HOW AHMED FLEW TO ENGLAND

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Tales

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HOW AHMED FLEW TO ENGLAND

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HOW AHMED FLEW TO ENGLAND

I

AHMED was a boy who lived in Calcutta. He went to school and played games like every other boy, but because his father was a very rich man Ahmed had more toys than many of the other boys whom he knew. He had trains and kites and balls, a small car, and many toy planes to play with. He had a monkey as well, which loved him very much.

Of all the toys that he had Ahmed loved his planes best. He read many books to find out how planes were made, and when he saw a seaplane or an aeroplane passing over Calcutta he could tell his family or friends what it was, for there are many kinds of planes.

" I do wish I could fly in a plane ! " Ahmed



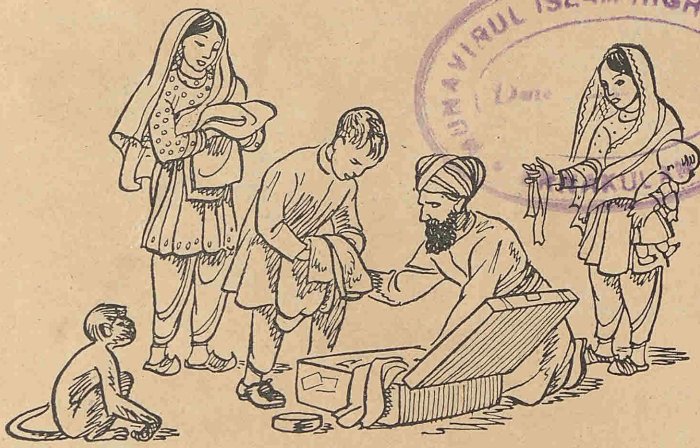
often said to his sisters. "When I am big I shall buy a plane of my own, and then I shall be able to fly all over the world and see everything for myself."

One day Ahmed's father said to him, "I have to go to England on business, Ahmed, and I am going to fly there. Would you like to go with me? I have often heard you say that you would like to fly."

"Oh Father!" cried Ahmed, "I should love to do that more than anything in the world."

"Very well," answered his father, smiling, "you must be ready to start in two days' time."

Ahmed ran to tell his mother and sisters


MAMIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL

this news. " Why can we not go too ? " cried his sisters. " We should like to see England and go all the way in a plane."

" You are too young," said Ahmed. " When you are older our father may take you."

His sisters were not pleased at this, but they helped Ahmed to get ready. His mother did not want him to go, for she was afraid that something might hurt him.

" You can only take a small bag with you," said Ahmed's father, " for we cannot carry much in the plane."

So Ahmed and his servant packed a small

bag with things that he would want, such as a toothbrush and some clothes.

" You must feed my monkey while I am away," said Ahmed to his sisters. " And you may play with my toys if you do not break them."

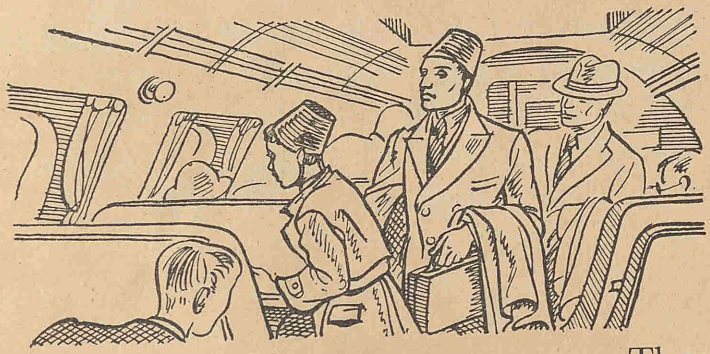
" We shall not break them," said his sisters. " And anyway we like our dolls much better than your toys, but we will feed the monkey and play with him because we love him, and he will be very sad when you are gone."

" Poor monkey ! " said Ahmed as he patted the little animal. " I shall soon come back to you, and then I shall be able to tell you all what it is like in England and what the world looks like from the sky."

" You must write us a long letter when you get to England so that we shall know of your adventures quickly," said Ahmed's mother.

