The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar
By Roald Dahl

Henry Sugar was forty-one years old and unmarried. He was also wealthy. He was wealthy because he had had a rich father who was now dead. He was unmarried because he was too selfish to share any of his money with a wife.
He was six feet two inches tall, but he wasn't really as good-looking as he thought he was.
He paid a great deal of attention to his clothes. He went to an expensive tailor for his suits, to a shirtmaker for his shirts, and to a bootmaker for his shoes.
He used a costly aftershave lotion on his face, and he kept his hands soft with a cream that contained turtle oil. His hairdresser trimmed his hair once every ten days, and he always took a manicure at the same time.
His upper front teeth had been capped at incredible expense because the originals had had a rather nasty yellowish tinge. A small mole had been removed from his left cheek by a plastic surgeon.
He drove a Ferrari car which must have cost him about the same as a country cottage.
He lived in London in the summer, but as soon as the first frosts appeared in October, he was off to the West Indies or the South of France, where he stayed with friends. All his friends were wealthy from inherited money.
Henry had never done a day's work in his life, and his personal motto, which he had invented himself, was this: It is better to suffer a mild scolding than to perform a difficult task. His friends thought this was hilarious.
Men like Henry Sugar are to be found drifting like seaweed all over the world. They can be seen especially in London, New York, Paris, Nassau, Montego Bay, Cannes and St Tropez. They are not particularly bad men. But they are not good men either. They are of no real importance. They are simply a part of the decoration.

All of them, all wealthy people of this type, have one peculiarity in common: they have a terrific urge to make themselves still wealthier than they already are. The million is never enough.
Nor is the two million. Always, they have this insatiable longing to get more money. And that is because they live in constant terror of waking up one morning and finding there's nothing in the bank.
These people all employ the same methods for trying to increase their fortunes. They buy stocks and shares, and watch them going up and down. They play roulette and blackjack for high stakes in casinos. They bet on horses. They bet on just about everything. Henry Sugar had once staked a thousand pounds on the result of a tortoise race on Lord Liverpool's tennis lawn. And he had wagered double that sum with a man called Esmond Hanbury on an even sillier bet, which was as follows: they let Henry's dog out into the garden and they watched it through the window. But before the dog was let out, each man had to guess beforehand what would be the first object the dog would lift its leg against. Would it be a wall, a post, a bush or a tree? Esmond chose a wall. Henry, who had been studying his dog's habits for days with a view to making this particular bet, chose a tree, and he won the money.
With ridiculous games such as these did Henry and his friends try to conquer the deadly boredom of being both idle and wealthy.

Henry himself, as you may have noticed, was not above cheating a little on these friends of his if he saw the chance. The bet with the dog was definitely not honest. Nor, if you want to know, was the bet on the tortoise race. Henry cheated on that one by secretly forcing a little sleeping-pill powder into the mouth of his opponent's tortoise an hour before the race.

And now that you've got a rough idea of the sort of person Henry Sugar was, I can begin my story.

One summer week-end, Henry drove down from London to Guildford to stay with Sir William Wyndham. The house was magnificent, and so were the grounds, but when Henry arrived on that Saturday afternoon, it was already pelting with rain. Tennis was out, croquet was out. So was swimming in Sir William's outdoor pool. The host and his guests sat glumly in the drawing-room, staring at the rain splashing against the windows. The very rich are enormously resentful of bad weather. It is the one discomfort that their money cannot do anything about.

Somebody in the room said, "Let's have a game of canasta for lovely high stakes".

The others thought that a splendid idea, but as there were five people in all, one would have to sit out. They cut the cards. Henry drew the lowest, the unlucky card.

The other four sat down and began to play. Henry was annoyed at being out of the game. He wandered out of the drawing-room into the great hall. He stared at the pictures for a few moments, then he walked on through the house, bored to death at having nothing to do. Finally, he mooched into the library.

Sir William's father had been a famous book collector, and all the four walls to this huge room were lined with books from floor to ceiling. Henry Sugar was not impressed. He wasn't even interested. The only books he read were detective novels and thrillers. He ambled aimlessly round the room, looking to see if he could find any of the sort of books he liked. But the ones in Sir William's library were all leather-bound volumes with names on them like Balzac, Ibsen, Voltaire, Johnson and Pepys. Boring rubbish, the whole lot of it, Henry told himself. And he was just about to leave when his eye was caught and held by a book that was quite different from all the others. It was so slim he would never have noticed it if it hadn't been sticking out a little from the ones on either side. And when he pulled it from the shelf, he saw that it was actually nothing more than a cardboard- covered exercise-book of the kind children use at school. The cover was dark blue, but there was nothing written on it. Henry opened the exercise-book. On the first page, hand-printed in ink, it said:

A REPORT ON AN INTERVIEW
WITH IMHRAT KHAN, THE MAN WHO
COULD SEE WITHOUT HIS EYES

by

Dr John F. Cartwright
BOMBAY, INDIA
DECEMBER, 1934

That sounds mildly interesting, Henry told himself. He turned over a page. What followed was all handwritten in black ink. The writing was clear and neat. Henry read the first two pages standing up. Suddenly, he found himself wanting to read on. This was good stuff. It was

fascinating. He carried the little book over to a leather armchair by the window and settled himself comfortably. Then he started reading again from the beginning.
This is what Henry read in the little blue exercise-book:

I, John Cartwright, am a surgeon at Bombay General Hospital. On the morning of the second of December, 1934, I was in the Doctors' Rest Room having a cup of tea. There were three other doctors there with me, all having a well-earned tea-break. They were Dr Marshall, Dr Phillips and Dr Macfarlane. There was a knock on the door. "Come in," I said.
The door opened and an Indian came in who smiled at us and said, "Excuse me, please. Could I ask you gentlemen a favour"?
The Doctors' Rest Room was a most private place. Nobody other than a doctor was allowed to enter it except in an emergency.
"This is a private room," Dr Macfarlane said sharply.
"Yes, yes," the Indian answered. "I know that and I am very sorry to be bursting in like this, sirs, but I have a most interesting thing to show you".
All four of us were pretty annoyed and we didn't say anything.
"Gentlemen," he said. "I am a man who can see without using his eyes".
We still didn't invite him to go on. But we didn't kick him out either.
"You can cover my eyes in any way you wish," he said, "You can bandage my head with fifty bandages and I will still be able to read you a book".
He seemed perfectly serious. I felt my curiosity beginning to stir. "Come here," I said. He came over to me. "Turn round." He turned round. I placed my hands firmly over his eyes, holding the lids closed. "Now," I said. "One of the other doctors in the room is going to hold up some fingers.
Tell me how many he's holding up".
Dr Marshall held up seven fingers.
"Seven," the Indian said.
"Once more," I said.
Dr Marshall clenched both fists and hid all his fingers.
"No fingers," the Indian said.
"Once more," I said.
Dr Marshall clenched both fists and hid all his fingers.
"No fingers," the Indian said.
I removed my hands from his eyes. "Not bad," I said.
"Hold on," Dr Marshall said. "Let's try this." There was a white doctor's coat hanging from a peg on the door. Dr Marshall took it down and rolled it into a sort of long scarf. He then wound it round the Indian's head and held the ends tight at the back. "Try him now," Dr Marshall said.
I took a key from my pocket. "What is this?" I asked.
"A key," he answered.
I put the key back and held up an empty hand. "What is this object?" I asked him.
"There isn't any object," the Indian said. "Your hand is empty".

Dr Marshall removed the covering from the man's eyes. "How do you do it?" he asked. "What's the trick"?
"There is no trick," the Indian said. "It is a genuine thing that I have managed after years of

training".
"What sort of training?" I asked.
"Forgive me, sir," he said. "But that is a private matter".
"Then why did you come here?" I asked.
"I came to request a favour of you," he said.
The Indian was a tall man of about thirty with light brown skin, the colour of a coconut. He had a small black moustache. Also, there was a curious matting of black hair growing all over the outsides of his ears. He wore a white cotton robe, and he had sandals on his bare feet.
"You see, gentlemen," he went on, "I am at present earning my living by working in a travelling theatre, and we have just arrived here in Bombay. Tonight we give our opening performance".
"Where do you give it?" I asked.
"In the Royal Palace Hall," he answered. "In Acacia Street. I am the star performer. I am billed on the programme as 'Imhrat Khan, the man who sees without his eyes'. And it is my duty to advertise the show in a big way. If we don't sell tickets, we don't eat".
"What does this have to do with us?" I asked him.
"Very interesting for you," he said. "Lots of fun. Let me explain. You see, whenever our theatre arrives in a new town, I myself go straight to the largest hospital and I ask the doctors there to bandage my eyes. I ask them to do it in the most expert fashion. They must make sure my eyes are completely covered many times over. It is important that this job is done by doctors, otherwise people will think I am cheating. Then, when I am fully bandaged, I go out into the streets and I do a dangerous thing".
"What do you mean by that?" I asked.
"What I mean is that I do something that is extremely dangerous for someone who cannot see".
"What do you do?" I asked.
"It is very interesting," he said. "And you will see me do it if you will be so kind as to bandage me up first. It would be a great favour to me if you will do this little thing, sirs".
I looked at the other three doctors. Dr Phillips said he had to go back to his patients. Dr

Macfarlane said the same. Dr Marshall said, "Well, why not? It might be amusing. It won't take a minute".
"I'm with you," I said. "But let's do the job properly. Let's make absolutely sure he can't peep".
"You are extremely kind," the Indian said. "Please do whatever you wish".
Dr Phillips and Dr Macfarlane left the room.
"Before we bandage him," I said to Dr Marshall, "let's first of all seal down his eyelids. When we've done that we'll fill his eye-sockets with something soft and solid and sticky".
"Such as what?" Dr Marshall asked.
"What about dough"?
"Dough would be perfect," Dr Marshall said.
"Right," I said. "If you will nip down to the hospital bakery and get some dough, I'll take him into the surgery and seal his lids".
I led the Indian out of the Rest Room and down the long hospital corridor to the surgery. "Lie down there," I said, indicating the high bed. He lay down. I took a small bottle from the cupboard. It had an eyedropper in the top. "This is something called collodion," I told him. "It will harden over your closed eyelids so that it is impossible for you to open them".

"How do I get it off afterwards?" he asked me.
"Alcohol will dissolve it quite easily," I said. "It's perfectly harmless. Close your eyes now".
The Indian closed his eyes. I applied collodion over both lids. "Keep them closed," I said. "Wait for it to harden".
In a couple of minutes, the collodion had made a hard film over the eyelids, sticking them down tight. "Try to open them," I said.
He tried but couldn't.
Dr Marshall came in with a basin of dough. It was the ordinary white dough used for baking bread. It was nice and soft. I took a lump of the dough and plastered it over one of the Indian's eyes. I filled the whole socket and let the dough overlap on to the surrounding skin. Then I pressed the edges
down hard. I did the same with the other eye.
"That isn't too uncomfortable, is it?" I asked.
"No," the Indian said. "It's fine".

