his ex-assistants. But perhaps he didn't invent it after all, perhaps.

## From Norway, With Love...

by RS staff

They came, they saw and they conquered the hearts of the Bangladeshi people.

For the children from the land of Thor-the God of thunder and shivering cold-Norway, the warmth of Bangladesh and its people had been unforgettable, according to the leader of an unofficial Norwegian children's goodwill delegation Per Erik Skuggevik.

The 16-member delegation comprising of 12 children and four adults visited Bangladesh for eight days and left Dhaka for home on November 4. They are members of an organisation named 'Norge Ungdomslag' located in the town of Arendal in the land of midnight sun.

When the team arrived Dhaka last month, the Central Kachi-Kanchar Mela arranged a reception in their honour. The Dada Bhai's organisation also took them to see the Central Shaheed Minar, the National Monument in Savar, the National Parliament and the Children's Academy museum.

The 12-rejoicing children were also taken to Chandpur.

Comilla and Srimangal in co-operation with the local units of the Kanchi-Kanchar Mela.

They saw displays of physical activities by the members of the Mela at the Chandpur Officers' Club premises, Shadow Dances at the Comilla Town Hall premises and cultural performances at the auditorium of the Bangladesh Tea Research Institute School in Srimangal.

At all of these places, the children of Norway enlivened their visit by performing folk dances for their Bangladeshi friends. They also visited the Mainamati Museum, the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARAD), tea gardens and tea processing plants in Srimangal and other places as well. Before leaving the land of six-seasons, at the Zia International Airport, they embraced the children of the Mela and broke down in emotional tears.

Director of the Central Kachi-Kanchar Mela Ruknuzzaman Khan, popularly known as Dadabhai, and his co-workers accompanied the team and supervised the visits.

## JUST WISHES

by Md Ziaul Haque

- I want to go where the rivers go, I want to go with the birds; I want to go where the desert sand ends, I want to reach the end of my planet, Where I will be the lone ranger. All I want is to be alone; and alone with no wants, and only alone; and lonely with nature.

THEY call him 'The Immortal Detective.' And to millions of devotees worldwide, Sherlock Holmes is alive and well and living in London. Letters praising his deductive skills or seeking his help in solving crimes still pour into his supposed lodgings - 221b Baker Street - at a rate of up to 100 each week.

Films, plays, television and radio serials - well over 200 in all - continue to depict his adventures. So when his most ardent fans foregather on the French Riviera later this year they will face a somewhat delicate balancing act - commemorating the death of a man who never was.

Holmes met his fate just a century ago atop the real-life Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland at the hands of his arch-enemy, Professor Moriarty.

At the climax of their hand-to-hand fight, both men plunged headlong into the 200m-high torrent: The Final Problem was meant to be the final curtain for them both.

## Why Detective Holmes Remains a Hero for Millions

by Nicola Cole

perately bored with the fictional character who had earned him fame and fortune.