" I will write, Mother," answered Ahmed ; " but you know that I am not very good at writing letters, and it will be better if I tell you everything when I see you."

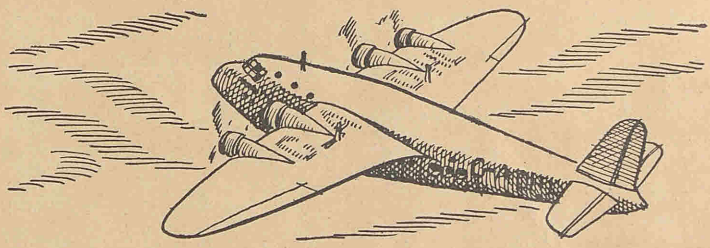
The two days passed very slowly for Ahmed,



because he wanted to start at once. They were to go by Air India International, in a big plane in which nearly forty people were going to England. Ahmed was very surprised to find that he would be able to sit in a big chair and have food on a little table in front of him. He was very pleased to see, too, that there was a big window out of which he could look and see the earth far below. It was very early in the morning when they left Calcutta, and the air was cold. The plane made its way across the field and then rose in the air like a great bird.

" Oh Father, we are flying ! " cried Ahmed. The other people in the plane smiled to see the boy's happiness.

Up and up they went into the sky, and soon



they were over a great cloud which was like a big white sheet. The sun was beginning to rise, and soon the cloud was full of pretty gold light. Ahmed thought the big white cloud, with the sun shining on it, was the prettiest thing he had ever seen. He knew now what it must feel like to be a bird flying in the sky. Looking down after a time Ahmed could see India looking just like a map in school. There were rivers and hills and roads and little villages and towns and trees till at last they saw two great rivers looking like shining silver snakes.

"There is Allahabad," said Ahmed's father. "We shall stop at Bamrauli, an airfield near to it."

"But what are those great rivers, Father?" asked Ahmed.

"Tch! You do not know your map of

India very well," said his father, smiling. "Those are the big rivers—the Ganges and the Jumna which join here, and therefore Allahabad, or Prayag as it was once called, is a very holy city of the Hindus. It is here that the great *mēlas* are held, the Magh *mēla* and the Kumbh *mēla*, and thousands of people come from all over India."

"But why is the city called Allahabad, Father?" asked Ahmed as the plane began to drop down towards earth.

"Because the fort here was built by Akbar who renamed the city in praise of Allah," answered his father. "And now you must not talk so much, for we are going to land."

The next place which the plane stopped at was Jodhpur, a big city in Jodhpur State. Here everything looked unlike the rest of India. The people were tall and dressed in bright colours, the oxen were much bigger than those in other parts of India, and the carts were not like those in Calcutta or in North India. From Jodhpur the plane went over the desert to Karachi.

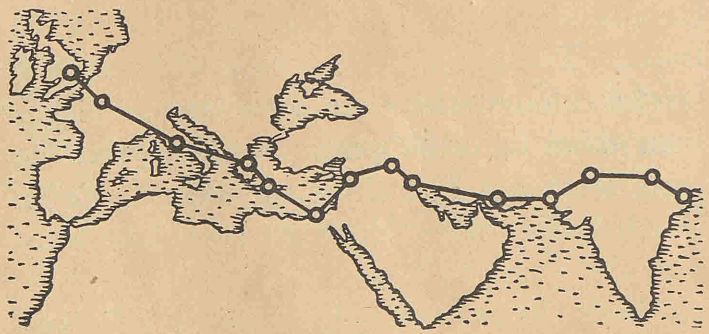
"This looks more like Calcutta," said

Ahmed ; " but it is not so pretty, for here everything looks very dry and there is no great river or green trees. I should not like to live here very much."

" Karachi has long been a great port and has known many fights with people like the Persians who wanted to take India," said Ahmed's father ; " but our own city of Calcutta is more lovely. Now we shall leave India and you will begin to see the other lands."

Ahmed looked out of the window all day, because he did not want to miss anything. Some of the people in the plane were ill, but Ahmed and his father were not ill at all and liked being in the air very much.

