



# SHANGHAI'S MORNING AFTER



By HILAIRE DU BERRIER

*The Greeks had the right idea: in their theaters they performed, together with their tragedies, "satyr" plays, which, with their wit and merry-making, brought comic relief to an audience tense from high drama. We were thinking of that when the other day we met one of our local satirists, the author of the following article. The world and Shanghai were passing through a great drama, war had broken out in the Pacific, and the foreign settlement in Shanghai was occupied. Mr. du Berrier appeared deep in thought. Indeed he was, for he was struggling to solve an important problem: "I am so broke," he said, "that I am trying to figure out what is wiser—to marry my amah or to pay her."*

*So we asked him to write a satire on the recent changes in Shanghai. Here it is.*

*Mr. du Berrier has already been introduced to our readers in connection with his article "No Wild Men in Borneo" in our October issue. He is an American of French ancestry and fond of crazy ideas. In his schooldays he founded the American Monarchist Party. It is true that he had no members in his party, but the stationery was all printed and a candidate selected for the future American throne. Later he became a traveler and adventurer and—as long as mail could cross the Pacific—a writer for "Esquire" and other American magazines.*

*We are delighted to illustrate this article with sketches by the ablest caricaturist in Shanghai. Known as Sapajou to the great number of his admirers who have for many years followed his amusing and penetrating sketches on current events, his real name is George Sapojnikov. Once a student of architecture at St. Petersburg and an officer in the Imperial Russian Army, he has been living in the Far East since the Russian Revolution. Here he is today one of the most widely known and appreciated of artists.—K.M.*

Well, now that it has happened you can just sit back and look it over, and if you stop to regard the whole jailbird's-eye view of Shanghai objectively, you must admit there is some basis for the belief that what has happened may do this town a lot of good. Life had become as erratic



as a coolie on a bicycle. A girl could be kept for less than a polo pony. Therefore the possession of a pony was something to be aspired to, but getting that far was a high-priced business. It re-

quired an almost unlimited capacity for whisky soda, mendacity, no sleep, and joy in cutting a friend's throat.

Then what did you have? Social recognition, boredom in place of loneliness, to say nothing of a financial mogul whose hobby was taking photos *au naturel* of his friends' wives and daughters. As soon as you started making money, dash it all, you became a friend of his, and you didn't dare shoot him for fear of what it would do to the market. For pride and honor are



things many foreigners spend ten years in the Orient to be able to afford when they leave. No, taken all in all, happiness and contentment and true friendship were about as scarce around Bagdad-on-the-Whangpoo as aviators at a Shanghai "R.A.F. Club" tiffin.

Old friends were breaking up; everyone was quarreling, drinking and pulling against someone else. The main reason for this tendency to go berserk seems to have been the evacuation of half the foreign wives of the community. Erstwhile serious husbands were breaking out faster than smallpox. They suddenly felt as though they had received a pardon. It took the governor off their thirsts and made jitterbugs out of their hearts, becoming an epidemic before we knew it. It even affected men whose wives



hadn't made the exodus.

Chances are, a lot of men are beginning to get acquainted with their families since busses stopped running and the night spots cooled. What is there left to do in the evening but to go to bed—for the duration?



Now, for the first time, people who have brushed elbows for years are beginning to get acquainted. The show is suspended, and when you start circulating around during this intermission by *force majeure* you are surprised to find what fine people some of the actors are when you meet them out of role.

There was an American so disliked that even with enough money to pay his chits the clubs blackballed him, so you know how popular he must have been. Now he is making friends, he walks around in a quiet and well-behaved manner, and people are be-

ginning to talk about what a swell guy he is at heart.

It has been interesting watching the way different strata of local life have reacted to the present emergency. It is just as though, in some giant dice game of the gods, their problems, their hopes and despairs, have been shaken up again and tossed out even. From the highest to the lowest they are broke.

