

TEEN'S and TWENTIES

The Magic of David Copperfield

by Samia Islam



David Copperfield with juicier super model Claudia Schiffer

THROUGH his conjuring art David Copperfield has made the Statue of Liberty disappear, walked through the Great Wall of China, flown on stage and made snow fall, but what most people in this continent know him by is his recent engagement to Super model Claudia Schiffer. Although last year he was tenth in the Forbes' list of top-earning performers, ahead of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Jackson and Madonna — and regularly sells out shows worldwide year after year, the illusionist's wedding announcement has raised his public profile considerably. "I have been on TV for 15 years," says Copperfield, 38. "I get engaged and then all of a sudden, all this attention. I think people care about more the personal lives of entertainers sometimes than the work, even though they pay money and tune in to see the work. It's bewildering." But I guess people don't have much of a choice since they only feast on what the paparazzi dish out in tabloids.

The first time I saw a David Copperfield show on tape, I thought magic couldn't get any better. But since that day, I have been proven wrong time and again, by none other than the man himself. And it's not magic tricks that he does, excuse me, it's illusions. He prefers to refer to himself as an illusionist. And he is, without a doubt, the best in the world. What intrigues me most about his illusions is the unorthodox way of his presentations. It's equally appealing to kids and adults alike. He deals with day to day issues and adds a little humour and finesse and lo, behold, the audience is entranced for hours. At times he walks on stage with his pet duck Webster who is part psychic. He interacts with his audience to get tremendous response. His punch lines have impeccable timing. Sometimes you forget whether he is an illusionist or a stand-up comic or both. On his earlier shows Harley Davidson bikes and shiny leather jackets used to be a regular but now his approach has changed considerably.

Then there is his other style. Where the suspense is palpable as he locks himself inside a vault in a building that is about to be demolished or gets chopped in half by an enormous rotating blade, or is tied up, hung upside down on a bed of spikes and set on fire, facing a perilous end where the worst could happen if he should fall. And the spikes are not made of rubber, for the kind information of all sceptics, and besides rubber spikes can be just as deadly when they are set alight.

He thinks up the most outrageously dangerous illusions and carries them off in style. Accidents do happen like the time he cut off the tip of his finger with the sharp scissors he was using for a particular act and when he told the audience about it, they burst into laughter thinking it a joke. Another time he was supposed to levitate a Ferrari 6 feet above ground but something

went wrong and it fell from a height of about three feet. Had it been 6 feet up in the air, he would have been standing underneath it! In view of such emergencies, the crew always have a Plan B to switch on to but in this instance the levitation act was to wrap up on the show so the crew did not have an alternative plan. So according to David, although he looked like a fool, everything worked out to his benefit when people flocked to his shows to see him goof up and he had sell-out shows wherever he went.

Kids love David not only because he can make things disappear but because he is a modern day Peter Pan — he can fly. Figuring out that

magie did not reinvent his career but it surely kicked it into high gear. Since he introduced the trick as his finale, his ratings have soared. Now he closes the show with a one-two emotional punch. First, he flies, and then tops it with a real wow: he makes snow appear out of his hands, a trick that climaxes with snow falling all over his audience.

"I work very hard to make magic emotional, funny, sensual and many different things," says Copperfield. "Magic can make you cry and that never happened before. When I make snow appear people don't walk out of the show thinking, 'how did he get

Claudia? There are people who think magic is 'cheesy' but they surely haven't seen David in action. Magic is as fine an art form as there is. Albert Einstein said that when wonder in us dies, we're as good as dead. Magic creates that wonder. Dance places the eyes and music the ears, but magic challenges the mind. I try to combine all of those in my shows."