The next stop was Jask, a place on the

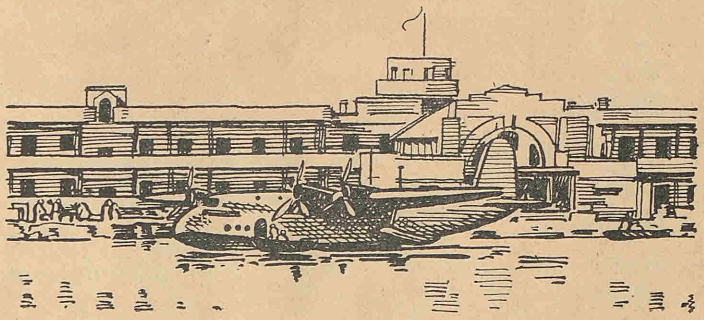


Persian Gulf. Ahmed was pleased to be in Persia, of which he had heard much, but he found it dry and hot like Karachi or the Sind Desert. There were hills and mountains too.

" The Persians were great soldiers, as you know, and took many lands in the days gone by. Cyrus and Darius were great kings of the Persians of whom you must have read."

From Persia the plane made its way to the city of Basra, and Ahmed saw the great river Euphrates.

" Now we are in Iraq. It was once a rich and great land with many great cities such as Ur and Babylon. But now most of that



Basra

rich land is desert. You can see the marks of these old cities in the desert."

From Baghdad the plane crossed over the Dead Sea and Jerusalem to its next stop at Ramleh. Ahmed thought that the Dead Sea was a strange-looking place. His father told him that the water was so full of salt that if he tried to swim in it his feet would at once go up over his head.

"I do not want to swim there very much, Father!" said Ahmed, smiling.

"We are now over Palestine and soon we shall be in Egypt," said Ahmed's father.

QUESTIONS

1 Where did Ahmed live in India?
2 What toy was he fondest of?
3 What was it that Ahmed wanted to do most of all?
4 Did his sisters also go to England in the plane?
5 What was the first place at which the plane landed?
6 Name the countries Ahmed had passed over when he got to Egypt?
7 What do you know about Cyrus and Darius?

2

AHMED thought that Alexandria was a very pretty city with its big white houses looking over the blue Mediterranean Sea.

" Can you tell me who this city is named after ? " asked his father as the plane landed.

" I think it was named after Alexander the Great," answered Ahmed.

" Yes, you are right. It was he who chose this place as a great port, and it was here that the first lighthouse in the world was made to save the ships and boats from being broken on the rocks which rise up in the sea here."

From Egypt the plane flew to the island of Crete. Ahmed had read a book about this place which told how Crete had once been a great land, and how men still dig up many lovely things which had belonged to the Cretan people thousands of years ago.



Jars found in Crete

" Now we are over Europe and have left the East behind us," said Ahmed's father.

" What place shall we see next, Father ? " asked Ahmed.

" We shall go now to Athens in Greece, and come down on its great port called the Piraeus," said his father.



" I wish we could see more of these places," said Ahmed. " We do not stay long enough anywhere ! "

" When you are older and come to England to College you shall visit all these countries again," said his father.

" I should like to do that," said Ahmed, very pleased. The air was colder now and the sun not so hot as it had been in India and over the deserts. Ahmed put on a warm coat and cap.

After Athens they came to Italy and its great city of Rome.

" Soon we shall be seeing France," said Ahmed's father. " When I was a boy I went to school in France and liked it very

much. I had a very good time there and lived with a French family. We shall be going to Paris, which was the place where I lived."

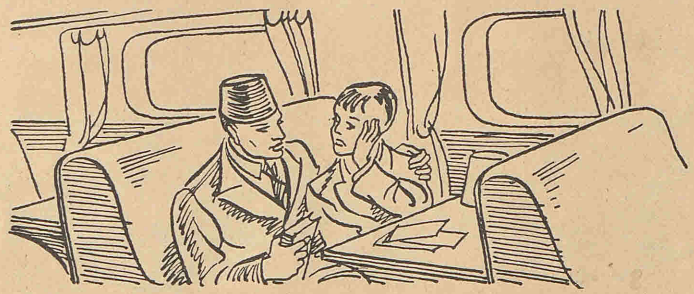
"How long will it take us to get to Paris, Father?" asked Ahmed later.