"You do the bandaging," I said to Dr Marshall. "My fingers are too sticky".
"A pleasure," Dr Marshall said. "Watch this." He took a thick wad of cotton-wool and laid it on top of the Indian's dough-filled eyes. The cotton-wool stuck to the dough and stayed in place.
"Sit up, please," Dr Marshall said.
The Indian sat up on the bed.
Dr Marshall took a roll of three-inch bandage and proceeded to wrap it round and round the man's head. The bandage held the cotton-wool and the dough firmly in place. Dr Marshall pinned the bandage. After that, he took a second bandage and began to wrap that one not only around the man's eyes but around his entire face and head.
"Please to leave my nose free for breathing," the Indian said.
"Of course," Dr Marshall answered. He finished the job and pinned down the end of the bandage. "How's that?" he asked.
"Splendid," I said. "There's no way he can possibly see through that".
The whole of the Indian's head was now swathed in thick white bandage, and the only thing you could see was the end of his nose sticking out. He looked like a man who had had some terrible brain operation.
"How does that feel?" Dr Marshall asked him.
"It feels good," the Indian said. "I must compliment you gentlemen on doing such a fine job".
"Off you go, then," Mr Marshall said, grinning at me. "Show us how clever you are at seeing things now"!
The Indian got off the bed and walked straight to the door. He opened the door and went out.
"Great Scott!" I said. "Did you see that? He put his hand right on to the doorknob"!
Dr Marshall had stopped grinning. His face had suddenly gone white. "I'm going after him," he said, rushing for the door. I rushed for the door as well.
The Indian was walking quite normally along the hospital corridor. Dr Marshall and I were about five yards behind him. And very spooky it was to watch this man with the enormous white and totally bandaged head strolling casually along the corridor just like anyone else. It was especially spooky when you knew for a certainty that his eyelids were sealed, that his eye-sockets were filled with dough, and that there was a great wad of cotton-wool and bandages on top of that.

I saw a native orderly coming along the corridor towards the Indian. He was pushing a food-trolley. Suddenly the orderly caught sight of the man with the white head, and he froze. The bandaged Indian stepped casually to one side of the trolley and went on.
"He saw it!" I cried. "He must have seen that trolley! He walked right round it! This is absolutely unbelievable"!
Dr Marshall didn't answer me. His cheeks were white, his whole face rigid with shocked disbelief.
The Indian came to the stairs and started to go down them.
He went down with no trouble at all. He didn't even put a hand on the stair-rail. Several people were coming up the stairs. Each one of them stopped, gasped, stared and quickly got out of his way.
At the bottom of the stairs, the Indian turned right and headed for the doors that led out into the street. Dr Marshall and I kept close behind him.
The entrance to our hospital stands back a little from the street, and there is a rather grand series of steps leading down from the entrance into a small courtyard with acacia trees around it. Dr Marshall and I came out into the blazing sunshine and stood at the top of the steps. Below us, in the courtyard, we saw a crowd of maybe a hundred people. At least half of them were barefoot children, and as our white-headed Indian walked down the steps, they all cheered and shouted and surged towards him. He greeted them by holding both hands above his head.
Suddenly I saw the bicycle. It was over to one side at the bottom of the steps, and a small boy was holding it. The bicycle itself was quite ordinary, but on the back of it, fixed somehow to the rear wheel-frame, was a huge placard, about five feet square. On the placard were written the following words:

IMHART KHAN, THE MAN WHO SEES
WITHOUT HIS EYES!

TODAY MY EYES HAVE BEEN BANDAGED BY

HOSPITAL DOCTORS!
APPEARING TONIGHT AND
ALL THIS WEEK AT
THE ROYAL PALACE HALL,
ACACIA STREET, AT 7 P.M.
DON'T MISS IT!

YOU WILL SEE MIRACLES PERFORMED.

Our Indian had reached the bottom of the steps and now he walked straight over to the bicycle. He said something to the boy and the boy smiled. The Indian mounted the bicycle. The crowd made way for him. Then, lo and behold, this fellow with the blocked-up, bandaged eyes now proceeded to ride across the courtyard and straight out into the bustling honking traffic of the street beyond! The crowd cheered louder than ever. The barefoot children ran after him, squealing and laughing. For a minute or so, we were able to keep him in sight. We saw him ride

superbly down the busy street with motor-cars whizzing past him and a bunch of children running in his wake. Then he turned a corner and was gone.
"I feel quite giddy," Dr Marshall said. "I can't bring myself to believe it".
"We have to believe it," I said. "He couldn't possibly have removed the dough from under the bandages. We never let him out of our sight. And as for unsealing his eyelids, that job would take him five minutes with cotton-wool and alcohol".
"Do you know what I think," Dr Marshall said. "I think we have witnessed a miracle".
We turned and walked slowly back into the hospital.

For the rest of the day, I was kept busy with patients in the hospital. At six in the evening, I came off duty and drove back to my flat for a shower and a change of clothes. It was the hottest time of year in Bombay, and even after sundown the heat was like an open furnace. If you sat still in a chair and did nothing, the sweat would come seeping out of your skin. Your face glistened with dampness all day long and your shirt stuck to your chest. I took a long cool shower. I drank a whisky and soda sitting on the veranda, with only a towel round my waist. Then I put on some clean clothes.
At ten minutes to seven, I was outside the Royal Palace Hall in Acacia Street. It was not much of a place. It was one of those smallish seedy halls that can be hired inexpensively for meetings or dances. There was a fair-sized crowd of local Indians milling round outside the ticket office, and a large poster over the entrance proclaiming that THE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY was performing every night that week. It said there would be jugglers and conjurers and acrobats and sword-swallowers and fire-eaters and snake-charmers and a one-act play entitled The Rajah and the Tiger Lady. But above all this and in far the largest letters, it said:

IMHRAT KHAN, THE MIRACLE
MAN WHO SEES WITHOUT HIS EYES.

I bought a ticket and went in.
The show lasted two hours. To my surprise, I thoroughly enjoyed it. All the performers were excellent. I liked the man who juggled with cooking-utensils. He had a saucepan, a frying-pan, a baking tray, a huge plate and a casserole pot all flying through the air at the same time. The snake-charmer had a big green snake that stood almost on the tip of its tail and swayed to the music of his flute. The fire-eater ate fire and the sword-swallower pushed a thin pointed rapier at least four feet down his throat and into his stomach. Last of all, to a great fanfare of trumpets, our friend Imhrat Khan came on to do his act. The bandages we had put on him at the hospital had now been removed.
Members of the audience were called on to the stage to blindfold him with sheets and scarves and turbans, and in the end there was so much material wrapped around his head he could hardly keep his balance. He was then given a revolver. A small boy came out and stood at the left of the stage. I recognized him as the one who had held the bicycle outside the hospital that morning. The boy placed a tin can on the top of his head and stood quite still. The audience became deathly silent as Imhrat Khan took aim. He fired. The bang made us all jump. The tin can flew off the boy's head and clattered to the floor. The boy picked it up and showed the bullet-hole to the audience. Everyone clapped and cheered. The boy smiled.
Then the boy stood against a wooden screen and Imhrat Khan threw knives all around his

body, most of them going very close indeed. This was a splendid act. Not many people could have thrown knives with such accuracy even with their eyes uncovered, but here he was, this extraordinary fellow, with his head so swathed in sheets it looked like a great snowball on a stick, and he was flicking the sharp knives into the screen within a hair's breadth of the boy's head. The boy smiled all the way through the act, and when it was over the audience stamped its feet and screamed with excitement.

Imhrat Khan's last act, though not so spectacular, was even more impressive. A metal barrel was brought on stage. The audience was invited to examine it, to make sure there were no holes. There were no holes.

The barrel was then placed over Imhrat Khan's already bandaged head. It came down over his shoulders and as far as his elbows, pinning the upper part of his arms to his sides. But he could still hold out his forearms and his hands. Someone put a needle in one of his hands and a length of cotton thread in the other. With no false moves, he neatly threaded the cotton through the eye of the needle. I was flabbergasted.

As soon as the show was over, I made my way backstage. I found Mr Imhrat Khan in a small but clean dressing-room, sitting quietly on a wooden stool. The little Indian boy was unwinding the masses of scarves and sheets from around his head.

"Ah," he said. "It is my friend the doctor from the hospital. Come in, sir, come in".

"I saw the show," I said.

"And what did you think"?

"I liked it very much. I thought you were wonderful".

"Thank you," he said. "That is a high compliment".

"I must congratulate your assistant as well," I said, nodding to the small boy. "He is very brave".

"He cannot speak English," the Indian said. "But I will tell him what you said." He spoke rapidly to the boy in Hindustani and the boy nodded solemnly but said nothing.

"Look," I said. "I did you a small favour this morning. Would you do me one in return? Would you consent to come out and have supper with me"?

All the wrappings were off his head now. He smiled at me and said, "I think you are feeling curious, doctor. Am I not right"?

"Very curious," I said. "I'd like to talk to you".

Once again, I was struck by the peculiarly thick matting of black hair growing on the outsides of his ears. I had not seen anything quite like it on another person. "I have never been questioned by a doctor before," he said. "But I have no objection. It would be a pleasure to have supper with you".

"Shall I wait in the car"?

"Yes, please," he said. "I must wash myself and get out of these dirty clothes".

I told him what my car looked like and said I would be waiting outside.

He emerged fifteen minutes later, wearing a clean white cotton robe and the usual sandals on his bare feet. And soon the two of us were sitting comfortably in a small restaurant that I sometimes went to because it made the best curry in the city. I drank beer with my curry. Imhrat Khan drank lemonade.

"I am not a writer," I said to him. "I am a doctor. But if you will tell me your story from the

beginning, if you will explain to me how you developed this magical power of being able to see without your eyes, I will write it down as faithfully as I can. And then, perhaps, I can get it published in the British Medical Journal or even in some famous magazine. And because I am a doctor and not just some writer trying to sell a story for money, people will be far more inclined to take seriously what I say. It would help you, wouldn't it, to become better known"?
"It would help me very much," he said. "But why should you want to do this"?
"Because I am madly curious," I answered. "That is the only reason".
Imhrat Khan took a mouthful of curried rice and chewed it slowly. Then he said, "Very well, my friend. I will do it".
"Splendid!" I cried. "Let's go back to my flat as soon as we've finished eating and then we can talk without anyone disturbing us".
We finished our meal. I paid the bill. Then I drove Imhrat Khan back to my flat.

In the living-room, I got out paper and pencils so that I could make notes. I have a sort of private shorthand of my own that I use for taking down the medical history of patients, and with it I am able to record most of what a person says if he doesn't speak too quickly. I think I got just about everything Imhrat Khan said to me that evening, word for word, and here it is. I give it to you exactly as he spoke it:
"I am an Indian, a Hindu," said Imhrat Khan, "and I was born in Akhnur, in Kashmir State, in 1905 .My family is poor and my father worked as a ticket inspector on the railway. When I was a small boy of thirteen, an Indian conjurer comes to our school and gives a performance. His name, I remember, is Professor Moor -- all conjurers in India call themselves 'professor' -- and his tricks are very good. I am tremendously impressed. I think it is real magic. I feel -- how shall I call it -- I feel a powerful wish to learn about this magic myself, so two days later I run away from home, determined to find and to follow my new hero, Professor Moor. I take all my savings, fourteen rupees, and only the clothes I am wearing. I am wearing a white dhoti and sandals. This is in 1918 and I am thirteen years old.
"I find out that Professor Moor has gone to Lahore, two hundred miles away, so all alone, I take a ticket, third class, and I get on the train and follow him. In Lahore, I discover the Professor. He is working at his conjuring in a very cheap-type show. I tell him of my admiration and offer myself to him as assistant. He accepts me. My pay? Ah yes, my pay is eight annas a day.
"The Professor teaches me to do the linking-rings trick and my job is to stand in the street before the theatre doing this trick and calling to the people to come in and see the show.
"For six whole weeks this is very fine. It is much better than going to school. But then what a terrible bombshell I receive when suddenly it comes to me that there is no real magic in Professor Moor, that all is trickery and quickness of the hand. Immediately the Professor is no longer my hero. I lose every bit of interest in my job, but at the same time my whole mind becomes filled with a very strong longing. I long above all things to find out about the real magic and to discover something about the strange power which is called yoga.
"To do this, I must find a yogi who is willing to let me become his disciple. This is not going to be easy. True yogis do not grow on trees. There are very few of them in the whole of India. Also, they are fanatically religious people. Therefore, if I am to have success in finding a teacher, I too will have to pretend to be a very religious man.
"No, I am actually not religious. And because of that, I am what you would call a bit of a

cheat. I wanted to acquire yoga powers purely for selfish reasons. I wanted to use these powers to get fame and fortune.