Copperfield grew up in Koutkin in Metuchen, New Jersey. He was the only son of a haberdasher who dreamed to become a performer himself. But his wife said (as David quips jokingly), "we want to eat," so he gave up his dream. But when his son wanted to be a magician, he let him pursue his goals. David started doing magic at age eight, trying to deal with his shyness. "Davino, Boy Magician," worked local birthday parties, hung around magic shops and by age 17, was starring in a Chicago musical about a magician. After knocking around NY for a few years he was discovered by producer Joseph Cates, who hired him for an ABC special, and he has never looked back since. In 1994, his future wife (no wedding dates yet) co-starred with him in a CBS special David Copperfield: 15 years of magic, a two-hour retrospective of his super illusions. For his first three specials he did the usual card, coin and levitation tricks. But for his fourth he went in for the big one — making an airplane disappear. Ever since he has tried to go beyond people's expectations, to find other big icons that people could relate to. He's already planning next year's show where he will try something with a tornado. His wish list included at one time: making an island disappear, straightening the Leaning Tower of Pisa and putting a woman's face on Mount Rushmore.

Viewers cram computer bulletin boards after his special air, offering opinions on how he pulled off his tricks. But so far, despite larger crews (who sign secrecy agreements) that accompany him: on his tours, his secrets have yet to be revealed. It's due in part to the fact that no single person is in charge of a whole act, the act is divided into different segments and a number of crew members oversee various details. So nobody except him knows how the entire trick works. That doesn't stop him from being paranoid. He doesn't want the location of his warehouse in the middle of the Nevada desert printed. He says people go through his garbage, poke around looking for clues. He is a very secretive person. He doesn't like to talk about his personal life much and being self-effacing, he is the last person to mention the foundation he has established to help kids with handicaps learn magic tricks so that they can improve their motor skills and teach those tricks to other kids, boosting their own self-confidence. "It's really important that we keep our private lives private," he says, "because it keeps the magic alive."

The Night Sky

Part-III

By M Amin and Syed Ashraf Uddin

WE are in the third month of your stargazing and we think you have recognized some of the constellations visible in the evening sky. This month a few of Autumn's constellation will appear from east and some of the summer's are preparing to say goodbye. You may have a question in your mind that why the pattern of the sky changes in every season? It is because of the Earth's revolution around the sun.

Now come to learn about the constellations. It is better to start with a specific one. Look at the northern sky. The Ursa Major — a group of seven bright stars appearing like a big question mark is domination at the lower sky. If you have not yet find the north pole stars then find it with the help of constellation Ursa Major. Advance with the lower two stars of Ursa Major or Big Dipper (described at previous issue) to east and you will get a second magnitude star which is lonely at that area. This is the Polaris — the south pole star. Polaris with other six faint stars make the constellation Ursa Major. But it is hard to recognize it for city light glare. The constellation Draco the dragon is high in the northern sky and above Polaris. Four stars look like a parallel, Polaris make the head of dragon and rests complete it's body.

At North-East sky a beautiful W-shaped constellation called Cassiopeia is rising. It will reach higher sky as night sets in. With a binocular you will get to see a cloud of stars at that area.

Come at your Zenith (the point overhead of the observer) and just east of your zenith the brilliant blue star Vega is shining. It is the 4th brightest star of the entire sky. Vega with four other stars close to it make the constellation Lyra. The constellation is well placed for observation. A famous planetary nebula "M57" or ring nebula lies in this constellation. Try to find it with your telescope using chart. North-east of Lyra the constellation Cygnus — the swan is swimming across the Milky Way. The constellation's brightest star Deneb is also shining with brilliancy.

At the eastern sky the great constellation Pegasus is rising. You will find as night sets in four stars make a big square in the sky. It is called the "Great square of Pegasus." Close to Pegasus the constellation Andromeda also rising from north-east sky. "M31" — the