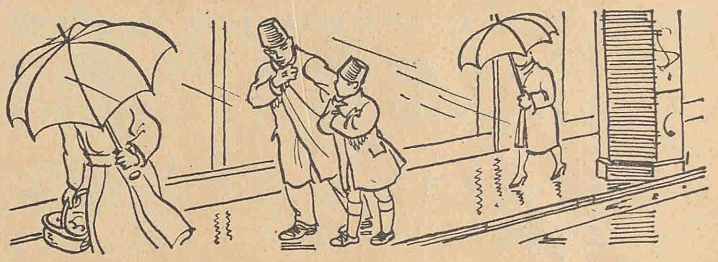
"Only a few hours now."

"When we get to London I shall write a letter to my mother and sisters," said Ahmed. But soon after this the clouds grew thick and the wind blew. The plane began to jump up and down and Ahmed said:

"Oh Father, I am ill. I do not want to look down any more."

"You will be better as soon as we get down," said his father. "It is because we are in what is called an 'air pocket,' and this



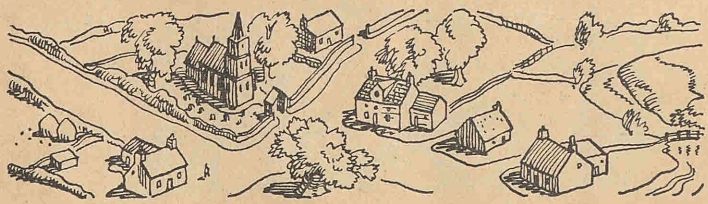


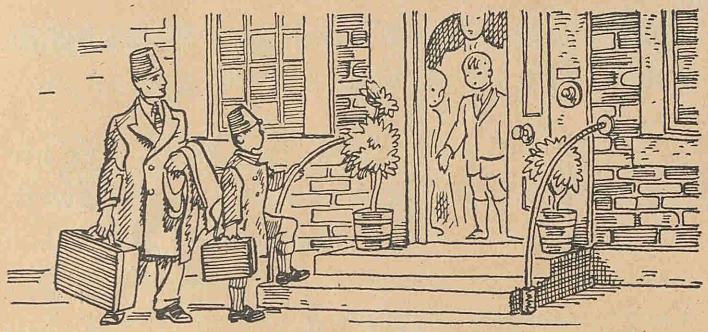
makes the plane jump like a ship when the sea is rough."

" I do not like it ! " cried poor Ahmed, and he lay down and held his head.

It was wet in Paris and very cold, and Ahmed did not like being there very much. When they got to England the sun was shining brightly though it was cold, and Ahmed soon felt well again. He was able to look down and see all the little villages and big towns of England.

" It will be good to be on the earth again," said Ahmed.





" Oh, so you have had too much of the air, eh ? " said his father, smiling.

" No, it is not that, Father, but we have come so many many miles and have been sitting so long that it will be so good to run and jump again," answered Ahmed.

When they got to London they went to live in a house where some friends of Ahmed's father lived. There were some children of the same age as Ahmed with whom he quickly made friends.

" To-morrow we will go and see many things which you will like, such as the Zoo and the Tower of London," said his new friends.

" Oh I should like that ! " cried Ahmed. He went to bed and slept all night till late the next morning.

After some days Ahmed got a letter by air mail from his sisters in Calcutta :

" DEAR AHMED (said the letter)—We are all very well and hope that you, too, are well. We miss you very much and Maya the monkey cries all day. We have given him many sweets and good things to eat, but he still cries. We have put all your toys away in a safe place and have not played with them, because we are afraid that we may break them. One day we went to the cinema, where we saw a good film. We hope you will come back soon to play with us. When we see a plane in the sky we say : ' Oh, if only Ahmed were here to tell us what kind of plane that was ! ' Your



friend Ali Khan comes often to ask for news of you, but we do not know yet if you have got to England. What is it like there? Please do write and tell us all your news and what you have seen."

Ahmed was very pleased to get his sisters' letter. "When I have been to the Zoo and other places I will write to them," he said. He did not like writing letters, and he had not yet written them.