"Now this was something the true yogi would despise more than anything in the world. In fact, the true yogi believes that any yogi who misuses his powers will die an early and sudden death. A yogi must never perform in public. He must practise his art only in absolute privacy and as a religious service, otherwise he will be smitten to death. This I did not believe and I still don't.

"So now my search for a yogi instructor begins. I leave Professor Moor and go to a town called Amritsar in the Punjab, where I join a travelling theatre company. I have to make a living while I am searching for the secret, and already I have had success in amateur acting at my school. So for three years I travel with this theatre group all over the Punjab and by the end of it, when I am sixteen and a half years old, I am playing top of the bill. All the time I am saving money and now I have altogether a very great sum, two thousand rupees.

"It is at this moment that I hear news of a man called Banerjee. This Banerjee, it is said, is one of the truly great yogis of India, and he possesses extraordinary powers. Above all, people are telling of how he has acquired the rare power of levitation, so that when he prays his whole body leaves the ground and becomes suspended in the air eighteen inches from the soil.

"Ah-ha, I think. This surely is the man for me. This Banerjee is the one that I must seek. So at once, I take my savings and leave the theatre company and make my way to Rishikesh, on the banks of the Ganges, where rumour says that Banerjee is living.

"For six months I search for Banerjee. Where is he? Where? Where is Banerjee? Ah yes, they say in Rishikesh, Banerjee has certainly been in the town, but that is a while ago, and even then no one saw him. And now? Now Banerjee has gone to another place. What other place? Ah well, they say, how can one know that. How indeed? How can one know about the movements of such a one as Banerjee. Does he not live a life of absolute seclusion? Does he not? And I say yes. Yes, yes, yes. Of course. That is obvious. Even to me.

"I spend all my savings trying to find this Banerjee, all except thirty-five rupees. But it is no good. However, I stay in Rishikesh and make a living by doing ordinary conjuring tricks for small groups and for suchlike. These are the tricks I have learned from Professor Moor and by nature my sleight of hand is very good.

"Then one day, there I am sitting in the small hotel in Rishikesh and again I hear talk of the yogi Banerjee. A traveller is saying how he has heard that Banerjee is now living in the jungle, not so very far away, but in the dense jungle and all alone.

"But where?

"The traveller is not sure where. 'Possibly,' he says, 'it is over there, in that direction, north of the town,' and he points with his finger.

"Well, that is enough for me. I go to the market and begin to bargain for hiring a tonga, which is a horse and cart, and the transaction is just being completed with the driver when up comes a man who has been standing listening nearby and he says that he too is going in that direction. He says can he come part of the way with me and share the cost. Of course I am delighted, and off we go, the man and me sitting in the cart, and the driver driving the horse. Off we go along a very small path which leads right through the jungle.

"And then what truly fantastic luck should happen! I am talking to my companion and I find that he is a disciple of none other than the great Banerjee himself and that he is going now on a visit to his master. So straight out I tell him that I too would like to become a disciple of the yogi. "He turns and looks at me long and slow, and for perhaps three minutes he does not speak. Then he says, quietly, 'No, that is impossible'.

"All right, I say to myself, we shall see. Then I ask if it is really true that Banerjee levitates when he prays.
' "Yes,' he says. 'That is true. But no one is allowed to observe the thing happening. No one is ever allowed to come near Banerjee when he is praying'.
"So we go on a little further in the tonga, talking all the time about Banerjee, and I manage by very careful casual questioning, to find out a number of small things about him, such as what time of day he commences with his praying. Then soon the man says, 'I will leave you here. This is where I dismount'.
"I drop him off and I pretend to drive on along my journey, but around a corner I tell the driver to stop and wait. Quickly I jump down and I sneak back along the road, looking for this man, the disciple of Banerjee. He is not on the road. Already he has disappeared into the jungle. But which way? Which side of the road? I stand very still and listen.
"I hear a sort of rustling in the undergrowth. That must be him, I tell myself. If it is not him, then it is a tiger. But it is him. I see him ahead. He is going forward through thick jungle. There is not even a little path where he is walking, and he is having to push his way between tall bamboos and every kind of heavy vegetation. I creep after him. I keep about one hundred yards behind him because I am frightened he may hear me. I can certainly hear him. It is impossible to proceed in silence through very thick jungle, and when I lose sight of him, which is most of the time, I am able to follow his sound.
"For about half an hour this tense game of follow-the-leader goes on. Then suddenly, I can no longer hear the man in front of me. I stop and listen. The jungle is silent. I am terrified that I may have lost him. I creep on a little way, and all at once, through the thick undergrowth, I see before me a little clearing, and in the middle of the clearing are two huts. They are small huts built entirely of jungle leaves and branches. My heart jumps and I feel a great surging of excitement inside me because this, I
know for certain, is the place of Banerjee, the yogi.
"The disciple has already disappeared. He must have gone into one of the huts. All is quiet.
So now I proceed to make a most careful inspection of the trees and bushes and other things all around. There is a small water-hole beside the nearest hut, and I see a prayer-mat beside it, and that, I say to myself, is where Banerjee meditates and prays. Close to this water-hole, not thirty yards away, there is a large tree, a great spreading baobab tree with beautiful thick branches which spread in such a way you can put a bed on them and lie on the bed and still not be seen from underneath. That will be
my tree, I say to myself. I shall hide in that tree, and wait until Banerjee comes out to pray. Then I will be able to see everything.
"But the disciple has told me that the time of prayer is not until five or six in the evening, so I have several hours to wait. Therefore I at once walk back through the jungle to the road and I speak to the tonga driver. I tell him he too must wait. For this, I have to pay him extra money, but it doesn't matter because now I am so excited I don't care about anything for the moment, not even money.
"And all through the great noontime heat of the jungle I wait beside the tonga, and on through the heavy wet heat of the afternoon, and then, as five o'clock approaches, I make my way quietly back through the jungle to the hut, my heart beating so fast I can feel it shaking my whole body. I climb up my tree and I hide among the leaves in such a way that I can see but cannot be seen. And I wait. I wait for forty-five minutes.

"A watch? Yes, I have on a wristwatch. I remember it clearly. It was a watch I won in a raffle and I was proud to own it. On the face of my watch it said the maker's name. The Islamia Watch Co,.Ludhiana. And so with my watch I am careful to be timing everything that goes on because I want to remember every single detail of this experience.
"I sit up in the tree, waiting.
"Then, all at once, a man is coming out of the hut. The man is tall and thin. He is dressed in an orange-coloured dhoti and he carries before him a tray with brass pots and incense-burners. He goes over and sits down cross-legged on the mat by the water-hole, putting the tray on the ground before him, and all the movements that he makes seem somehow very calm and gentle. He leans forward and scoops a handful of water from the pool and throws it over his shoulder. He takes the incense-burner and passes it back and forth across his chest, slowly, in a gentle, flowing manner. He puts his hands palm downward on his knees. He pauses. He takes a long breath through his nostrils. I can see him take a long breath and suddenly I can see his face is changing, there is a sort of brightness coming
over all his face, a sort of. . . well, a sort of brightness on his skin and I can see his face is changing.
"For fourteen minutes he remains quite still in that position, and then, as I look at him, I see, quite positively I see his body lifting slowly. . . slowly. . . slowly off the ground. He is still sitting cross-legged, the hands palm downward on the knees, and his whole body is lifting slowly off the ground, up into the air. Now I can see daylight underneath him. Twelve inches above the ground he is sitting. . . fifteen inches. . . eighteen. . . twenty. . . and soon he is at least two feet above the prayer mat.

"I stay quite still up there in the tree, watching, and I keep saying to myself, now look carefully. There before you, thirty yards away, is a man sitting in great serenity upon the air. Are you seeing him? Yes, I am seeing him. But are you sure there is no illusion? Are you sure there is no deception? Are you sure you are not imagining? Are you sure? Yes, I am sure, I say. I am sure. I stare at him, marvelling. For a long while I keep staring, and then the body is coming slowly down again towards the earth. I see it coming. I see it moving gently downward, slowly downward, lowering to the earth until again his buttocks rest upon the mat.
"Forty-six minutes by my watch the body has been suspended! I timed it.
"And then, for a long long while, for over two hours, the man remains sitting absolutely still, like a stone person, with not the slightest movement. To me, it does not seem that he is breathing. His eyes are closed, and still there is this brightness on his face and also this slightly smiling look, a thing I have not seen on any other face in all my life since then.
"At last he stirs. He moves his hands. He stands up. He bends down again. He picks up the tray and goes slowly back into the hut. I am wonderstruck. I feel exalted. I forget all caution and I climb down quickly from the tree and run straight over to the hut and rush in through the door. Banerjee is bending over, washing his feet and hands in a basin. His back is towards me, but he hears
me and he turns quickly and straightens up. There is great surprise on his face and the first thing he says is, 'How long have you been here?' He says it sharply, as if he is not pleased.
"At once I tell the whole truth, the whole story about being up in the tree and watching him, and at the end I tell him there is nothing I want in life except to become his disciple. Please will he let me become his disciple?
"Suddenly he seems to explode. He becomes furious and he begins shouting at me: 'Get out'!

he shouts. 'Get out of here! Get out! Get out! Get out!' and in his fury he picks up a small brick and flings it at me and it strikes my right leg just below the knee and tears the flesh. I have the scar still. I will show it to you. There, you see, just below the knee.
"Banerjee's anger is terrible and I am very frightened. I turn and run away. I run back through the jungle to where the tonga-driver is waiting, and we drive home to Rishikesh. But that night I regain my courage. I make for myself a decision and it is this: that I will return every day to the hut of Banerjee, and I will keep on and on at him until at last he has to take me on as a disciple, just to get himself some peace.
"This I do. Each day I go to see him and each day his anger pours out upon me like a volcano, him shouting and yelling and me standing there frightened but also obstinate and repeating always to him my wish to become a disciple. For five days it is like this. Then, all at once, on my sixth visit, Banerjee seems to become quite calm, quite polite. He explains he cannot himself take me on as a disciple. But he will give me a note, he says, to another man, a friend, a great yogi, who lives in Hardwar. I am to go there and I will receive help and instruction".

Imhrat Khan paused and asked me if he might have a glass of water. I fetched it for him. He took a long slow drink, then he went on with his story:
"This is in 1922 and I am nearly seventeen years old. So I go to Hardwar. And there I find the yogi, and because I have a letter from the great Banerjee, he consents to give me instruction.
"Now what is this instruction?
"It is, of course, the critical part of the whole thing. It is what I have been yearning for and searching for, so you can be sure I am an eager pupil.
"The first instruction, the most elementary part, consists of having to practise the most difficult physical exercises, all of them concerned with muscle control and breathing. But after some weeks of this, even the eager pupil becomes impatient. I tell the yogi it is my mental powers I wish to develop , not my physical ones.
"He replies, 'If you will develop control of your body, then the control of your mind will be an automatic thing.' But I want both at once, and I keep asking him, and in the end he says, 'Very well,

I will give you some exercises to help you to concentrate the conscious mind'.
' "Conscious mind?' I ask. 'Why do you say conscious mind'?
' "Because each man has two minds, the conscious and the sub-conscious. The sub-conscious mind is highly concentrated, but the conscious mind, the one everyone uses, is a scattered, unconcentrated thing. It is concerning itself with thousands of different items, the things you are seeing around you and the things you are thinking about. So you must learn to concentrate it in such a way that you can visualize at will one item, one item only, and absolutely nothing else. If you work hard at this, you should be able to concentrate your mind, your conscious mind, upon any one object you select for at least three and a half minutes. But that will take about fifteen years'.
' "Fifteen years!' I cry.
' "It may take longer,' he says. 'Fifteen years is the usual time'.
' "But I will be an old man by then'!
' "Do not despair,' the yogi says. 'The time varies with different people. Some take ten years, a few can take less, and on extremely rare occasions a special person comes along who is able to develop the power in only one or two years. But that is one in a million'.