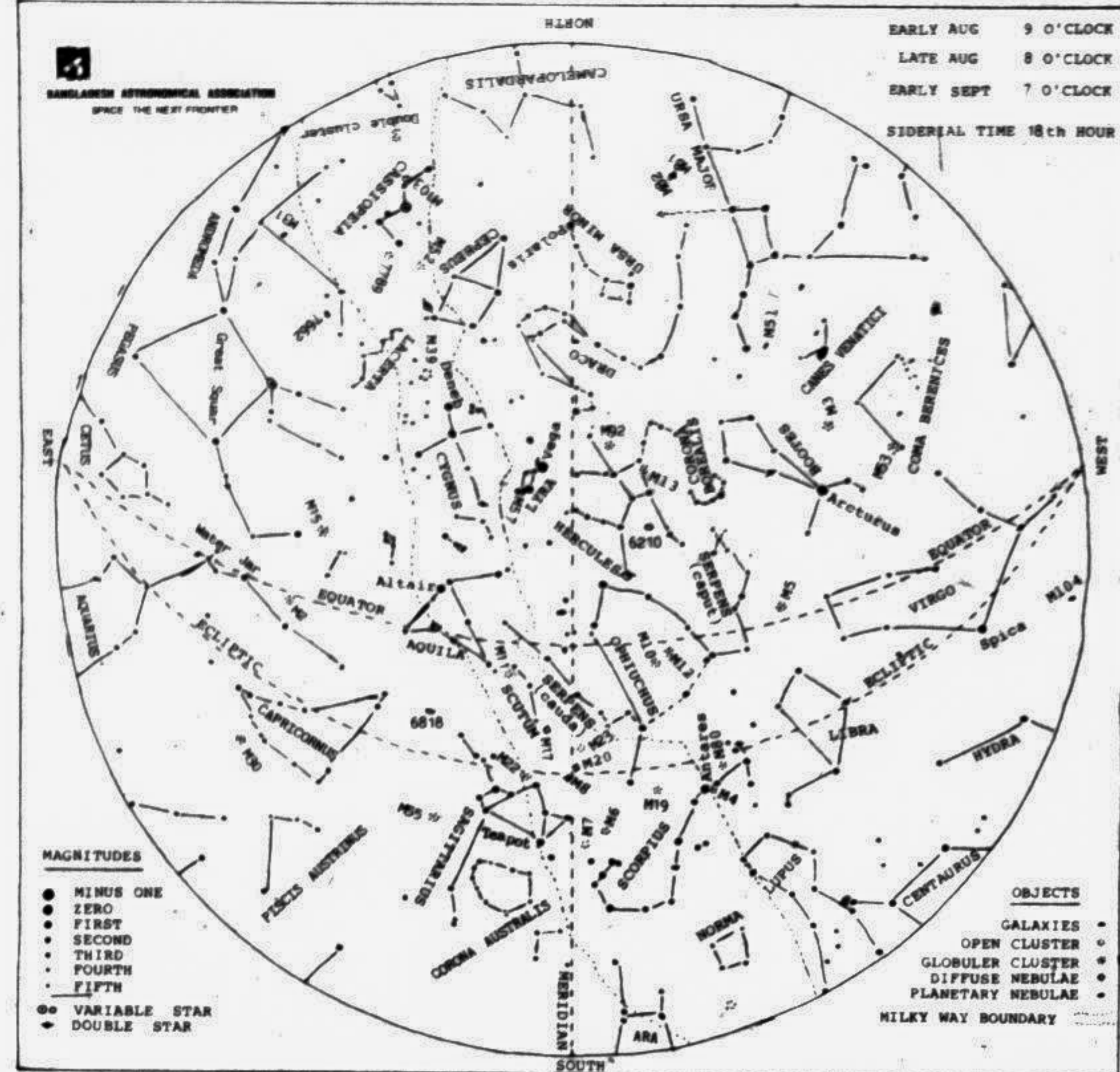
famous naked eye spiral galaxy is at this constellation. But it will be observable fairly in next month.

Come to southern sky where the rich summer constellations are waiting for you. When twilight starts a reddish sky will appear at the south-

small but famous constellation is situated. This is Secotum. This area is full with dense star could visible with binoculars. The constellation Compricornus is at the left of Sagittarius. From south-east sky constellation Aquarius — the water bearer is rising. At

reddish star will easily catch your sight. It is Ancturos — the 5th brightest star of entire sky. Areturus is the brightest star of constellation Books. At lower western sky constellation Virgo is preparing to set down. At South-Western sky the biggest constellation Hydra is nearly gone away.