The Marines are gone. In tawdry rooms up little alleys are girls and babies, the debris a retreating army leaves behind. They are the saddest, most human lot. The Marines are gone, there will be no money orders now.



The taipan whose only fear on earth was to appear in Don Chisolm's column is suddenly facing unfamiliar problems. He has barely learned where the bus stops are around here, when the busses stopped running. You can't very well harness an unemployed bar girl, and rickshaw coolies have become both too expensive and too unruly. Horses and buggies are out of the question, with hay looming as a potential substitute for spinach and salad. So the upshot is that the whole thing, through the process of elimination, ends with the only possible choice being between roller skates and a bicycle. There are two schools of thought. Both have advantages. If you have a bicycle stolen from under you—and in these days when you have to cease sleeping



with your mouth open if you have gold teeth that is just what is likely to happen—the financial loss will be considerable. And you always have



the parking problem. (Did you ever try to carry your bicycle to the apartment of your friends who live on the seventh floor of a house

saving electricity on the elevator?) Yet there is something to the easy, graceful glide of the bicycle as opposed to the short, quick sweep of the roller-skate school, but then again, how much simpler the parking.



With roller skates you merely tuck them under your arm, take them into Sam Shing's with you, and if you do lose six pairs a year you can console yourself with the thought they can't be shipped to the interior. The thieves' market supply and victims' demands will remain a constant.

So argues the taipan. Probably more fortunate than those temporarily deprived of their fat bank accounts during this period of financial hibernation, is the carefree failure who never had more than a month's rent in his life anyway. He loves this, wouldn't miss it for anything. He has always been broke, so war hasn't brought any problems he hasn't been trying to cope with all his life. What it has done is give him a lot of company and a good excuse to quit trying, to just rest his head for a while and let someone else worry.

Among the more unconventional methods of transportation we might mention the co-operative idea of a man who lives next to a Sikh who keeps a goat. They have had a cart made and are assiduously trying to teach the goat to pull it.

Anything is better than walking. The man who regards a ten-mile hike only in the light of good, healthful exercise is about as smart as the young American who stayed in Shanghai to evade the draft because he didn't think he would like the cooking. Besides, what we are going to do for shoe leather before this is over already has a lot of us looking like Rodin's "Thinker."



To the man with a nice residence out west who is grief-stricken because his business has been stopped, there is also a bright side to look on: the business of that army of nondescript, bleary-eyed, down-at-heel coffee-house brokers you used to see on Szechuen Road is also stopped.

With a piece of paper and a pencil as their stock in trade, the sidewalk for an office, and a smattering of coolie Chinese, pidgin English and low-class Russian for a vocabulary, they were making money hand over fist. Most of them looked like beachcombers and a lot of them couldn't write, but it was nothing to see them earning fifty or a hundred thousand dollars a day selling scrap iron, copper wire, Singapore tin or what have you.

In time these would have made up what would have come to be known as our "scrap-iron aristocracy," and, whether the comfortable taipan out west liked it or not, they would have been his neighbors. It would probably have been discouraging. Shanghai had just finished rounding off the corners and rough edges of its opium aristocracy. After a generation and a half of money they were beginning to use a handkerchief instead of the sidewalk, and now it would have been a depressing business to go through all that again with a whole new upper stratum.

It is hard to go into detail on the various phases of life since the shake-up, but to give you something to work on you might start by writing a new

book of etiquette. Forget that it was once customary to send your hostess a basket of flowers accompanied by a short note of thanks the morning after a dinner. That is all passé now. Your 1942 clubman and man-about-Shanghai sends a can of sardines and a tin opener.

When eating in restaurants it is quite the thing to wrap up the remaining piece of bread on your plate in a paper napkin and take it home with you. If it happens to be a swanky joint, where they give you margerine with your bread, you take it too, by all means. And butter, if you meet any, is to be handled as though it were gold leaf.