' "Who are these special people?' I ask. 'Do they look different from other people'?
' "They look the same,' he says. 'A special person might be a humble roadsweeper or a factory worker. Or he might be a rajah. There is no way of telling until the training begins'.
' "Is it really so difficult,' I ask, 'to concentrate the mind upon a single object for three and a half minutes'?
' "It is almost impossible,' he answers. 'Try it and see. Shut your eyes and think of something. Think of just one object. Visualize it. See it before you. And in a few seconds your mind will start wandering. Other little thoughts will creep in. Other visions will come to you. It is a very difficult thing'.
"Thus spoke the yogi of Hardwar.
"And so my real exercises begin. Each evening, I sit down and close my eyes and visualize the face of the person I love best, which is my brother. I concentrate upon visualizing his face. But the instant my mind begins to wander, I stop the exercise and rest for some minutes. Then I try again.
"After three years of daily practice, I am able to concentrate absolutely upon my brother's face for one and a half minutes. I am making progress. But an interesting thing happens. In doing these exercises, I lose my sense of smell absolutely. And never to this day does it come back to me.
"Then the necessity for earning my living to buy food forces me to leave Hardwar. I go to Calcutta where there are greater opportunities, and there I soon begin to make quite good money by giving conjuring performances. But always I continue with the exercises. Every evening, wherever I am, I settle myself down in a quiet corner and practise the concentrating of the mind upon my brother's face. Occasionally, I choose something not so personal, like for example an orange or a pair of spectacles, and that makes it even more difficult.
"One day, I travel from Calcutta to Dacca in East Bengal to give a conjuring show at a college there, and while in Dacca, I happen to be present at a demonstration of walking on fire. There are many people watching. There is a big trench dug at the bottom of a sloping lawn. The spectators are sitting in their hundreds upon the slopes of the lawn looking down upon the trench.
"The trench is about twenty-five feet long. It has been filled with logs and firewood and charcoal, and a lot of paraffin has been poured on it. The paraffin has been lit, and after a while the whole trench has become a smouldering red-hot furnace. It is so hot that the men who are stoking it are obliged to wear goggles. There is a high wind and the wind fans the charcoal almost to white heat.
"The Indian fire-walker then comes forward. He is naked except for a small loincloth, and his feet are bare. The crowd becomes silent. The fire-walker enters the trench and walks the whole length of it, over the white-hot charcoal. He doesn't stop. Nor does he hurry. He simply walks over the white-hot coals and comes out at the other end, and his feet are not even singed. He shows the soles of his feet to the crowd. The crowd stares in amazement.
"Then the fire-walker walks the trench once more. This time he goes even slower, and as he does it, I can see on his face a look of pure and absolute concentration. This man, I tell myself, has practised yoga. He is a yogi.
"After the performance, the fire-walker calls out to the crowd, asking if there is anyone brave enough to come down and walk on the fire. There is a hush in the crowd. I feel a sudden surge of excitement in my chest. This is my chance. I must take it. I must have faith and courage. I

must have a go. I have been doing my concentration exercises for over three years now and the time has come to give myself a severe test.
"While I am standing there thinking these thoughts, a volunteer comes forward from the crowd. It is a young Indian man. He announces that he would like to try the fire-walk. This decides me, and I also step forward and make my announcement. The crowd gives us both a cheer.
"Now the real fire-walker becomes the supervisor. He tells the other man he will go first. He makes him remove his dhoti, otherwise, he says, the hem will catch fire from the heat. And the sandals must be taken off.
"The young Indian does what he is told. But now that he is close to the trench and can feel the terrible heat coming from it, he begins to look frightened. He steps back a few paces, shielding his eyes from the heat with his hands.
' "You don't have to do it if you don't want to,' the real fire-walker says.

"The crowd waits and watches, sensing a drama.
"The young man, though scared out of his wits, wishes to prove how brave he is, and he says, 'Of course I'll do it'.
"With that, he runs towards the trench. He steps into it with one foot, then the other. He gives a fearful scream and leaps out again and falls to the ground. The poor man lies there screaming in pain. The soles of his feet are badly burned and some of the skin has come right away. Two friends of his run forward and carry him off.
' "Now it is your turn,' says the fire-walker. 'Are you ready'?
' "I am ready,' I say. 'But please be silent while I prepare myself'.
"A great hush has come over the crowd. They have seen one man get badly burned. Is the second one going to be mad enough to do the same thing?
"Someone in the crowd shouts, 'Don't do it! You must be mad!' Others take up the shout, all telling me to give up. I turn and face them and raise my hands for silence. They stop shouting and stare at me. Every eye in that place is upon me now.
"I feel extraordinarily calm.
"I pull my dhoti off over my head. I take off my sandals. I stand there naked except for my underpants. I stand very still and close my eyes. I begin to concentrate my mind. I concentrate on the fire. I see nothing but white-hot coals and I concentrate on them being not hot but cold. The coals are cold, I tell myself. They cannot burn me. It is impossible for them to burn me because there is no heat in them. I allow half a minute to go by. I know that I must not wait too long because I am only able to concentrate absolutely upon any one thing for a minute and a half.
"I keep concentrating. I concentrate so hard that I go into a sort of trance. I step out on to the coals. I walk fairly fast the whole length of the trench. And behold, I am not burned!
'The crowd goes mad. They yell and cheer. The original fire-walker rushes up to me and examines the soles of my feet. He can't believe what he sees. There is not a burn mark on them ".
'Ayee!' he cries. 'What is this? Are you a yogi'?
' "I am on the way, sir,' I answer proudly. 'I am well on the way'.
"After that, I dress and leave quickly, avoiding the crowd.
"Of course I am excited. 'It is coming to me,' I say. 'Now at last the power is beginning to come.' And all the time I am remembering something else. I am remembering a thing that the old yogi of Hardwar said to me. He said, 'Certain holy people have been known to develop so

great a concentration that they could see without using their eyes.' I keep remembering that saying and I keep longing for the power to do likewise myself. And after my success with the fire-walking, I decided that I will concentrate everything upon this single aim -- to see without the eyes".

For only the second time so far, Imhrat Khan broke off his story. He took another sip of water, then he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.
"I am trying to get everything in the correct order," he said. "I don't want to miss anything out".
"You're doing fine," I told him. "Carry on".
"Very well," he said. "So I am still in Calcutta and I have just had success with fire-walking. And now I have decided to concentrate all my energy on this one thing, which is to see without the eyes.
"The time has come, therefore, to make a slight change in the exercises. Each night now I light a candle and I begin by staring at the flame. A candle-flame, you know, has three separate parts, the yellow at the top, the mauve lower down, and the black right inside. I place the candle sixteen inches away from my face. The flame is absolutely level with my eyes. It must not be above or below. It must be dead level because then I do not have to make even the tiniest little adjustment of the eye muscles by looking up or down. I settle myself comfortably and I begin to stare at the black part of the flame, right in the centre. All this is merely to concentrate my conscious mind, to empty it of everything around me. So I stare at the black spot in the flame until everything around me has disappeared and I can see nothing else. Then slowly I shut my eyes and begin to concentrate as usual upon one single object of my choice, which as you know is usually my brother's face.
"I do this every night before bed and by 1929, when I am twenty-four years old, I can concentrate upon an object for three minutes without any wandering of my mind. So it is now, at this
time, when I am twenty-four, that I begin to become aware of a slight ability to see an object with my
eyes closed. It is a very slight ability, just a queer little feeling that when I close my eyes and look at something hard, with fierce concentration, then I can see the outline of the object I am looking at. "Slowly I am beginning to develop my inner sense of sight.
"You ask me what I mean by that. I will explain it to you exactly as the yogi of Hardwar explained it to me.
"All of us, you see, have two senses of sight, just as we have two senses of smell and taste and hearing. There is the outer sense, the highly developed one which we all use, and there is the inner one also. If only we could develop these inner senses of ours, then we could smell without our noses, taste without our tongues, hear without our ears and see without our eyes. Do you not understand? Do you not see that our noses and tongues and ears and eyes are only. . . how shall I say it?. . . are only instruments which assist in conveying the sensation itself to the brain.
"And so it is that I am all the time striving to develop my inner senses of sight. Each night now I perform my usual exercises with the candle-flame and my brother's face. After that I rest a little while. I drink a cup of coffee. Then I blindfold myself and sit in my chair trying to visualize, trying to see, not just to imagine, but actually to see without my eyes every object in the room.
"And gradually success begins to come.

"Soon I am working with a pack of cards. I take a card from the top of the pack and hold it before me, back to front, trying to see through it. Then, with a pencil in my hand, I write down what I think it is. I take another card and do the same again. I go through the whole of the pack like that and when it is over I check what I have written down against the pile of cards beside me. Almost at once I have a sixty to seventy per cent success.
"I do other things. I buy maps and complicated navigating charts and pin them up all around my room. I spend hours looking at them blindfold, trying to see them, trying to read the small lettering
of the place-names and the rivers. Every evening for the next four years, I proceed with this kind of practice.
"By the year 1933 -- that is only last year -- when I am twenty-eight years old, I can read a book. I can cover my eyes completely and I can read a book right through.
"So now at last I have it, this power. For certain I have it now, and at once, because I cannot wait with impatience, I include the blindfold act in my ordinary conjuring performance.
"The audience loves it. They applaud long and loud. But not one single person believes it to be genuine. Everyone thinks it is just another clever trick. And the fact that I am a conjurer makes them think more than ever that I am faking. Conjurers are men who trick you. They trick you with cleverness. And so no one believes me. Even the doctors who blindfold me in the most expert way refuse to believe that anyone can see without his eyes. They forget there may be other ways of sending the image to the brain".
"What other ways?" I asked him.
"Quite honestly, I don't know exactly how it is I can see without my eyes. But what I do know is this; when my eyes are bandaged, I am not using the eyes at all. The seeing is done by another part of my body".
"Which part?" I asked him.
"Any part at all so long as the skin is bare. For example, if you put a sheet of metal in front of me and put a book behind the metal, I cannot read the book. But if you allow me to put my hand around the sheet of metal so that the hand is seeing the book, then I can read it".
"Would you mind if I tested you on that?" I asked.
"Not at all," he answered.
"I don't have a sheet of metal," I said. "But the door will do just as well".
I stood up and went to the bookshelf. I took down the first book that came to hand. It was Alice in Wonderland. I opened the door and asked my visitor to stand behind it, out of sight. I opened the
book at random and propped it on a chair the other side of the door to him. Then I stationed myself in a position where I could see both him and the book.
"Can you read that book?" I asked him.
"No," he answered. "Of course not".
"All right. You may now put your hand around the door, but only the hand".
He slid his hand around the edge of the door until it was within sight of the book. Then I saw the fingers on the hand parting from one another, spreading wide, beginning to quiver slightly, feeling the air like the antennae of an insect. And the hand turned so that the back of it was facing the book.
"Try to read the left page from the top," I said.
There was silence for perhaps ten seconds, then smoothly, without pause, he began to read" :

'Have you guessed the riddle yet?' the Hatter said, turning to Alice again. 'No, I give it up,' Alice replied. 'What's the answer?' 'I haven't the slightest idea,' said the Hatter. 'Nor I,' said the Hare. Alice sighed wearily. 'I think you might do something better with the time,' she said, 'than waste it asking riddles with no answers" '. . .
"It's perfect!" I cried. "Now I believe you! You are a miracle!" I was enormously excited.
"Thank you, doctor," he said gravely. "What you say gives me great pleasure".
"One question," I said. "It's about the playing-cards. When you held up the reverse side of one of them, did you put your hand around the other side to help you to read it"?
"You are very perceptive," he said. "No, I did not. In the case of the cards, I was actually able to see through them in some way".
"How do you explain that?" I asked.
"I don't explain it," he said. "Except perhaps that a card is such a flimsy thing, it is so thin, and not solid like metal or thick like a door. That is all the explanation I can give. There are many things in this world, doctor, that we cannot explain".
"Yes," I said. "There certainly are".
"Would you be kind enough to take me home now," he said. "I feel very tired".
I drove him home in my car.