QUESTIONS

1 Which city on the Mediterranean Sea did Ahmed like?
2 Whom was this city named after?
3 What was the name of the great port in Greece where the plane stopped?
4 Where had Ahmed's father been to school?
5 Where did Ahmed and his father stay in London?
6 Was Ahmed's monkey happy while he was away?

3

AHMED and his friends set out for the London Zoo in Regent's Park one morning a week after Ahmed had got there. As they went in the bus Ahmed told the other children of the Calcutta Zoo.

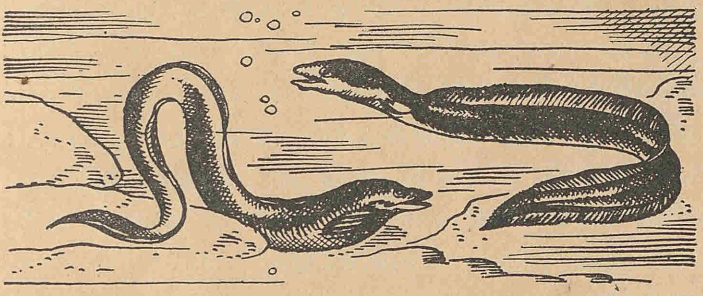
" There are many birds and animals there, bears and tigers and lions and peacocks and many other things."

" Wait, Ahmed. You will see many more animals in *this* Zoo ! " said the others smiling.

Ahmed said no more, but he thought to himself : " I am sure this Zoo will not be as good as the Calcutta one."

But when the children got to the Zoo and Ahmed saw how large it was, and how many animals there were, he began to think that his friends were right. They bought some nuts and food to give to the animals, and fed the many monkeys. Then they went to the Mappin Terraces where the bears lived. They smiled to see the bears doing funny tricks and begging for food.

When they had seen many of the animals



and birds, Firoz, one of the children, said :

" Now we must show Ahmed the fish in the Aquarium, for I know he can never have seen such pretty fish."

The children went down some steps and were soon in the water zoo, which is built under the Mappin Terraces. There they found three rooms, called the Fresh-water Hall, the Sea-water Hall, and the Tropical Hall. These great rooms had many tanks in which the fish were swimming about. On one side they were lit by daylight and on the other by cleverly hidden electric lights. Each tank had a glass front, so that Ahmed and his friends were able to stand and watch the fish. In the biggest tanks the plate glass was over an inch thick, for some of the fish were very large.

" Look, Ahmed, there is a devil fish," cried Firoz, " and in this one is an octopus. Look at all its legs. I should not like to meet one of those when I was bathing in the sea ! "

As well as these two strange-looking fish there were others—dogfish, big conger eels, and swordfish. Some of the smaller fish were very pretty.

" I like the paradise fish and the rainbow fish best," said Ahmed after he had watched them for some time.

One of the strangest looking fish which Ahmed saw was the sea horse, a tiny little fish which looked very like a horse's head. While Ahmed and his friends were looking at the fish a keeper came into the place and began to talk to them. He told them that the fish knew him, and that when he brought their food they would come swimming to the tops of their tanks and ask for their dinner like the animals and birds. He told them that he liked the fish very much and found them very clever.

" This is the finest water zoo in the world," he told them, and Ahmed said to himself :

"I must write and tell my sisters about this."

The next day Ahmed's friends took him to see the Tower of London and the Houses of Parliament. They went to Kensington Gardens one morning and Ahmed sailed his toy boat on the Round Pond. Then came the day when his father's business was finished and he told Ahmed that they would be going back to India very soon. Ahmed felt sad at leaving his friends, for he had liked being with them and seeing so many things and places very much. But he was happy to think that he would soon be at home again with his sisters and his friends in India. Firoz and his brother and sisters had not seen India for many years.



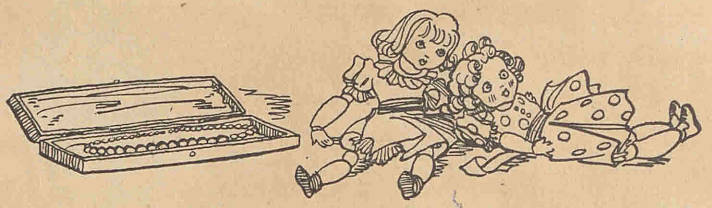
"You must write and tell us what it is like in Calcutta, and what games you play and what you learn in school," said Firoz.