We have described the



ern sky. It is the brightest star of constellation Scorpius. Scorpius represents a Scorpion according to ancient mythology and this shape is easy to recognize. Left of Scorpius the Sagittarius — the archer is stands. It's tea pot asterism (a part of whole constellation) is also easy target. The bright planet Jupiter is just over the tea' pot shape of Sagittarius constellation that shines with steady light and distinguishes it from stars. Above Scorpius the constellation Ophiuchus and constellation Serpenn are dominating the sky. Just above Sagittarius

very high in the southern sky a bright star Altair is shining. This with other stars make the constellation Aquila — the eagle. Altain with Vega and Deneb make a triangle and this is called 'summer triangle'. Again come to Zenith and this time just west of your Zenith the constellation Hercules' is standing. Look for M13 — the brightest globular cluster of northern sky with your telescope that lies here. West of Herwies a group of stars arranged like a semicircle will catch your sight. It is constellation Cora Borealis. At western sky a brilliant

principle constellations visible in the evening sky for this month. Have a clear sky and good observation. N.B. 1) Hold the chart above your head so that the East-West, North-South marking are in proper directions. 2) Bangladesh Astronomical Association runs a weekly observation camp at Dhaknondi Club play ground (8 no. road) in every Monday from evening to 9 pm. Persons who are interested to observe the sky with telescope are welcome here. Courtesy: Bangladesh Astronomical Association.