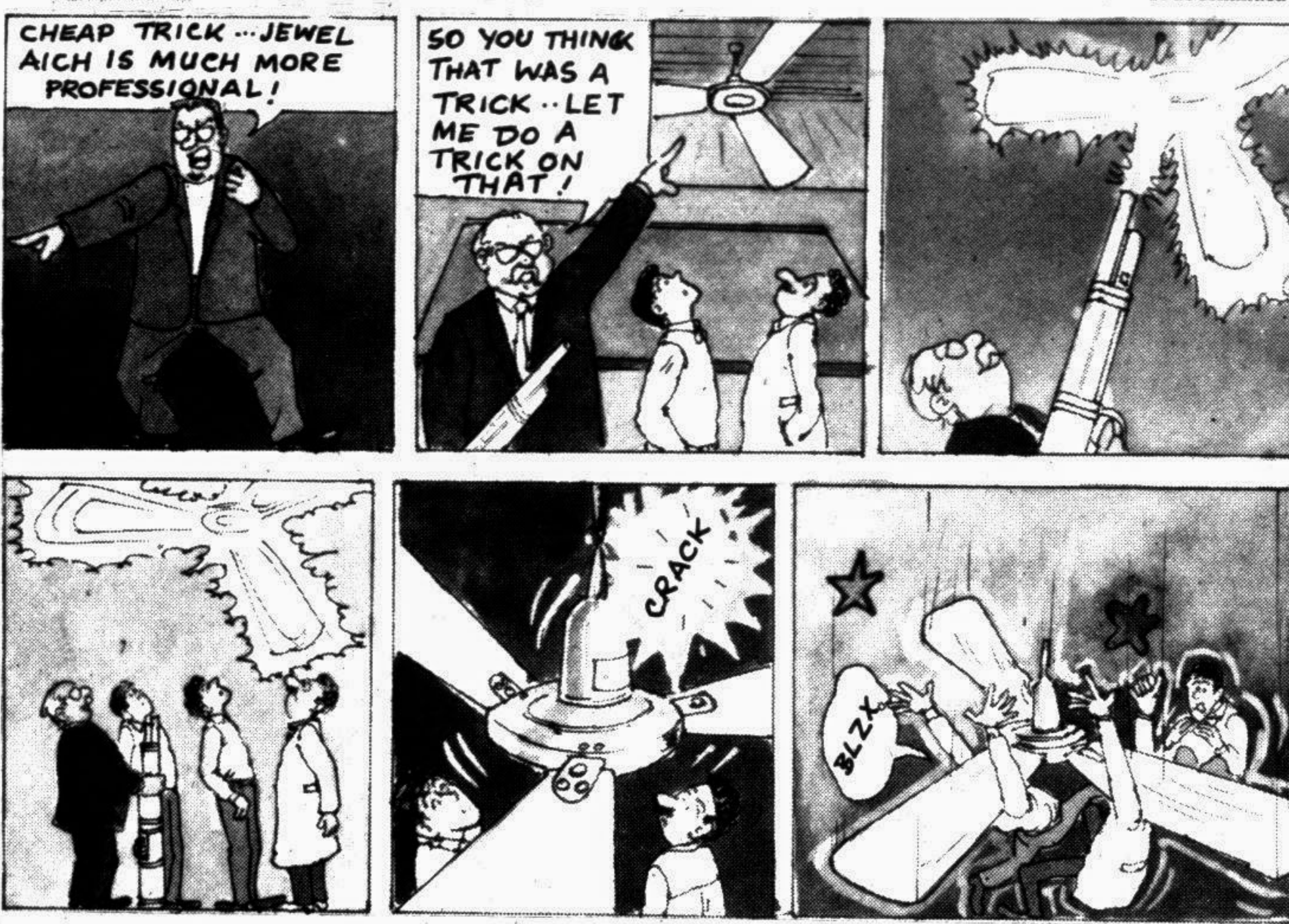
His reading public was outraged. Twenty-four brilliant Holmes stories had engendered a deep affection for the horse-drawn hero. Many believed he really existed - and mourned him by donning black armbands.

Indignant questions were asked in Parliament. Conan Doyle's publishers The Strand Magazine, was flooded with furious letters. In the best tradition of such matters, there could be only one solution to the final problem; Conan Doyle revived Holmes - and loyally kept him going for a further 34 years.

During the interval between his "disappearance" and re-emergence, known to disciples as "the great hiatus," Holmes dodged Moriarty's vengeful henchmen - and supposedly spent time

## THE MISSING MACHINE

To be continued



researching coal-tar derivatives in Montpellier. Will the same be true of JB Ewing, the ruthless Texan oil tycoon who made the US teleshop Dallas compulsive viewing for several hundred million fans worldwide?

Unlikely, but possible; for the angry cries of "Who shot JR?" easily drowned out the silent minority who thought "Who cares?" They prompted a resurrection of the bullying boss everyone loved to hate - and a further chance for co-star Joan Collins to prove that well-proportioned women

approaching pensionable age should not always feel shy of wearing mini-skirts and plunge-necklines... Minis had hardly been invented when novelist Archibald J Cronin delivered Doctor Finlay - a fiery young Scots physician who translated to TV so convincingly that, as filming progressed, the actor who played him was mistaken for a real-life medic and asked to assist at accidents.

Dr Finlay's Casebook was such a success that, following a 19-year absence, the series has been brought back in remake form. No amount of ham acting and ponderous production values seem able to dim its appeal. This is true of all beloved heroes and heroines from Romeo and Juliet to Anna Karenina, Robin Hood to Davy Crockett.

And Little Nell, of course. He death scene in The Old Curiosity Shop made its author weep as copiously as his readers.

For Nell was a tribute to one of Charles Dickens' early great loves - his wife's sister, Mary, who had died in his arms after a heart attack at the tender age of 17. "Young, beautiful and good... she had not a fault," Dickens elegised, adding: "God in his mercy numbered her with his angels."