Week after week, in the magazines and papers of Shanghai, financial columns have been appearing, although only one man in a thousand ever had enough finances to see any sense in reading these columns. Some of the columns foresaw every possible twist and turn of finance, in a world where financial graphs had more ups and downs than a roller coaster, but the one thing they never thought to devote a bit of attention to was the advisability of thoroughly responsible, stable men dropping in for an occasional chat in their neighborhood Chinese pawnshops.

Any of the gay young blades that bankers looked down on like Roman patricians on a lionized Christian, could have told them what 當舖, that sign on corner buildings with swinging doors, meant, and that it might not be a bad idea to take the old watch in for a little loan once in a while, even if you didn't



need to.

The first time you walk in to a Chinese pawnshop with a gold watch you are lucky if you can talk the austere financier behind the grillwork out of fifty dollars. But don't argue. Take it. Take it with the carefree gesture of a man to the manner born, the sort of a fellow to whom fifty bucks is nothing. Never let him guess that fifty dollars, in reality, is nothing

to you—nothing more than your right leg and one eye and a lung or two, just stuff it in your pocket, along with the yellow ticket, in a way suggesting that you are just out for an evening of good clean fun up Blood Alley and will be back for the timepiece in the morning.

Before going out, stop and say: *Ni hao wah?* to the baby. Every Chinese pawnshop has a baby. If they take you up and start talking Chinese just tell them you are Cantonese; that takes care of everything.



And then, be sure and go back a day or two later, peeling the fifty-two, fifty, off a roll of bills like the front wheel of a steamroller, even if you have to borrow it. Do this three or four times; then breeze in some evening, airily greet the pawnbroker like an old pal, and tell him, quite cheerfully, that you need a hundred this time. Now you are set, and besides, the more he loans you the more interest he will collect—if you come back.

The financial columns never thought to tell you about this two months ago when they had their ears glued to a stethoscope and their hands gripped on a financial pulse that said: "Brother, cultivate a pawnbroker!" if any pulse ever did. It may not be too late even now. Take a tip from us and get busy, because as things stand now, the old, conventional form of financial prognostications is going to be about as useful to the average man as Napoleon's maxims.

Everything that the officials responsible for making our lot easier have been able to think of seems to have been done, but there are still a few suggestions one might make.

For instance, some sort of a liaison bureau should be worked out to negotiate between the hat-snatchers' guild and the hat-wearing public. Under our present system the hard-working hat-snatcher is being shamefully

exploited by cleaning establishments and second-hand dealers, who at most will pay him no more than five dollars mex for a hundred-dollar fedora he

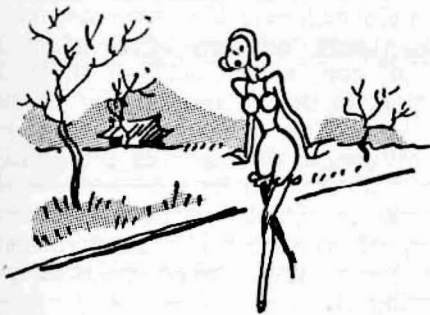


has stood out in the cold fifteen minutes to snatch. If the proper authorities could

appoint a committee to operate between these two bodies, the average hat-owner would pay at least three times as much as an honest thief could get anywhere else, just to have his old, familiar skypiece back again; and it would still be cheaper than a new one.

This is only one of the numerous economic problems we are going to have to face before this is over, because as the situation now stands a hat is about as safe on a head in Shanghai as a wife used to be on a Lloyd Triestino liner.

A lot of robbing is going on nowadays. You hardly dare look at the morning paper for fear of finding out that you have been one of the victims. The young lady who walked in from Hungjao clad in nothing but



undies last month wasn't a chorus girl paying an election bet. She was just another bicyclist who had met a band of robbers.

Another direct result of the rising cost of living and the difficulty most of us are experiencing in getting our hands on fresh money these days is the growing custom of moving in with the girl friend and making her split the rent.