That night I didn't go to bed. I was far too worked up to sleep. I had just witnessed a miracle. This man would have doctors all over the world turning somersaults in the air! He could change the whole course of medicine! From a doctor's point of view, he must be the most valuable man alive!
We doctors must get hold of him and keep him safe. We must look after him. We mustn't let him go. We must find out exactly how it is that an image can be sent to the brain without using the eyes. And if we do that, then blind people might be able to see and deaf people might be able to hear. Above all, this incredible man must not be ignored and left to wander around India, living in cheap rooms and playing in second-rate theatres.
I got so steamed up thinking about this that after a while I grabbed a notebook and a pen and started writing down with great care everything that Imhrat Khan had told me that evening. I used the notes I had made while he was talking. I wrote for five hours without stopping. And at eight o'clock the next morning, when it was time to go to the hospital, I had finished the most important part, the pages you have just read.
At the hospital that morning, I didn't see Dr Marshall until we met in the Doctors' Rest Room in our tea-break.
I told him as much as I could in the ten minutes we had to spare. "I'm going back to the theatre tonight," I said. "I must talk to him again. I must persuade him to stay here. We mustn't lose him now".
"I'll come with you," Dr Marshall said.
"Right," I said. "We'll watch the show first and then we'll take him out to supper".
At a quarter to seven that evening, I drove Dr Marshall in my car to Acacia Road. I parked the car, and the two of us walked over to the Royal Palace Hall.
"There's something wrong," I said. "Where is everybody"?
There was no crowd outside the hall and the doors were closed. The poster advertising the

show was still in place, but I now saw that someone had written across it in large printed letters, using black paint, the words TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE CANCELLED. There was an old gatekeeper standing by the locked doors.
"What happened?" I asked him.
"Someone died," he said.
"Who?" I asked, knowing already who it was.
"The man who sees without his eyes," the gatekeeper answered.
"How did he die?" I cried. "When? Where"?
"They say he died in his bed," the gatekeeper said. "He went to sleep and never woke up. These things happen".
We walked slowly back to the car. I felt an overwhelming sense of grief and anger. I should never have allowed this precious man to go home last night. I should have kept him. I should have given him my bed and taken care of him. I shouldn't have let him out of my sight. Imhrat Khan was a maker of miracles. He had communicated with mysterious and dangerous forces that are beyond the reach of ordinary people. He had also broken all the rules. He had performed miracles in public. He had taken money for doing so. And, worst of all, he had told some of those secrets to an outsider- me. Now he was dead.
"So that's that," Dr Marshall said.
"Yes," I said. "It's all over. Nobody will ever know how he did it".
This is a true and accurate report of everything that took place concerning my two meetings with Imhrat Khan.
signed John F. Cartwright, M.D.
Bombay, 4th December, 1934

"Well, well, well," said Henry Sugar. "Now that is extremely interesting".
He closed the exercise-book and sat gazing at the rain splashing against the windows of the library.
"This," Henry Sugar went on, talking aloud to himself, "is a terrific piece of information. It could change my life".
The piece of information Henry was referring to was that Imhrat Khan had trained himself to read the value of a playing-card from the reverse side. And Henry the gambler, the rather dishonest gambler, had realized at once that if only he could train himself to do the same thing, he could make a fortune.
For a few moments, Henry allowed his mind to dwell upon the marvellous things he would be able to do if he could read cards from the back. He would win every single time at canasta and bridge and poker. And better still, he would be able to go into any casino in the world and clean up at blackjack and all the other high-powered card games they played!
In gambling casinos, as Henry knew very well, nearly everything depended in the end upon the turn of a single card, and if you knew beforehand what the value of that card was, then you were home and dry!
But could he do it? Could he actually train himself to do this thing?
He didn't see why not. That stuff with the candle-flame didn't appear to be particularly hard work. And according to the book, that was really all there was to it -- just staring into the middle of the flame and trying to concentrate upon the face of the person you loved best.
It would probably take him several years to bring it off, but then who in the world wouldn't be

willing to train for a few years in order to beat the casinos every time he went in?
"By golly," he said aloud, "I'll do it! I'm going to do it"!
He sat very still in the armchair in the library, working out a plan of campaign. Above all, he would tell nobody what he was up to. He would steal the little book from the library so that none of his friends might come upon it by chance and learn the secret. He would carry the book with him wherever he went. It would be his bible. He couldn't possibly go out and find a real live yogi to instruct him, so the book would be his yogi instead. It would be his teacher.
Henry stood up and slipped the slim blue exercise-book under his jacket. He walked out of the library and went straight upstairs to the bedroom they had given him for the week-end. He got out his suitcase and hid the book underneath his clothes. He then went downstairs again and found his way to the butler's pantry.
"John," he said, addressing the butler, "can you find me a candle? Just an ordinary white candle".
Butlers are trained never to ask reasons. They simply obey orders. "Do you wish a candle-holder as well, sir"?
"Yes. A candle and a candle-holder".
"Very good, sir. Shall I bring them to your room"?
"No. I'll hang around here till you find them".
The butler soon found a candle and a candle-holder. Henry said, "And now could you find me a ruler?" The butler found him a ruler. Henry thanked him and returned to his bedroom.
When he was inside the bedroom, he locked the door. He drew all the curtains so that the place was in twilight. He put the candle-holder with the candle in it on the dressing-table and pulled up a chair. When he sat down, he noticed with satisfaction that his eyes were exactly level with the wick of the candle. Now, using the ruler, he positioned his face sixteen inches from the candle, which was what the book said must be done.
That Indian fellow had visualized the face of the person he loved best, which in his case was a brother. Henry didn't have a brother. He decided instead to visualize his own face. This was a good choice because when you are as selfish and self-centred as Henry was, then one's own face is certainly the face one loves best of all. Moreover, it was the face he knew best of all. He spent so much time looking at it in the mirror, he knew every twist and wrinkle.
With his cigarette-lighter, he lit the wick. A yellow flame appeared and burned steadily.

Henry sat quite still and stared into the candle-flame. The book had been quite right. The flame, when you looked into it closely, did have three separate parts. There was the yellow outside. Then there was the mauve inner sheath. And right in the middle was the tiny magic area of absolute blackness. He stared at the tiny black area. He focused his eyes upon it and kept staring at it, and as he did so, an extraordinary thing happened. His mind went absolutely blank, and his brain ceased fidgeting around, and all at once it felt as though he himself, his whole body, was actually encased within the flame, sitting snug and cosy within the little black area of nothingness.
With no trouble at all, Henry allowed the image of his own face to swim into sight before him. He concentrated upon the face and nothing but the face. He blocked out all other thoughts. He succeeded completely in doing this, but only for about fifteen seconds. After that, his mind began to wander and he found himself thinking about gambling casinos and how much money he was going to win. At this point, he looked away from the candle and gave himself a rest.
This was his very first effort. He was thrilled. He had done it. Admittedly he hadn't kept it up

for very long. But neither had that Indian fellow on the first attempt.
After a few minutes, he tried again. It went well. He had no stop-watch to time himself with, but he sensed that this was definitely a longer go than the first one.
"It's terrific!" he cried. "I'm going to succeed! I'm going to do it!" He had never been so excited by anything in his life.
From that day on, no matter where he was or what he was doing, Henry made a point of practising with the candle every morning and every evening. Often he practised at midday as well.
For the first time in his life he was throwing himself into something with genuine enthusiasm. And the progress he made was remarkable. After six months, he could concentrate absolutely upon his own face for no less than three minutes without a single outside thought entering his mind.
The yogi of Hardwar had told the Indian fellow that a man would have to practise for fifteen years to get that sort of result!
But wait! The yogi had also said something else. He had said (and here Henry eagerly consulted the little blue exercise-book for the hundredth time), he had said that on extremely rare occasions a special person comes along who is able to develop the power in only one or two years.
"That's me!" Henry cried. "It must be me! I am the one-in-a-million person who is gifted with the ability to acquire yoga powers at incredible speed! Whoopee and hurray! It won't be long now before I'm breaking the bank in every casino in Europe and America"!
But Henry at this point showed unusual patience and good sense. He didn't rush to get out a pack of cards to see if he could read them from the reverse side. In fact, he kept well away from card games of all kinds. He had given up bridge and canasta and poker as soon as he had started working with the candle. What's more, he had given up razzing around to parties and weekends with his rich friends. He had become dedicated to this single aim of acquiring yoga powers, and everything else would have to wait until he had succeeded.

Some time during the tenth month, Henry became aware, just as Imhrat Khan had done before him, of a slight ability to see an object with his eyes closed. When he closed his eyes and stared at something hard, with fierce concentration, he could actually see the outline of the object he was looking at.
"It's coming to me!" he cried. "I'm doing it! It's fantastic"!
Now he worked harder than ever at his exercises with the candle, and at the end of the first year he could actually concentrate upon the image of his own face for no less than five and a half minutes!
At this point, he decided the time had come to test himself with the cards. He was in the living-room of his London flat when he made this decision and it was near midnight. He got out a pack of cards and a pencil and paper. He was shaking with excitement. He placed the pack upside down before him and concentrated on the top card.
All he could see at first was the design on the back of the card. It was a very ordinary design of thin red lines, one of the commonest playing-card designs in the world. He now shifted his concentration from the pattern itself to the other side of the card. He concentrated with great intensity upon the invisible underneath of the card, and he allowed no other single thought to creep into his mind. Thirty seconds went by.
Then one minute. . .

Two minutes. . .
Three minutes. . .
Henry didn't move. His concentration was intense and absolute. He was visualizing the reverse side of the playing-card. No other thought of any kind was allowed to enter his head.
During the fourth minute, something began to happen. Slowly, magically, but very clearly, the black symbols became spades and alongside the spades appeared the figure five.
The five of spades!
Henry switched off his concentration. And now, with shaking fingers, he picked up the card and turned it over.
It was the five of spades!
"I've done it!" he cried aloud, leaping up from his chair. "I've seen through it! I'm on my way"!
After resting for a while, he tried again, and this time he used a stop-watch to see how long it took him. After three minutes and fifty-eight seconds, he read the card as the king of diamonds. He was right!