DARJEELING THE QUEEN OF THE HILLS

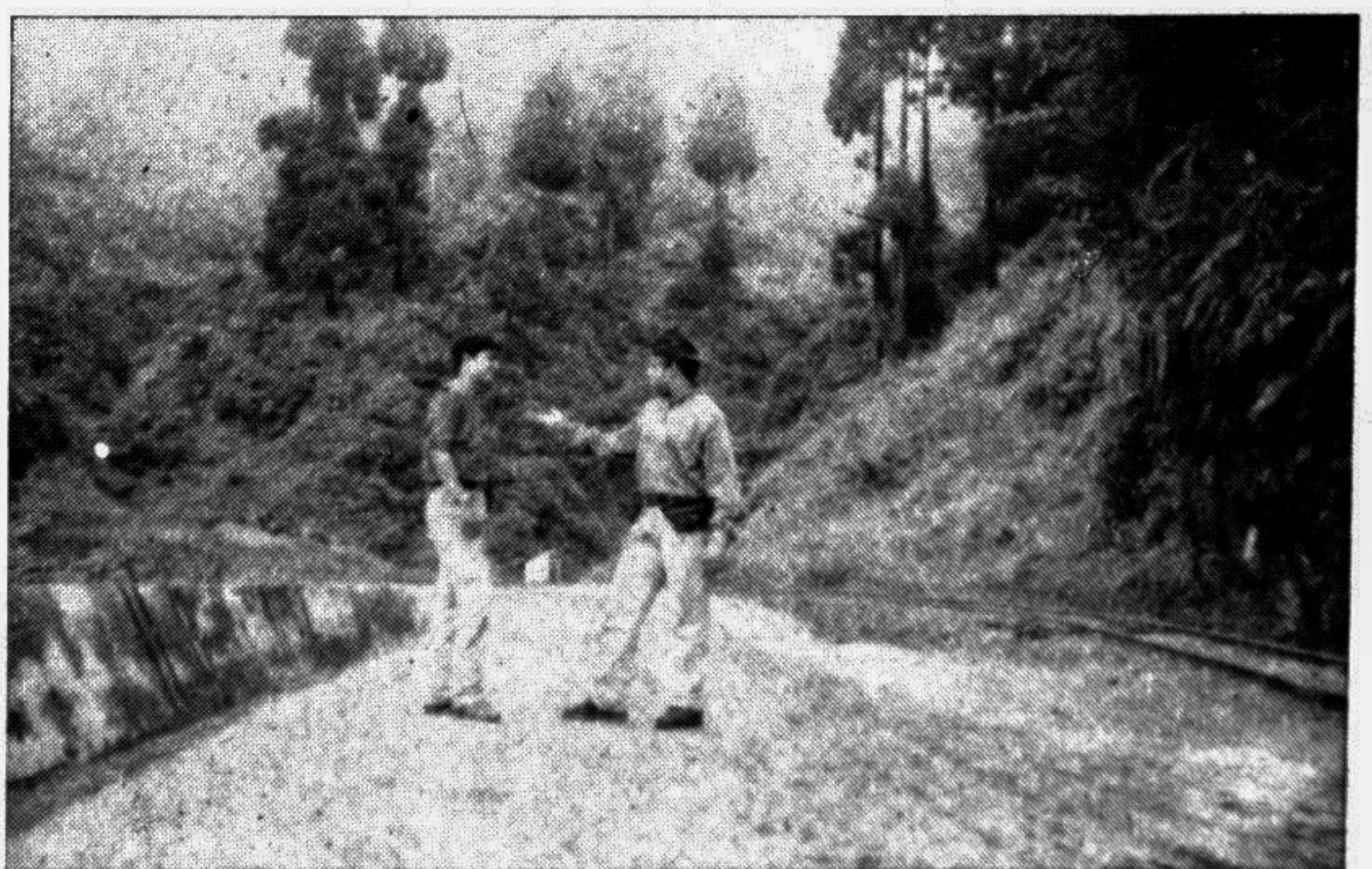
By Towheed Feroze

DARJEELING — the mere mention of the name creates irones mind a picture of surpassing beauty, serenity and tranquility. Situated in West Bengal Darjeeling is a veritable paradise on Earth. In this age of artificial beauty Darjeeling stands as one of the few places which captivates one's heart with its pure impeccable natural elegance. Cool atmosphere combined with rich lush trees and beautiful mountainous terrain characterises this heavenly place. If beauty needs to be perceived then Darjeeling is the right place. Here the adjective beauty expresses itself in its full potential. During my recent visit to Darjeeling I was enchanted by the immense charm holds. Far from the scorching heat of August, Darjeeling is now cool. This coolness is actually reminiscent of our beautiful winter which always seems to last only a few days. Darjeeling is so near yet very few people seem to choose this place for a short visit. A visit to Darjeeling is rather cheap and to be quite frank within the financial capacity of the middle class Bengalees. From Calcutta it takes about twelve hours to reach Shilliguri — a town on the foot of the mountain which leads to Darjeeling. There are several bus lines operating in the Shilliguri Route. Bus tickets are available in Calcutta just underneath the monument in Dharmatala. There are also train lines from Howrah and Shialdah but train journeys are a bit time consuming. Bus lines are far better but look out don't expect to see Hino luxury coaches with four different music channels, video's, in coach snacks etc. From Shilliguri jeeps, luxury coaches (no resemblance to our luxury coaches) are available which leave for Darjeeling every hour. By jeep it takes around two and a half hours and the fare is forty rupees per person. The journey to Darjeeling is through the mountains. It is thrilling as well as charming. Half way through the road cloud will pass through ones hands. The city itself is not at all pleasant, it is congested,

dirty, noisy. Once you are in Darjeeling life will become hell due to the constant pestering of the middlemen. These middlemen work for different hotels and they seem to be hell bent determined to take you to the hotel of their choices. One must also be cautious in selecting hotels. The hotel I was in was disastrous and did not have any water supply. Water has to be bought for five rupees a bucket. The city is no attraction, as for the food there and so some Nepali restaurants which serve delicious Nepali food and believe me these dishes are absolutely delectable. If you go to Darjeeling try the "Tokfa" its a traditional Nepali dish. For expensive food hotel Simla is a place worth visiting. However the beauty of Darjeeling is not in the city but on the journey to the city from Shilliguri.