Yet she too survives, despite over-sentimentalisation and unintended sabotage by the speaking-clock school of drama presentation.

This style is seen at its underwhelming best in Australia's TV serial Neighbours, which continues to bounce around the globe like a wooden ball. Its most memorable character has been Kyle Minogue's Charlene, who did more than any other vapid blonde to enhance the epithet "blimbo."

## Like Test Drivers in a Driving School

by Siraj-us-Saleheen

LET us visualize the following scene - a man has a heart attack, and must immediately be removed to a hospital. The ambulance arrives, picks him up and is on its way to the hospital. But unfortunately there is a traffic jam on the way. The ambulance fails to reach its destination in time, and the man dies. What a tragedy? If Shakespeare was living in our times he wouldn't have to look for a plot to write a tragedy story. This would do.

It may seem ironic but this is the true picture of our great(?) capital, Dhaka. Obviously, among the major problems in Bangladesh, the problem of traffic gets prior attention. There isn't a day, or even an hour when there is no traffic jam in any part of the city. If one wants to while away his or her time, they may just get stuck in a traffic jam, and that will do. So we definitely must come up with some quick ideas to eliminate this cursed problem.

The most tangible area for traffic jams are the entry points of the city, some of which we know as Saidabad, Mahakhali, Gabtoli. It is needless to describe the situation that arises in these areas nearly all the times - especially at the morning and at the noon. With all the truck, lorry, bus, coach and even tempo drivers; stopping, turning and rampaging as senseless idiots who seem like test-drivers in a driving school. The place always looks like a jigsaw-puzzle. In Gabtoli we see that, though there is a rule for trucks not to enter the city before 6 PM, they start pouring in before 6 PM and make multiple lines parked upto Dar-Us-Salaam, which is one of the main reasons of such chaos in that area.

If someone wants to find out how many types of vehicles there is in our cosmopolitan city, all they have to do is to stand close to the centre of the city, better known as Gulistan. A variety of transports lurk to and fro, with no specific destination in mind, making the place unbearable with polluted air or Carbon-dioxide and constant beeping of horns. Except some areas, such as Gulshan, Banani, Dhankundi and places of Mohammadpur; each and every point in Dhaka is affected by the traffic problem.

If we dig a little deeper, we might see that there are a lot of reasons for this poor traffic system. One of the main reasons is inexperienced drivers. Most of the vehicle drivers, specially truck drivers, are not aware of the consequences of

traffic problems. This arises from their lack of education. Almost every driver can't even read or write their own name, so how can we expect them to understand traffic signals and rules.

Also there is the problem of rickshaws. The good citizens of Dhaka are fed-up with these rickshaw drivers. Nobody can tell the exact number of rickshaws that roam around the city. On an estimation it seems that there are approximately three lakh rickshaws in the city. These small disturbing contraptions along with their drivers don't give a damn to the traffic laws. In many important roads they even block most of the road by parking to and fro and make lines more than necessary.

Besides there is the problem of roadside spaciousness. Except for some of the main roads, all the other roads (e.g roads of Lalbagh, Narinda, Lakshimbazar, Modhubagh, Malbagh, Zigatola and many more) are very congested. Although there are some wide roads, they are almost fully blocked by illegal occupation of unauthorized hawkers. As a result there is a huge parking problem in the city.

Then there is the matter of irregular construction of roads and highways. If, however the Municipality fixes a road - just within a few days the same road will be broken down by Dhaka WASA for setting proper sanitation lines. Then what is the use of ever fixing any road at all? In many places of the city we see that big tall buildings, mainly apartments and shopping centres are constructed without any specific planning and are in places they should not be. This creates unnecessary crowding of private cars and rickshaws blocking nearly the whole road, which causes confusion.

This may seem like a laughing matter, but a close observation has shown that traffic jams have a psychological effect on people experiencing it. People are always at the edge of their tolerance limits. There is no specifically designed solution for this grand and serious problem. Still we must take some remedial steps to try and solve it. Firstly, and firmly, we must talk some sense into ourselves. We are basically nonchalant towards others problems. This must not be. If we start caring for one another's lives, some help will be done. Each and every one should follow the existing traffic rules.

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We regret full printing errors in the article An Unexpected Punishment published in The Daily Star issue of November 13 1994. —RS Editor