Ahmed and his father left soon after for Calcutta, and when they arrived there Ahmed

was very pleased to find that his monkey was safe and well. The little animal ran to meet him and jumped into his arms, crying with happiness.

" He has missed you very much and has grown thin. Now he will eat and grow fat again," said Ahmed's servant.

Ahmed had many things to tell his mother



and sisters and friends. He had brought them all gifts from England. For his mother he had brought a gold necklace, and for his sisters some pretty dolls. Ahmed's friends wanted to hear of every place that he had seen on his way to and from England, and they wanted to hear, too, of the things he had seen in England.

" It will take me many days to tell you all this," said Ahmed, smiling. " You will have to come every day and I will tell you a little

of what I saw and heard. It is a good thing that my father made me write down the things I saw every day in a little book. I will read from my book and then tell you more things about the places we saw and the people we spoke to."

"I wish I could have gone up in a plane and seen all these things," cried one of his friends; "but I have never been in anything but a car or tram, and have never seen any place but Calcutta."

"Well, never mind!" answered Ahmed. "When you are big your father may take you to see many places, just as mine did."

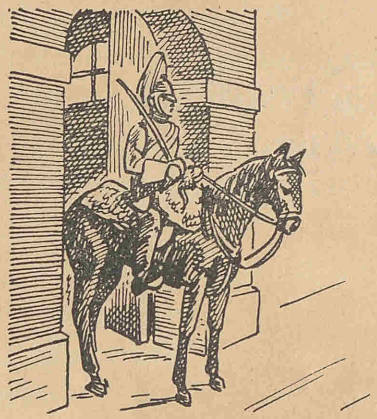
Then he began to tell his friends many things about England.

"What place did you like best in London?" asked Mohammed Khan, another of his friends.

Ahmed had to think for a long time before he could answer this. "I think I liked the Tower of London the best," he said at last.

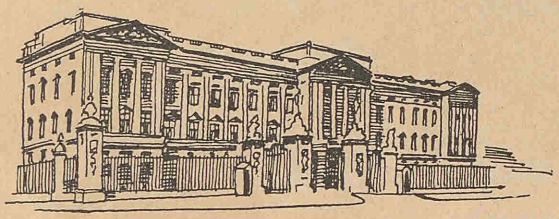
"Tell us what that is," cried Mohammed.

"Well, it is the place where the Crown Jewels are kept. These you can see in a case.





The Tower was made by William the Conqueror to keep the river gate to the city of London safe. There are many small rooms where great men were shut up for planning bad things against the Kings and Queens of England. Some of them have written their names on the walls and you can still see them there. Another place that I liked very much was the old Palace of Whitehall where once the Kings of England lived. At the door of the Palace two soldiers on big black horses keep guard. These are the Horse Guards. They wear very rich clothes and everyone stops to look at them and to watch them changing guard. I went, too, to see the Palace



where the King was living. This is called Buckingham Palace."

"What does it look like?" asked another of Ahmed's friends.

"It is a long stone house with a big courtyard in front and a lovely garden at the back. In front there is a large monument to Queen Victoria who was the great-grandmother of King George Sixth. From the gates of Buckingham Palace we went along a wide road with trees lining it which is called The Mall. It is up this road that the King and Queen drive to great *tamashas*. On one side of it is St. James's Park, a very pretty place."

"Did you see the King?" asked another boy.