Similarly on the way back from Darjeeling city the beauty of this mountainous terrain is revealed. On the way back I suggest the toy train which goes to Siliguri but takes about seven hours. The time will not seem like a bother as the mind and soul will totally be enraptured by the captivating beauty of the mountains. The train journey reveals the profound charm an chastity of Darjeeling. Whiles visiting Darjeeling another place must be visited that is the Batasia loop a park made in remembrance of the Gurkha, fighters who laid their lives for their country. Batasia means the windy place. This is a natural spur of the tiger hills mountain around which the narrow gauge rail makes a double loop on its way between Ghoom and Darjeeling towns. This is in itself an engineering marvel. Coming from the plains it is only after having crossed Batasia that one gets the breath taking first glimpse of the queen of the hills — Darjeeling with the pure white

snow laden magnificent Kunchenjunga Range in the background. There is a war memorial at Batasia, the war memorial consists of a sanctified raised oval platform with a nine feet high bronze statue of a Gurkha soldier in "Shok Shastra" and a thirty feet high triangular granite cenotaph on a thirty feet octagonal base, with the roll of honour engraved on it. The entire war memorial complex comprising app 50000 square feet has been covered with grass and beautified with seasonal, perennial flowers and shrubs. For photographers Darjeeling will prove to be a subject with diversity and variety for aesthetes it is a treat for the soul and the eyes. For the ordinary man it is a temporary sanctuary from this modern mundane world. With this rapid development of the world it will not be a matter of amazement if one day man forgets how it feels to be in the presence of natural environment. But still no matter how artificial the world becomes Darjeeling will be there far away from the mechanised world as the place where the mountains kiss the skies and where Nature communes with man.



Darjeeling — a veritable heaven on Earth

Municipality's Garbage Collection

FIRST of all, I would like to thank Samia Islam for her article "Dhaka in the Rainy Season" in the column "Dhaka Day by Day" of July 26th '96. I think that the garbage problem is one of the major problems along with the traffic jam for the people of Dhaka which should be solved by the new government immediately. I would like to add here to bring to the notice of the authorities that the large dustbin skips supplied by the Dhaka City Corporation (financed by the World Bank) is not appropriate for our Dhaka city because of the following reasons:

- 1) These kind of skips needs a collection truck for each time, which makes it very expensive to dispose the garbage in a country like Bangladesh.
- 2) If a truck has to move back and forth to the disposal site it creates more problem for the existing traffic jam in the city.
- 3) The placing of the large dustbin skip on the street in the corner or junction of a road occupies a lot of road space specially when the garbage in almost every case is also thrown outside the bin, helped by the rain water the

decomposed and obnoxious odour or smell irritates the road users and the residents who live near the place. This large skip is hazardous to both the traffic and pedestrian. If I may suggest for the efficient removal of garbage from the city area in the following:-
a) Every household of municipal corporation tax-payer should be provided with a large (3 to 4 feet in height) plastic bucket including lid so that the residents can keep the garbage outside their gates on certain collection days, say 2/3 times per week, which should be collected at dawn

before 6:30 am. Alternatively, these can be unloaded in a municipal wheelbarrow by the local municipal dustman/women and put in the local garbage site to be collected by the truck.
b) Big plastic bags can be used but for various reasons process may not be efficient. Some of the reasons are in the following:-
i) Pilferage of plastic sack/bag might take place.
ii) Plastic bags are not environment friendly.
iii) Also the big plastic bags can be dangerous for the children. I am in favour of the system mentioned in the paragraph 'a)' above.
c) For the final disposal from the locality to the garbage disposal site a modern large, covered truck with a built-in compressor to squeeze the garbage into compact form to accommodate more garbage than the old-fashioned, traditional trucks may be introduced which will solve the disadvantages mentioned in the beginning of my letter. To enumerate the advantages that I mentioned again that enormous quantity of garbage can be filled at each time so that trips become fewer thus saving fuel and not fueling the existing traffic jam.

by Ilora Anwar

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