

Parmi tous ces gens débordant de gaieté, de joie de vivre, les musiciens allaient de table en table, jouant les airs favoris et les hymnes nationaux des dîneurs étrangers. Devant nous, ils entamèrent un vigoureux "Alouette" que toute la salle reprit avec chaleur. Ma compagne, émue, avait une petite larme au coin de l'oeil... Je leur demandai "Sainte nuit" car je voulais encore une fois l'entendre dans ce pays qui l'a vu naître... La salle se tut comme par enchantement et le petit orchestre joua avec une pointe d'émotion et de tendresse cette musique lente et douce pendant que, dans le fond de la salle, la grosse horloge sonnait minuit et qu'ainsi s'achevait un Noël en musique.



CHRISTMAS MORN IN NEW DELHI

I joined in the festivities of my first Christmas Eve in New Delhi with carefree abandon, confident that Christmas morn could be devoted to sleep. And so some time before dawn I crept into my bed and slept.

WHAM! A resounding thump on a mighty drum filled my room. My eyes snapped open. My brain slowly warmed to consciousness. "What was that?" Again WHAM! Cymbals crashed together and horns blasted forth. I listened. Through a wild cacophony of discordant notes filtered the tune "God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing ye dismay". "Well, I never" I mumbled 'Carol singers' and 'Drunk!' This deduction made me indignant. "I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window, I flew like a flash, tore open the shutter and threw up the sash", and there below in the hotel compound stood shivering men, clinging with mouths and fingers to a tangle of brass tubes. Their skeletal forms were lost in the folds of outsized red and gold uniforms long since discarded by Queen Victoria's soldiers. The battered brass glistened in the frosted rays of a sun just risen. Before their next musical offering could be identified, some one, wise in the formalities of Christmas morning, provided the required rupees. The chowkidar hustled the musicians out of the compound and blessed silence fell all round. I returned to my bed and to sleep.

WHAM! CRASH! WHAM! "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. Oh what fun..." I shot out of bed and groped for my wallet. With a fistful of rupees (Please note one rupee = 19 cents), I ran to the window to silence them but I looked out into a rain of rupees floating down onto happy up-turned faces. Once they had grabbed up the rupees, the musicians puffed out their cheeks and with vigour played an encore for us. What it was no one ever knew. I went back to bed and, with my pillow over my head, tried to sleep. 'Fat chance of getting any sleep' I thought 'Once news of our generosity gets around, hundreds of others will be lining up to play for us! News of that sort travels exceedingly fast.

I must have slept because suddenly I woke. I was sure some one had knocked at my door. Yes, there it was again. Pulling on my dressing gown, I wondered how long I'd been sleeping. It was Ram Singh at the door, dressed in his fine white uniform. He was an excellent room bearer and looked after my welfare wonderfully well. From his hand hung a garland of marigolds. "Merry Christmas, memsahib", he greeted me and reached up to put the garland over my head. "How beautiful",