the property-room, to see what I looked like. They stared at me in silence and walked away.

"Kin yuh beat it!" one of them said.

I peered cautiously at the audience: the New York managers had left; the box was empty—one of the chairs was tipped over, though I don't offer that as evidence. Poor Lola!

When the curtain fell, there was an oppressive silence in the house. Somebody's baby began to cry. There was an ominous rustle of programmes. The agent who had secured the try-out came on the stage.

I opened the umbrella, and we walked slowly back to the depot.

"Now, Reggie, listen. You've had a play produced; you've seen how the wheels go. There's only one thing more you need to learn."

"What's that, Lola?"

"Life."

There may have been try-outs since, many failures, some successes. Through them all Lola has stood by. Invariably, when I read the plays to her, if she clasped her hands back of her head and frowned at the ceiling, they were sure to fail; if, instead, the laughter rippled

"Say, who got the idea we could be a quartet?"

"Miss Henrici," he said, taking Lola's hand, which trembled a little, "you were charmin'; they never seen better actin' in this house. But where, in heaven's name, did you get the vehicle? 'The rehabilitation of beauty fer beauty's sake——!' Say, why didn't you let him kill himself as he wanted to? Your jokes went great (Lola's jokes!), but the rest of the dope——!" He concluded with an expressive rotary gesture near one temple.

"It was only an experiment," explained Lola, sweetly.

The agent gave a glance towards me and dropped his voice: "And where, oh, where did you pick up the valet?"

We dressed. As we entered the street, we saw the hero's coat-tails vanishing between two swinging doors.

from her lips, or the tears gathered beneath her lashes, their success was signed and sealed. Lola knew. I am now of a mind that the whole secret lay in that one word—Life. She is sitting opposite as I write, more mature, more gentle, more lovely than ever, despite these busy years. She puts down her books, looks over, hands folded beneath her chin, and asks me how it goes. And I remember again the little verse of Hugo's:—

"Je ne vis qu'elle etait belle
Qu'en sortant des grandes bois sourds.
'Soit; n'y pensons plus!' dit-elle.
Depuis, j'y pense toujours."

Why?

Because we're married now.

SAINT PETER: THE STORY OF A MIRACLE

By Chas. E. C. Worthington

THE age of miracles, we are told, has gone. The days in which saints lent their powerful patronage and help to faithful devotees in time of extreme need has passed away on the advent of motoring, bridge, and other modern religions.

A quarter of a century has brought about this change, for no one who reads this plain tale can have the hardihood to doubt that the spirit of the prototype of our hero did not actively assist in meeting out punishment to sacrilegious hands.

Under the sweltering heat of the eternal summer that obtains in Chittagong, the worthy padre awaited with impatience the arrival of the British Indies steamer from Calcutta. By her was expected a magnificent new statue of St. Peter, which was to adorn the little Roman Catholic chapel that nestled in all its white-washed purity amid the dense olive-green of the tropical foliage that shaded the mission compound.

The arrival of the weekly steamer from Calcutta was an event of note, for by her came the only supplies of ice that tempered the "whisky peg" of the perspiring white man. Incidentally, there were mails and cargo that had also to be landed, and the agent was, on that day, a busy and much-worried man.

The padre was anxiously flitting about the go-down, hoping to catch a glimpse of the package that contained the life-size presentment of the janitor of Heaven, when the agent's eyes lit on him.

"Not to-day, Padre; not to-day. Come to-morrow, and don't forget the bill of lading," he said.

The morrow came, and the usual sweating, yelling mob of coolies were engaged in sorting and delivering goods, directed by soft-voiced, oily Babus, who in turn were being loudly cursed into activity by white merchants' clerks.

The work was proceeding apace when the padre and the agent came along, arm-in-arm, chatting pleasantly. The padre was a genial soul, while the agent was famous for his hospitality and his ponies throughout the entire East; as a host, he was the incarnation of good fellowship, but in business he was adamantine.

The imposing case that contained the illustrious Apostle was standing near the doors, ready for delivery, and only waiting to be signed for, when the padre's eye caught sight of evident signs of damage. He was far too old a hand to accept delivery without inspection—he knew the ways of the transhippers in Calcutta. The agent, realising that it was too late to head him off, reluctantly agreed to have an examination made of the contents of the case.

The revelations were distressing. The figure, executed in plaster of Paris over a wooden core, was gorgeous to behold. In white, purple, and gold, a chain of aldermanic proportions around his neck, on which hung the keys—and such keys; truly the authorities in Heaven had never attempted to modernise the locks—but, alas! one arm was broken at the shoulder, and the neck had a most suspicious crack in it.

The agent first broke the painful silence, by cheerfully exclaiming: "That will be all right. I will have it sent up for you, and get a man to fix up that arm and neck, and make it just as good as ever it was."

The Padre was not easily won over to this plan—hundreds of coolies and native merchants, some of whom were converts, had seen the damage; the go-down was full of spectators, and well the padre knew that the Oriental had no use for a broken saint. If a saint who could work miracles could not be trusted to take care of himself from Calcutta to Chittagong, he would never hold the respect of an Eastern multitude.

The agent, watching from the tail of his eye, could see that the day was going against him, and when the Padre declined to accept delivery, and notified his intention of claiming damages from the company, he was by no means surprised; but, as befitting a good business man, he put up a most strenuous protest.

The padre was immutable.