The next time he was right again and it took him three minutes and fifty-four seconds. That was four seconds less.
He was sweating with excitement and exhaustion. "That's enough for today," he told himself. He got up and poured himself an enormous drink of whisky and sat down to rest and to gloat over his success.
His job now, he told himself, was to keep practising and practising with the cards until he could see through them instantly. He was convinced it could be done. Already, on the second go, he had knocked four seconds off his time. He would give up working with the candle and concentrate solely upon the cards. He would keep at it day and night.
And that is what he did. But now that he could smell real success in the offing, he became more fanatical than ever. He never left his flat except to buy food and drink. All day and often far into the night, he crouched over the cards with the stop-watch beside him, trying to reduce the time it took him to read from the reverse side.
Within a month, he was down to one and a half minutes.
And at the end of six months of fierce concentrated work, he could do it in twenty seconds.
But even that was too long. When you are gambling in a casino and the dealer is waiting for you to say yes or no to the next card, you are not going to be allowed to stare at it for twenty seconds before making up your mind. Three or four seconds would be permissible. But no more.
Henry kept at it. But from now on, it became more and more difficult to improve his speed. To get down from twenty seconds to nineteen took him a week of very hard work. From nineteen to eighteen took him nearly two weeks. And seven more months went by before he could read through a card in ten seconds flat.
His target was four seconds. He knew that unless he could see through a card in a maximum of four seconds, he wouldn't be able to work the casinos successfully.
Yet the nearer he got towards the target, the more difficult it became to reach it. It took four weeks to get his time down from ten seconds to nine, and five more weeks to go from nine to eight. But at this stage, hard work no longer bothered him. His powers of concentration had now developed to such a degree that he was able to work for twelve hours at a stretch with no trouble at all. And he knew with absolute certainty that he would get there in the end. He would not stop until he did. Day after day, night after night, he sat crouching over the cards with his

stop-watch beside him, fighting with a terrible intensity to knock those last few stubborn seconds off his time.
The last three seconds were the worst of all. To get from seven seconds to his target of four took him exactly eleven months!
The great moment came on a Saturday evening. A card lay face down on the table in front of him. He clicked the stop-watch and began to concentrate. At once, he saw a blob of red. The blob swiftly took shape and became a diamond. And then, almost instantaneously, a figure six appeared in the top left-hand corner. He clicked the watch again. He checked the time. It was four seconds! He turned the card over. It was the six of diamonds! He had done it! He had read it in four seconds flat!
He tried again with another card. In four seconds he read it as the queen of spades. He went right through the pack, timing himself with every card. Four seconds! Four seconds! Four seconds! It was always the same. He had done it at last! It was all over. He was ready to go! And how long had it taken him? It had taken him exactly three years and three months of concentrated work.
And now for the casinos!
When should he start? Why not tonight?
Tonight was Saturday. All the casinos were crowded on Saturday nights. So much the better.

There'd be less chance of becoming conspicuous. He went into his bedroom to change into his dinner- jacket and black tie. Saturday was a dressy night at the big London casinos.

He would go, he decided, to Lord's House. There are well over one hundred legitimate casinos in London, but none of them is open to the general public. You must become a member before you are allowed to walk in. Henry was a member of no less than ten of them. Lord's House was his favourite. It was the finest and most exclusive in the country.

Lord's House was a magnificent Georgian mansion in the centre of London, and for over two hundred years it had been the private residence of a Duke. Now it was taken over by the bookmakers, and the superb high-ceilinged rooms where the aristocracy and often royalty used to gather and play a gentle game of whist were today filled with a new kind of people who played a very different sort of game.
Henry drove to Lord's House and pulled up outside the great entrance. He got out of the car, but left the engine running. Immediately, an attendant in green uniform came forward to park it for him.
Along the kerb on both sides of the street stood perhaps a dozen Rolls-Royces. Only the very wealthy belonged to Lord's House.
"Why hello, Mr Sugar!" said the man behind the desk whose job it was never to forget a face. "We haven't seen you for years"!
"I've been busy," Henry answered.
He went upstairs, up the marvellous wide staircase with its carved mahogany banisters, and entered the cashier's office. There he wrote a cheque for one thousand pounds. The cashier gave him ten large pink rectangular plaques made of plastic. On each it said £100. Henry slipped them into his pocket and spent a few minutes sauntering through the various gaming rooms to get the feel of things again after such a long absence. There was a big crowd here tonight. Well-fed women stood around

the roulette wheel like plump hens around a feeding hopper. Jewels and gold were dripping over their bosoms and from their wrists. Many of them had blue hair. The men were in dinner-jackets and there wasn't a tall one among them. Why, Henry wondered, did this particular kind of rich man always have short legs? Their legs all seemed to stop at the knees with no thighs above. Most of them had bellies coming out a long way, and crimson faces, and cigars between their lips. Their eyes glittered with greed.

All this Henry noticed. It was the first time in his life that he had looked with distaste upon this type of wealthy gambling-casino person. Up until now, he had always regarded them as companions, as members of the same group and class as himself. Tonight they seemed vulgar. Could it be, he wondered, that the yoga powers he had acquired over the last three years had altered him just a little bit?

He stood watching the roulette. Upon the long green table people were placing their money, trying to guess which little slot the small white ball would fall into on the next spin of the wheel. Henry looked at the wheel. And suddenly, perhaps more from habit than anything else, he found himself beginning to concentrate upon it. It was not difficult. He had been practising the art of total concentration for so long that it had become something of a routine. In a fraction of a second, his mind had become completely and absolutely concentrated upon the wheel. Everything else in the room, the noise, the people, the lights, the smell of cigar smoke, all this was wiped out of his mind, and he saw only the white numbers around the rim. The numbers went from 1 to 36, with an O between 1 and 36.

Very quickly, all the numbers blurred and disappeared in front of his eyes. All except one, all except the number 18. It was the only number he could see. At first it was slightly muzzy and out of focus.

Then the edges sharpened and the whiteness of it grew brighter, more brilliant, until it began to glow as though there was a bright light behind it. It grew bigger. It seemed to jump towards him. At that point, Henry switched off his concentration. The room swam back into vision.

"Have you all finished?" the croupier was saying.

Henry took a £100 plaque from his pocket and placed it on the square marked 18 on the green table. Although the table was covered all over with other people's bets, his was the only one on 18.

The croupier spun the wheel. The little white ball bounced and skittered around the rim. The people watched. All eyes were on the little ball. The wheel slowed. It came to rest. The ball jiggled a few more times, hesitated, then dropped neatly into slot 18.

"Eighteen!" called the croupier.

The crowd sighed. The croupier's assistant scooped up the piles of losing plaques with a long-handled wooden scooper. But he didn't take Henry's. They paid him thirty-six to one. Three thousand six hundred pounds for his hundred. They gave it to him in three one-thousand pound plaques and six hundreds.

Henry began to feel an extraordinary sense of power. He felt he could break this place if he wanted to. He could ruin this fancy high-powered expensive joint in a matter of hours. He could take a million off them and all the stony-faced sleek gentlemen who stood around watching the money rolling in would be scurrying about like panicky rats.

Should he do that?

It was a great temptation.

But it would be the end of everything. He would become famous and would never be allowed

into a casino again anywhere in the world. He mustn't do it. He must be very careful not to draw attention to himself.
Henry moved casually out of the roulette room and passed into the room where they were playing blackjack. He stood in the doorway watching the action. There were four tables. They were oddly shaped, these blackjack tables, each one curved like a crescent moon, with the players sitting on high stools around the outside of the half-circle and the dealers standing inside.

The packs of cards (at Lord's House they used four packs shuffled together) lay in an open-ended box known as a shoe, and the dealer pulled the cards out of the shoe one by one with his

fingers. . . The reverse side of the card in the shoe was always visible, but no others.
Blackjack, as the casinos call it, is a very simple game. You and I know it by one of three other names, pontoon, twenty-one or vingt-et-un. The player tries to get his cards to add up to as near twenty-one as possible, but if he goes over twenty-one, he's bust and the dealer takes the money. In nearly every hand, the player is faced with the problem of whether to draw another card and risk being bust, or whether to stick with what he's got. But Henry would not have that problem. In four seconds, he would have "seen through" the card the dealer was offering him, and he would know whether to say yes or no. Henry could turn blackjack into a farce.
In all casinos, they have an awkward rule about blackjack betting which we do not have at home. At home, we look at our first card before we make a bet, and if it's a good one we bet high. The casinos don't allow you to do this. They insist that everyone at the table makes his bet before the first card of the hand is dealt. What's more; you are not allowed to increase your bet later on by buying a card.
None of this would disturb Henry either. So long as he sat on the dealer's immediate left, then he would always receive the first card in the shoe at the beginning of each deal. The reverse side of the card would be clearly visible to him, and he would "read through" it before he made his bet.
Now, standing quietly just inside the doorway, Henry waited for a place to become vacant on the dealer's left at any of the four tables. He had to wait twenty minutes for this to happen, but he got what he wanted in the end.
He perched himself on the high stool and handed the dealer one of the £1,000 plaques he had won at roulette. "All in twenty-fives, please," he said.
The dealer was a youngish man with black eyes and grey skin. He never smiled and he spoke only when necessary. His hands were exceptionally slim and there was arithmetic in his fingers. He took Henry's plaque and dropped it in a slot in the table. Rows of different coloured circular chips lay neatly in a wooden tray in front of him, chips for £25, £10 and £5, maybe a hundred of each. With his thumb and forefinger, the dealer picked up a wedge of £25 chips and placed them in a tall pile on the table. He didn't have to count them. He knew there were exactly twenty chips in the pile. Those nimble fingers could pick up with absolute accuracy any number of chips from one to twenty and never be wrong. The dealer picked up a second lot of chips, making forty in all. He slid them over the table to Henry.
Henry stacked the chips in front of him, and as he did so, he glanced at the top card in the shoe. He switched on his concentration and in four seconds he read it as a ten. He pushed out eight of his chips, £200. This was the maximum stake allowed for blackjack at Lord's House.

He was dealt the ten, and for his second card he got a nine, nineteen altogether.
Everyone sticks on nineteen. You sit tight and hope the dealer won't get twenty or twenty-one. So when the dealer came round again to Henry, he said, "Nineteen," and passed on to the next player.
"Wait," Henry said.
The dealer paused and came back to Henry. He raised his brows and looked at him with those cool black eyes. "You wish to draw to nineteen?" he asked somewhat sarcastically. He spoke with an Italian accent and there was scorn as well as sarcasm in his voice. There were only two cards in the pack that would not bust a nineteen, the ace (counting as a one) and the two. Only an idiot would risk drawing to nineteen, especially with £200 on the table.
The next card to be dealt lay clearly visible in the front of the shoe. At least, the reverse side of it was clearly visible. The dealer hadn't yet touched it.
"Yes," Henry said. "I think I'll have another card".
The dealer shrugged and flipped the card out of the shoe. The two of clubs landed neatly in front of Henry, alongside the ten and the nine.
"Thank you," Henry said. "That will do nicely".
"Twenty-one," the dealer said. His black eyes glanced up again into Henry's face, and they rested there, silent, watchful, puzzled. Henry had unbalanced him. He had never in his life seen anyone draw on nineteen. This fellow had drawn on nineteen with a calmness and a certainty that was quite staggering. And he had won.
Henry caught the look in the dealer's eyes, and he realized at once that he had made a silly mistake. He had been too clever. He had drawn attention to himself. He must never do that again. He must be very careful in future how he used his powers. He must even make himself lose occasionally, and every now and again he must do something a bit stupid.
The game went on. Henry's advantage was so enormous, he had difficulty keeping his winnings down to a reasonable sum. Every now and again, he would ask for a third card when he already knew it was going to bust him. And once, when he saw that his first card was going to be an ace, he put out his smallest stake, then made a great show of cursing himself aloud for not having made a bigger bet in the first place.
In an hour, he had won exactly three thousand pounds, and there he stopped. He pocketed his chips and made his way back to the cashier's office to turn them in for real money.
He had made £3,000 from blackjack and £3,600 from roulette, £6,600 in all. It could just as easily have been £660,000. As a matter of fact, he told himself he was now almost certainly able to make money faster than any other man in the entire world.
The cashier received Henry's pile of chips and plaques without twitching a muscle. He wore steel spectacles, and the pale eyes behind the spectacles were not interested in Henry. They looked only at the chips on the counter. This man also had arithmetic in his fingers. But he had more than that.
He had arithmetic, trigonometry and calculus and algebra and Euclidean geometry in every nerve of his body. He was a human calculating-machine with a hundred thousand electric wires in his brain. It took him five seconds to count Henry's one hundred and twenty chips.
"Would you like a cheque for this, Mr Sugar?" he asked. The cashier, like the man at the desk downstairs, knew every member by name.
"No, thank you," Henry said. "I'll take it in cash".
"As you wish," said the voice behind the spectacles, and he turned away and went to a safe at

the back of the office that must have contained millions.
By Lord's House standards, Henry's win was fairly small potatoes. The Arab oil boys were in London now and they liked to gamble. So did the shady diplomats from the Far East and the Japanese businessmen and the British tax-dodging real-estate operators. Staggering sums of money were being won and lost, mostly lost, in the large London casinos every day.
The cashier returned with Henry's money and dropped the bundle of notes on the counter. Although there was enough here to buy a small house or a large automobile, the chief cashier at Lord's House was not impressed. He might just as well have been passing Henry a pack of chewing-gum for all the notice he took of the money he was dishing out.
You wait, my friend, Henry thought to himself as he pocketed the money. You just wait. He walked away.
"Your car, sir?" said the man at the door in the green uniform.
"Not yet," Henry told him. "I think I'll take a bit of fresh air first".
He strolled away down the street. It was nearly midnight. The evening was cool and pleasant. The great city was still wide awake. Henry could feel the bulge in the inside pocket of his jacket where the big wad of money was lying. He touched the bulge with one hand. He patted it gently. It was a lot of money for an hour's work.