On the surface this seems like a good idea. It was sin before but it looks like just common sense to say in Shanghai today, "Listen, honey; what do you say we send our laundry out together?" But the man who is only looking at the economic side of this solution is apt to overlook the fact that, first, there is a rigid form of etiquette which prescribes that a gentleman, once he has talked himself into such a state, must stay at least three months out of politeness. Also, he has to get permission from the gendarmerie to change his residence, and even the most patient official does not want to be bothered with a request to move every three weeks. He may be stuck for the duration.

What also came from placing a large part of our foreign population in a more or less permanent state of insolvency has been a noticeable trend on the part of house servants to let business acumen outweigh their loyalty. With the institution going bust, a surprising number of them have just taken off with the family silver while the going was good. And when you consider that the town they are leaving has become a place where coal is a semi-precious stone and rice the stuff you make necklaces out of, you can't blame them for folding their tents like the Arabs and as silently stealing away. And let the impoverished gentleman console himself: a great actor, in writing his memoirs, once ended a chapter with: "—And from that time on nothing eventful ever happened in my life because I never again knew poverty."

We may die of many things in the next two years, but by Jove, it won't be from boredom!

People you never bothered to talk to before stop now and tell you a story. The tops of busses used to be fairly exclusive. You could sit up there and listen to some amah in a front seat carry on a long conversation with another one ten rows back, but you had a feeling of insulation and contentment. Now with all these taipans piling in on you, you feel that the old club has been

invaded, but you don't mind as long as they have a story, and strangely enough all these humans who used to roll down the macadam highway of life with their eyes fixed on some imaginary object on the distant horizon have turned out to have some humor other than ill beneath the Simonizing job a gold-pay salary and the East have given them.

A well-to-do foreigner about a week ago discovered on alighting from a crowded bus that fifty dollars had disappeared from his pants pocket, so he sat down and thought it over. He remembered that he got on at the Grand Theater bus stop, so he went back and stood for a while, looking for a clue. He noticed three Chinese in long gowns, pushing for all they were worth every time a bus stopped, and then not getting on it, so he went up, grabbed one of them and told him he wanted his fifty dollars back. He got it, along with a promise not to filch the same pocket again. Each saw the other's problem and they parted good friends.

The stories of Shanghai under the occupation will be legion before it is over, and the friendships that are springing up now for the first time, will, let us hope, be lasting ones. Only O. Henry could do justice to some of the things most of you are likely to end up doing for the price of a cup of coffee at Jimmy's before you are through. There may be things you won't do, but just offhand I can't for the life of me think of what they could be, so the best thing anyone can suggest for the present is that you hippity-hop down Nanking Road, saying: "Let's worry about it tomorrow." Like the fellow who fell out of the fourteenth-story window and remarked blissfully to himself as he passed the third: "Well, I'm all right so far!"

Even the local business depression isn't entirely universal. They may not be among your personal friends, but never let it be said that no one in

Shanghai is making money. Chinese compradores have subscribed wholeheartedly to the words of that great American meat packer who said: "If ya wanta sell 'em something, sell 'em something to eat!"

One enterprising gentleman out in the Western district confided in a friend that he had found the perfect combination: he had started hoarding



coffins, and while waiting for the price to rise he was using the coffins to store rice in.

Your good old-fashioned house-cat has become "man's best friend" to the half of the community that is jealously guarding the sort of food reserve any self-respecting rat might consider a delicacy, but he is just a plain vandal to those of you who are saving your rats for borstch next winter.

Men who broke champagne glasses in night clubs all over the East now go home with a sack or two of dried prunes and a couple of bottles of vodka, figuring, with one eye on the calendar and the other on the measuring cup: "If it soaks till Saturday, it will be just right." These are only a few examples, but there are a thousand more, of the new standards creeping into your lives today without your knowing it.

Considering the state of affairs existing in two thirds of the world today, we might console ourselves with the thought that, after all, Shanghai is still Shanghai, and that we are pretty lucky to be here.