"Well," said the agent, to conclude, "if you won't take delivery of that highly-gilded Apostle, I shall take him up to my bungalow and make a cockshy of him, to your everlasting discredit. Fancy your converts seeing splinters knocked off the door-keeper of Heaven."

The padre crossed himself, and delicately inferred that such being the case he would stretch his claim to the utmost limit; also (this impressively, and to the gallery, coolies and others), that "God could be trusted to protect his own, and to duly reward each according to his deserts in His own good time."

There is much give and take in an Anglo-Indian community, and the padre was neither surprised nor yet greatly shocked when he heard that St. Peter was installed in the big bungalow on the hill—but he bided his time, with the wisdom of an old and wise school.

The agent was a personality that demands more than a passing notice. Young and wealthy, he dispensed hospitalities lavishly. He kept a great number of horses; his turn-outs were exceptionable, and his polo ponies were the cracks of Further—India. The various religious denominations had at various times, and in divers ways, made assaults upon him for some confession of faith. But he gave to all alike, and the nearest admission that could be wrung out of him was "that he believed in driving tandem on Sundays"—an article of religion that he invariably lived up to.

He was the despair of Smith, the Anglican parson, whose hopes of him were fostered by the fact that he sent down flowers for church decoration once a month.

Smith, by-the-by, was at one time a Methodist, who (his enemies declared) had crept through on to Anglican pastures, attracted thither by their superior grazing qualities. He now affected extreme High Church ritual.

As far as St. Peter was concerned, the agent made good his threats. After breakfast, at 11 a.m., when the guests were enjoying their cheroots, the long lounge chairs would be drawn up in line at the end of the verandah, a wide stone pillared colonnade that went round three sides of the house. The bearers would bring whisky-pegs and revolvers, and at a range of about twenty-five yards fire would be opened at St. Peter for sweepstakes.

It must be confessed that the shooting was atrociously bad for men who numbered amongst them some of the best shots in Further-India; the faithful would attribute this to the Divine influence of the Saint; scoffers averred that it was the malign influence of the Spirits. Be that as it may, in the course of a week or two his Saintship bore an extremely battered look, the addition of a briar pipe (the bull's eye), accentuating his Bow-street Monday morning appearance. The wall against which St. Peter was propped formed a stop in the verandah some thirty feet from the rear line of the building, which was a very considerable size, covering a square of some one hundred and fifty feet. At the back of this wall was a room that formed an annex to the Agent's suite, and around it were ranged on rests, brackets, and horses, saddles of very kind—riding, racing, hunting, and side saddles, tandem and four-in-hand harness, dog-cart aprons and fancy cushions, polo gear, and all the multifarious trappings that a man of wealth of sporting tastes can accumulate, and in which the Agent took a peculiar interest and delight. The treacherous wall against which St. Peter reclined in battered state was a hollow sham, but some four feet upwards were solid brick and concrete; the upper part was fine bamboo matting carried up on studs, and tightly stretched and white-washed until the outer surface resembled the solid lower portion.

It was on a Sunday morning, when, about to follow his religious custom of driving tandem that the Agent aroused the entire household with quaintly expressed and vigorous variegated swear words.

It did not require much looking for by the guests to decide the cause—through the upper part of the wall all ill-directed shots, richochets had sped, here was a saddle ploughed up, there a trace cut, polo sticks ruined, everywhere damage irretrievable.

The contemplation of this was bad enough, but when coupled with the knowledge that the Padre was quite human enough to make a monstrous pile of capital out of it, it became intolerable. Condolences were out of the question, and, well, the guests knew that borne on the mysterious waves of the native intelligence department the story of how the Great Saint of the Holy Padre had miraculously revenged himself on the sacrilegious heretics, would even now be buzzing in every bazaar to the uttermost confines of the Indian borders.

It was indeed so; inside of a week circumstantial tales of how the suffering Saint had been seen to deflect bullets with a wave of his sacred keys, how mysterious repairs had been effected by unseen, unheard hands, how the Padre's prophesies of disaster publicly made had been publicly fulfilled—these and many other stories, guilded with all the wealth of Oriental imagery, were to be heard daily where native merchants mostly did congregate.

So mysterious are the ways of Providence that the first to feel the influence of these happenings was neither of the two human principals. To Pastor Smith was assigned that fate. Unaccountably his little flock of native converts diminished—not all the stately influence of Colonel L———, the Commissioner, reading the lessons, nor yet the impressive and dignified snores of Judge H———; could prevent the defection. The most promising pupils at Sunday School grew fitful and lax in attendance and finally, on a High Catholic Feast-day they openly deserted to the little Roman Catholic mission church, wherein was enthroned in magnificent state a glorified replica of the battered image that lay already overgrown with weeds in the deep nulla at the back of the Agent's compound.

During this phase of the drama neither by word, nor gesture, did the Padre or the Agent betray their feelings. The Padre, cheery and genial, always had a friendly greeting to bestow on the Agent; the Agent, on his part, always had a cover at table and unlimited whisky pegs and iced hock for the Padre. The centre of the trouble was shifted to Pastor Smith, who viewed with increasing dismay the desertion of his congregation to the aegis of such a powerful Saint as that enshrined in the rival church; his troubles weighed heavily upon him, and the collections manifested a most dismal and unfortunate shrinkage. Could he but conjure up a Saint that—though apparently a battered idol, could make revolver bullets go whither he would, he might hope to regain his lost prestige and sinking financial status.

Whilst Smith troubled thus, the Padre went round and that with no little ostentation, to collect funds for the enlargement of his church; his fame was great, and wide-spread converts from