And what of the future?
What was the next move going to be?
He could make a million in a month.
He could make more if he wanted to.
There was no limit to what he could make.
Walking through the streets of London in the cool of the evening, Henry began to think about the next move. Now, had this been a made-up story instead of a true one, it would have been necessary to invent some sort of a surprising and exciting end for it. It would not be difficult to do that. Something dramatic and unusual. So before telling you what really did happen to Henry in real life, let us pause here for a moment to see what a competent fiction writer would have done to wrap this story up. His notes would read something like this:
1- Henry must die. Like Imhrat Khan before him, he had violated the code of the yogi and had used his powers for personal gain.
2 -It will be best if he dies in some unusual and interesting manner that will surprise the reader.
3 -For example, he could go home to his flat and start counting his money and gloating over it. While doing this, he might suddenly begin to feel unwell. He has a pain in his chest.
4 -He becomes frightened. He decides to go to bed immediately and rest. He takes off his clothes. He walks naked to the cupboard to get his pyjamas. He passes the full-length mirror that stands against the wall. He stops. He stares at the reflection of his naked self in the mirror. Automatically, from force of habit he begins to concentrate. And then. . .
5- All at once, he is "seeing through" his own skin. He "sees through" it in the same way that he "saw through" those playing-cards a while back. It is like an X-ray picture, only far better. An X-ray can see only the bones and the very dense areas. Henry can see everything. He sees his arteries and veins with the blood pumping through him. He can see his liver, his kidneys, his intestines and he can see his heart beating.
6 -He looks at the place in his chest where the pain is coming from. . . and he sees. . . or thinks

he sees. . . a small dark lump inside the big vein leading into the heart on the right-hand side. What could a small dark lump be doing inside the vein? It must be a blockage of some kind. It must be a clot. A blood-clot!

7 -At first, the clot seems to be stationary. Then it moves. The movement is very slight, no more than a millimetre or two. The blood inside the vein is pumping up behind the clot and pushing past it and the clot moves again. It jerks forward about half an inch. This time, up the vein, towards the heart. Henry watches in terror. He knows, as almost everyone else in the world knows, that a blood-clot which has broken free and is travelling in a vein will ultimately reach the heart. If the clot is a large one, it will stick in the heart and you will probably die. . .

That wouldn't be such a bad ending for a work of fiction, but this story is not fiction. It is true. The only untrue things about it are Henry's name and the name of the gambling casino. Henry's name was not Henry Sugar. His name has to be protected. It still must be protected. And for obvious reasons, one cannot call the casino by its real name. Apart from that, it is a true story. And because it is a tiue story, it must have the true ending. The true one may not be quite so dramatic or spooky as a made-up one could be, but it is nonetheless interesting. Here is what actually happened.

After walking the London streets for about an hour, Henry returned to Lord's House and collected his car. Then he drove back to his flat. He was a puzzled man. He couldn't understand why he felt so little excitement about his tremendous success. If this sort of thing had happened to him three years ago, before he'd started the yoga business, he'd have gone crazy with excitement. He'd have been dancing in the streets and rushing off to the nearest nightclub to celebrate with champagne.

The funny thing was that he didn't really feel excited at all. He felt melancholy. It had somehow all been too easy. Every time he'd made a bet, he'd been certain of winning. There was no thrill, no suspense, no danger of losing. He knew of course that from now on he could travel around the world and make millions. But was it going to be any fun doing it?

It was slowly beginning to dawn upon Henry that nothing is any fun if you can get as much of it as you want. Especially money.

Another thing. Was it not possible that the process he had gone through in order to acquire yoga powers had completely changed his outlook on life?

Certainly it was possible.

Henry drove home and went straight to bed.

The next morning he woke up late. But he didn't feel any more cheerful now than he had the night before. And when he got out of bed and saw the enormous bundle of money still lying on his dressing-table, he felt a sudden and very acute revulsion towards it. He didn't want it. For the life of him, he couldn't explain why this was so, but the fact remained that he simply did not want any part of it.

He picked up the bundle. It was all in twenty-pound notes, three hundred and thirty of them to be exact. He walked on to the balcony of his flat, and there he stood in his dark-red silk pyjamas looking down at the street below him.

Henry's flat was in Curzon Street, which is right in the middle of London's most fashionable and expensive district, known as Mayfair. One end of Curzon Street runs into Berkeley Square, the other into Park Lane. Henry lived three floors above street level, and outside his bedroom there was a small balcony with iron railings that overhung the street.

The month was June, the morning was full of sunshine, and the time was about eleven o'clock. Although it was a Sunday, there were quite a few people strolling about on the pavements.

Henry peeled off a single twenty-pound note from his wad and dropped it over the balcony. A breeze took hold of it and blew it sideways in the direction of Park Lane. Henry stood watching it. It fluttered and twisted in the air and eventually came to rest on the opposite side of. the street, directly in front of an old man. The old man was wearing a long brown shabby overcoat and a floppy hat. And he was walking slowly, all by himself. He caught sight of the note as it fluttered past his face, and he stopped and picked it up. He held it with both hands and stared at it. He turned it over. He peered closer. Then he raised his head and looked up.
"Hey there!" Henry shouted, cupping a hand to his mouth. "That's for you! It's a present"!
The old man stood quite still, holding the note in front of him and gazing up at the figure on the balcony above.
"Put it in your pocket!" Henry shouted. "Take it home!" His voice carried far along the street, and many people stopped and looked up.
Henry peeled off another note and threw it down. The watchers below him didn't move. They simply watched. They had no idea what was going on. A man was up there on the balcony and he had shouted something, and now he had just thrown down what looked like a piece of paper. Everyone followed the piece of paper as it went fluttering down, and this one came to rest near a young couple who were standing arm in arm on the pavement across the street. The man unlinked his arm and tried to catch the paper as it went past him. He missed it but picked it up from the ground. He examined it closely. The watchers on both sides of the street all had their eyes on the young man. To many of them, the paper had looked very much like a bank-note of some kind, and they were waiting to find out.
"It's twenty pounds!" the man yelled, jumping up and down. "It's a twenty-pound note"!
"Keep it!" Henry shouted at him. "It's yours"!
"You mean it?" the man called back, holding the note out at arm's length. "Can I really keep it"?
Suddenly there was a rustle of excitement along both sides of the street and everyone started moving at once. They ran out into the middle of the road and clustered underneath the balcony. They lifted their arms above their heads and started calling out, "Me! How about one for me! Drop us another one, guv'nor! Send down a few more"!
Henry peeled off another five or six notes and threw them down.

There were screams and yells as the pieces of paper fanned out in the wind and floated downward, and there was a good old-fashioned scrimmage in the streets as they reached the hands of the crowd. But it was all very good-natured. People were laughing. They thought it a fantastic joke.
Here was a man standing three floors up in his pyjamas, slinging these enormously valuable notes into the air. Quite a few of those present had never seen a twenty-pound note in their lives until now.
But now something else was beginning to happen.
The speed with which news will spread along the streets of a city is phenomenal. The news of what Henry was doing flashed like lightning up and down the length of Curzon Street and into the smaller and larger streets beyond. From all sides, people came running. Within a few minutes, about a thousand men and women and children were blocking the road underneath Henry's balcony. Car-drivers who couldn't pass got out of their vehicles and joined the crowd. And all of a sudden, there was chaos in Curzon Street.
At this point, Henry simply raised his arm and swung it out and flung the entire bundle of notes

into the air. More than six thousand pounds went fluttering down towards the screaming crowd below.
The scramble that followed was really something to see. People were jumping up to catch the notes before they reached the ground, and everyone was pushing and jostling and yelling and falling over, and soon the whole place was a mass of tangled, yelling, fighting human beings.
Above the noise and behind him in his own flat, Henry suddenly heard his doorbell ringing long and loud. He left the balcony and opened the front door. A large policeman with a black moustache stood outside with his hands on his hips. "You!" he bellowed angrily. "You're the one!
What the devil d'you think you're doing"?
"Good morning, officer," Henry said. "I'm sorry about the crowd. I didn't think it would turn out like that. I was just giving away some money".
"You are causing a nuisance!" the policeman bellowed. "You are creating an obstruction! You are inciting a riot and you are blocking the en-tire street"!
"I said I was sorry," Henry answered. "I won't do it again, I promise. They'll soon go away".
The policeman took one hand off his hip and from the inside of his palm he produced a twenty-pound note.
"Ah-ha!" Henry cried. "You got one yourself! I'm so glad! I'm so happy for you"!
"Now you just stop that larking about!" the policeman said. "Because I have a few serious questions to ask you about these here twenty-pound notes." He took a notebook from his breast pocket. "In the first place," he went on, "where exactly did you get them from"?
"I won them," Henry said. "I had a lucky night." He went on to give the name of the club where he had won the money and the policeman wrote it down in his little book. "Check it up," Henry added.

"They'll tell you it's true".
The policeman lowered the notebook, and looked Henry in the eye. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I believe your story. I think you're telling the truth. But that doesn't excuse what you did one little bit".
"I didn't do anything wrong," Henry said.
"You're a blithering young idiot!" the policeman shouted, beginning to work himself up all over again. "You're an ass and an imbecile! If you've been lucky enough to win yourself a tremendous big sum of money like that and you want to give it away, you don't throw it out the window"!
"Why not?" Henry asked, grinning. "It's as good a way of getting rid of it as any".
"It's a damned stupid silly way of getting rid of it!" the policeman cried. "Why didn't you give it where it would do some good? To a hospital, for instance? Or an orphanage? There's orphanages all over the country that hardly have enough money to buy the kids a present even for Christmas! And then along comes a little twit like you who's never even known what it's like to be hard up and you throw the stuff out into the street! It makes me mad, it really does"!
"An orphanage?" Henry said.
"Yes, an orphanage!" the policeman cried. "I was brought up in one so I ought to know what it's like!" With that, the policeman turned away and went quickly down the stairs towards the street.
Henry didn't move. The policeman's words, and more especially the genuine fury with which

they had been spoken, smacked our hero right between the eyes.
"An orphanage?" he said aloud. "That's quite a thought. But why only one orphanage? Why not lots of them?" And now, very quickly, there began to come to him the great and marvellous idea that was to change everything.
Henry shut the front door and went back into his flat. All at once, he felt a powerful excitement stirring in his belly. He started pacing up and down, ticking off the points that would make his marvellous idea possible.
"One," he said, "I can get hold of a very large sum of money each day of my life.
"Two. I must not go to the same casino more than once every twelve months.
"Three. I must not win too much from any one casino or somebody will get suspicious. I suggest I keep it down to twenty thousand pounds a night.
"Four. Twenty thousand pounds a night for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year comes to how much"?
Henry took a pencil and paper and worked this one out.

