

FROM THE EDITOR

THE SCHOOLS FOR SCANDAL

Andre Maurois is believed to have said that in England there was only silence or scandal. We in India don't enjoy silence as an alternative to scandal. We had developed a tremendous capacity for making noise. Now we are on the move to match that with the capacity for boosting up scandal and gossip. Some of the current publications (they even call themselves national!) have tried to make a culture of scandal. Luckily, there are fields where human endeavour just does not succeed. Glossy print, well thought-out cliches, imaginatively displayed pictures, do not make literature of scandals. They cannot 'secure' a new status for scandal and gossip either. Culture and scandal will be always different, though the domain of the former may shrink and that of the latter expand. All that the zealous publications do is popularise scandal. They influence larger number of readers to buy their ware. Many of such readers become addicts.

And every scandal-addict is a loss to the world of healthy, normal readership.

That by itself may not matter much. But the unfortunate thing is, a scandal-addict is an unhappy man. Scandal and gossip keep him agog with a kind of excitement which drives away positive thinking and positive emotional exercise and the poise of silent goodwill indispensable for a meaningful existence. He derives momentarily a kind of pleasure which is by itself destructive^ for it lowers his consciousness. To live in that state of consciousness is a suffering by itself.

Politicians and power-wielding people should be exposed when they go corrupt. This is the argument which the scandal-carriers put forth. That is true in principle. But exposing one's corruption and spreading scandal are not the same thing. The latter is done with unworthy motive—to boost up circulation or to derive morbid pleasure in others' humiliation. It does not necessarily point itself at a target who has authority, but at anyone who commands some popularity. It does not necessarily expose its target's misuse of power, but exposes his personal failings and weaknesses. It makes a saleable commodity of something that (if at all a fact) deserves pity. The argument set forth by the promoters of scandal that they can reform individuals through character-assassination is as sound as the terrorists' argument that they can achieve an ideal by assassinating helpless, unprepared individuals.

No sensible reader can fail to discriminate between an exposure carried on with a sense of responsibility and a gleeful scandal. We must discourage the latter before it is too late. Let us remember what many of us must have read in our text-book: "In scandal, as in robbery, the receiver is always thought as bad as the thief." (Chesterfield)

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

"A HOPE FOR CHANGE"

"In attempting to write of myself I have not attempted to say one thing and mean another. It is an 'unvarnished tale' of my life with all its pleasures and pains as, indeed, all memories are either a source of joy or pain," says Mr. M. Hidayatullah in the preface to his biography, *My Own Boswell*. His readers can feel how justified his claim is. He has the art of making unvarnished tales absorbingly interesting.

Why should the former Vice-President of India and the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court stop where he does? Significantly, he says at the end of his memoirs: "Old age does not sit heavily on me. I can do a whole day's work and play a round of golf." He is eighty.

Why then should he not write another volume of his memoirs—or something else—since there is a magazine like THE HERITAGE?

I was most cordially received when I called on Mr. M. Hidayatullah and Mrs. Pushpa Hidayatullah, for the ones to notify them of my visit were Mr. Justice Benoy Chowdhury and Mrs. Aloka Chowdhury, their dearest friends.

Soon I found out that he proposed working on a second volume of memoirs and I was delighted. But what I found out next, subjecting this great legal luminary to a bit of examination and cross-examination for a change, shocked me. Let me put forth the crude facts straight, though Mr. Hidayatullah was too shy and gentle to come out with them easily: He has to write everything in longhand—and that is a slow process—because he cannot afford a stenographer or typist. He does not own a car now. His Rajya Sabha allowance apart, he received no salary as the Vice-President of India. Whatever savings he had, was gone in doing justice to his status.

We understand that provisions are made for Vice-Presidents to draw a salary now. But what about providing our former Presidents and Vice-Presidents with some minimum secretarial assistance? If one was chosen to symbolise the zenith of a hierarchy for a certain period, one cannot get rid entirely of the aura we liked to see around him, for the rest of his life. The positions of the President and the Vice-President, unlike those of ministers and executives, have some dignified peculiarity about them, a fact that should not be ignored.

Mr. Hidayatullah's article, "A Hope for Change", appears in this issue. That, of course, has nothing to do with our hope for a change in the authority's attitude to him, who had been unanimously elected to that lofty position of the Vice-President of our republic.