"Yes, one day my father and I were walking along Whitehall and the King passed by in a car. I did not know it was the King, but





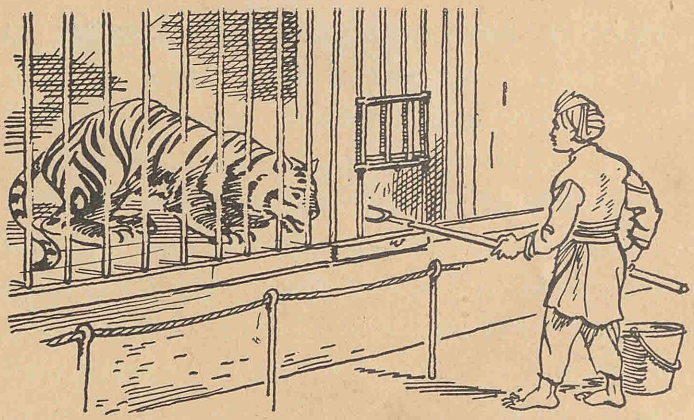
I saw all the men on the street taking their hats off, and a lady told me it was King George."

Ahmed's master at school asked him to write a story of his adventures in the plane, and afterwards this story was put into the school paper. Ahmed was very pleased to see his story in the paper.

"I must send this to Firoz and my other friends in London," he said, "and I must write them a long letter." So one evening he sat down with his pen and some paper and wrote a long long letter to Firoz :

"DEAR FIROZ (his letter said)—I should have written to you before this, but I have been very busy seeing all my friends and going to school. Now I have more time, because the school is shut. I am sending you a paper, and in it you will find the

story of how my father and I went to England. All my friends want to hear about England and all the places and things which we saw. I have told them of you all and of how kind you were to me. I hope that you are all well. It must be very cold in London now. Here we have warm sunshine and do not need thick clothes or a fire. I found my family well and my little monkey, but he was so thin. My servant told me that he had cried for me all the time and would not eat his food. Now he eats well and jumps about happily. I have taught him some new tricks. Have you been to see the Zoo again? I would like to go there. It was great fun to see so many animals. I should like to see the fish again too. In this Zoo there is a tiger which is very bad. He does not like his keeper. One day when the keeper was putting some meat into the place where the tiger lives, he caught hold of his arm and bit it right off. Now the poor keeper has only one arm. He does not look after the tiger any more, because he is afraid of



him. The tiger likes his new keeper, but the man takes his food to him on a long stick. The tiger's name is Raja. He was brought here from the forests, and is very big. When I go to the Zoo here I feed the bears with nuts, because they like them very much. I hope that one day you will come back to India and come here to Calcutta to see us and to play with us. If you stay any longer in England you will not know India when you come back to it ! When I am bigger I shall come to England to the University. How grand it would be if we two could go there ! I do not know if I shall go to Oxford or to Cambridge. Please

give my love to your dear mother and father and to all my friends. I hope that you will write to me soon."

Ahmed was pleased when he had finished his letter for he was bad at writing letters and did not like doing it. He posted it and the paper which had his story in it.

" I have written a long letter to Firoz," he told his sisters.

" What ! You have written a letter ? " cried one of them, smiling.

" Listen, Sister, Ahmed has written a long letter to his friend in England. Very soon the moon will fall from the sky ! "

" What do you say ? " asked Ahmed angrily.

" Well, all the time you were in England you did not write to *us*," cried his sister. " If it had not been for father's letters we would not have known what you were doing there."

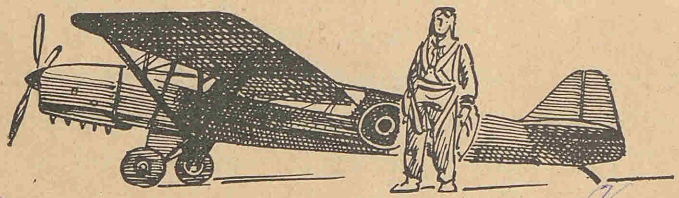
" I thought it better to wait and tell you everything," said Ahmed, and then he began to smile too.

All this happened many years ago. Ahmed is now a grown man and has a plane of his

own. He is a clever pilot, and has been given great praise for his skill and courage in flying over difficult country in all kinds of weather. His sisters are very proud of their airman brother.

QUESTIONS

1 What did Ahmed like best at the London Zoo?
2 Describe the water zoo there.
3 What did Ahmed do in Kensington Gardens?
4 What did Ahmed take back as gifts for his mother and sisters.
5 Describe Buckingham Palace.
6 Was Ahmed fond of writing letters? Do you like writing letters?
7 The King in the story is George Sixth; who is reigning now?



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