"It comes to seven million, three hundred thousand pounds," he said aloud.
"Very well. Point number five. I shall have to keep moving. No more than two or three nights at a stretch in any one city or the word will get around. Go from London to Monte Carlo. Then to Cannes. To Biarritz. To Deauville. To Las Vegas. To Mexico City. To Buenos Aires. To Nassau.
And so on.
"Six. With the money I make, I will set up an absolutely first-class orphanage in every country I visit. I will become a Robin Hood. I will take money from the bookmakers and the gambling proprietors and give it to the children. Does that sound corny and sentimental? As a dream, it does But as a reality, if I can really make it work, it wouldn't be corny at all, or sentimental. It would be
rather tremendous.
"Seven. I will need somebody to help me, a man who will sit at home and take care of all that money and buy the houses and organize the whole thing. A money man. Someone I can trust. What about John Winston"?

John Winston was Henry's accountant. He handled his income-tax affairs, his investments and all other problems that had to do with money. Henry had known him for eighteen years and a friendship had developed between the two men. Remember, though, that up until now, John Winston had known Henry only as the wealthy idle playboy who had never done a day's work in his life.
"You must be mad," John Winston said when Henry told him his plan. "Nobody has ever devised a system for beating the casinos".
From his pocket, Henry produced a brand-new unopened pack of cards. "Come on," he said. "We'll play a little blackjack. You're the dealer. And don't tell me those cards are marked. It's a new pack".
Solemnly, for nearly an hour, sitting in Winston's office whose windows looked out over Berkeley Square, the two men played blackjack. They used matchsticks as counters, each match being worth twenty-five pounds. After fifty minutes, Henry was no less than thirty-four thousand pounds up!

John Winston couldn't believe it. "How do you do it?" he said.
"Put the pack on the table," Henry said. "Face down".
Winston obeyed.
Henry concentrated on the top card for four seconds. "That's a knave of hearts," he said. It was.
"The next one is. . . a three of hearts." It was. He went right through the entire pack, naming every card.
"Go on," John Winston said. "Tell me how you do it." This usually calm and mathematical

man was leaning forward over his desk, staring at Henry with eyes as big and bright as two stars.
"You do realize you are doing something completely impossible?" he said.
"It's not impossible," Henry said. "It is only very difficult. I am the one man in the world who can do it".
The telephone rang on John Winston's desk. He lifted the receiver and said to his secretary, "No more calls please, Susan, until I tell you. Not even my wife." He looked up, waiting for Henry to go on.
Henry then proceeded to explain to John Winston exactly how he had acquired the power. He told him how he had found the notebook and about Imhrat Khan and then he described how he had been working non-stop for the past three years, training his mind to concentrate.
When he had finished, John Winston said, "Have you tried walking on fire"?
"No," Henry said. "And I'm not going to".
"What makes you think you'll be able to do this thing with the cards in a casino"?
Henry then told him about his visit to Lord's House the night before.
"Six thousand, six hundred pounds!" John Winston cried. "Did you honestly win that much in real money"?
"Listen," Henry said. "I just won thirty-four thousand from you in less than an hour"!
"So you did".
"Six thousand was the very least I could win," Henry said. "It was a terrific effort not to win more".
"You will be the richest man on earth".
"I don't want to be the richest man on earth," Henry said. "Not any more." He then told him about his plan for orphanages.
When he had finished, he said, "Will you join me, John? Will you be my money man, my banker, my administrator and everything else? There will be millions coming in every year".
John Winston, a cautious and prudent accountant, would not agree to anything at all on the spur of the moment. "I want to see you in action first," he said.
So that night, they went together to the Ritz Club on Curzon Street. "Can't go to Lord's House again now for some time," Henry said.
On the first spin of the roulette wheel, Henry staked £100 on number twenty-seven. It came up.

The second time he put it on number four; that came up too. A total of £7,500 profit.
An Arab standing next to Henry said. "I have just lost fifty-five thousand pounds. How do you do it"?
"Luck," Henry said. "Just luck".

They moved into the Blackjack Room and there, in half an hour, Henry won a further £10,000. Then he stopped.
Outside in the street, John Winston said, "I believe you now. I'll come in with you".
"We start tomorrow," Henry said.
"Do you really intend to do this every single night"?
"Yes," Henry said. "I shall move very fast from place to place, from country to country. And every day I shall send the profits back to you through the banks".
"Do you realize how much it will add up to in a year"?
"Millions," Henry said cheerfully. "About seven million a year".
"In that case, I can't operate in this country," John Winston said. "The taxman will have it all".
"Go anywhere you like," Henry said. "It makes nO difference to me. I trust you completely".
"I shall go to Switzerland," John Winston said. "But not tomorrow. I can't just pull up and fly away. I'm not an unattached bachelor like you with no responsibilities. I must talk to my wife and children. I must give notice to my partners in the firm. I must sell my house. I must find another house in Switzerland. I must take the kids out of school. My dear man, these things take time"!
Henry drew from his pocket the £17,500 he had just won and handed them to the other man.
"Here's some petty cash to tide you over until you get settled," he said. "But do hurry up. I want to get cracking".
Within a week, John Winston was in Lausanne, with an office high up on the lovely hillside above Lake Geneva. His family would follow him as soon as possible.
And Henry went to work in the casinos.

One year later, he had sent a little over eight million pounds to John Winston in Lausanne. The money was sent five days a week to a Swiss company called ORPHANAGES S.A. Nobody except John Winston and Henry knew where the money came from or what was going to happen to it. As for the Swiss authorities, they never want to know where money comes from. Henry sent the money through the banks. The Monday remittance was always the biggest because it included Henry's take for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, when the banks were closed. He moved with astonishing speed, and often the only clue that John Winston had to his whereabouts was the address of the bank which had sent the money on a particular day. One day it would come perhaps from a bank in Manila. The next day from Bangkok. It came from Las Vegas, from Curacao, from Freeport, from Grand Cayman, from San Juan, from Nassau, from London, from Biarritz. It came from anywhere and everywhere so long as there was a big casino in the city.

For seven years, all went well. Nearly fifty million pounds had arrived in Lausanne, and had been safely banked away. Already John Winston had got three orphanages established, one in France, one in England, and one in the United States. Five more were on the way.
Then came a bit of trouble. There is a grapevine among casino owners, and although Henry was always extraordinarily careful not to take too much from any one place on any one night, the news was bound to spread in the end.
They got wise to him one night in Las Vegas when Henry rather imprudently took one hundred thousand dollars from each of three separate casinos that all happened to be owned by the same mob.
What happened was this. The morning after, when Henry was in his hotel room packing to

leave for the airport, there was a knock on his door. A bell-hop came in and whispered to Henry that two men were waiting for him in the lobby. Other men, the bell-hop said, were guarding the rear exit.
These were very hard men, the bell-hop said, and he did not give much for Henry's chances of survival if he were to go downstairs at this moment.
"Why do you come and tell me?" Henry asked him. "Why are you on my side"?
"I'm not on anyone's side," the bell-hop said. "But we all know you won a lot of money last night and I figured you might give me a nice present for tipping you off".
"Thanks," Henry said. "But how do I get away? I'll give you a thousand dollars if you can get me out of here".
"That's easy," the bell-hop said. "Take your own clothes off and put on my uniform. Then walk out through the lobby with your suitcase. But tie me up before you leave. I've gotta be lying here on the floor tied up hand and foot so they won't think I helped you. I'll say you had a gun and I couldn't do nothing".
"Where's the cord to tie you up with?" Henry asked.
"Right here in my pocket," the bell-hop said, grinning.
Henry put on the bell-hop's gold and green uniform, which wasn't too bad a fit. Then he tied the man up good and proper with the cord and stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth. Finally, he pushed ten one-hundred dollar bills under the carpet for the bell-hop to collect later.
Down in the lobby, two short, thick, black-haired thugs were watching the people as they

came out of the elevators. But they hardly glanced at the man in the green and gold bellhop's uniform who came out carrying a suitcase and who walked smartly across the lobby and out through the swing-doors that led to the street.
At the airport, Henry changed his flight and took the next plane to Los Angeles. Things were not going to be quite so easy from now on, he told himself. But that bell-hop had given him an idea.
In Los Angeles, and in nearby Hollywood and Beverly Hills, where the film people live, Henry sought out the very best make-up man in the business. This was Max Engelman. Henry called on him. He liked him immediately.
"How much do you earn?" Henry asked him.
"Oh, about forty thousand dollars a year," Max told him.
"I'll give you a hundred thousand," Henry said, "if you will come with me and be my make-up artist".
"What's the big idea?" Max asked him.
"I'll tell you," Henry said. And he did.
Max was only the second person Henry had told. John Winston was the first. And when Henry showed Max how he could read the cards, Max was flabbergasted.
"Great heavens, man!" he cried. "You could make a fortune"!
"I already have," Henry told him. "I've made ten fortunes. But I want to make ten more." He told Max about the orphanages. With John Winston's help, he had already set up three of them, with more on the way.
Max was a small dark-skinned man who had escaped from Vienna when the Nazis went in. He had never married. He had no ties. He became wildly enthusiastic. "It's crazy!" he cried. "It's the craziest thing I've ever heard in my life! I'll join you, man! Let's go"!

From then on, Max Engelman travelled everywhere with Henry and he carried with him in a trunk such an assortment of wigs, false beards, sideburns, moustaches and make-up materials as you have never seen. He could turn his master into any one of thirty or forty unrecognizable people, and the casino managers, who were all watching for Henry now, never once saw him again as Mr Henry Sugar. As a matter of fact, only a year after the Las Vegas episode, Henry and Max actually went back to that dangerous city, and on a warm starry night Henry took a cool eighty thousand dollars from the first of the big casinos he had visited before. He went disguised as an elderly Brazilian diplomat, and they never knew what had hit them.
Now that Henry no longer appeared as himself in the casinos, there were, of course, a number of other details that had to be taken care of, such as false identity cards and passports. In Monte Carlo, for example, a visitor must always show his passport before being allowed to enter the casino.

Henry visited Monte Carlo eleven more times with Max's assistance, every time with a different passport and in a different disguise.
Max adored the work. He loved creating new characters for Henry. "I have an entirely fresh one for you today!" he would announce. "Just wait till you see it! Today you will be an Arab sheikh from Kuwait"!
"Do we have an Arab passport?" Henry would ask. "And Arab papers"?
"We have everything," Max would answer. "John Winston has sent me a lovely passport in the name of His Royal Highness Sheikh Abu Bin Bey"!
And so it went on. Over the years, Max and Henry became as close as brothers. They were crusading brothers, two men who moved swiftly through the skies, milking the casinos of the world and sending the money straight back to John Winston in Switzerland, where the company known as ORPHANAGES S.A. grew richer and richer.

Henry died last year, at the age of sixty-three; his work was completed. He had been at it for just on twenty years.

His personal reference book listed three hundred and seventy-one major casinos in twenty-one different countries or islands. He had visited them all many times and he had never lost.

According to John Winston's accounts, he had made altogether one hundred and forty-four million pounds.
He left twenty-one well-established well-run orphanages scattered about the world, one in each country he visited. All these were administered and financed from Lausanne by John and his staff.
But how do I, who am neither Max Engelman nor John Winston, happen to know all this? And how did I come to write the story in the first place?
I will tell you.
Soon after Henry's death, John Winston telephoned me from Switzerland. He introduced himself simply as the head of a company calling itself ORPHANAGES S.A., and asked me if I would come out to Lausanne to see him with a view to writing a brief history of the organization. I don't know how he got hold of my name. He probably had a list of writers and stuck a pin into

it. He would pay me well, he said. And he added. "A remarkable man has died recently. His name was Henry Sugar. I think people ought to know a bit about what he has done".
In my ignorance, I asked whether the story was really interesting enough to merit being put on paper.
"All right," said the man who now controlled one hundred and forty-four million pounds.

"Forget it. I'll ask someone else. There are plenty of writers around".
That needled me. "No," I said. "Wait. Could you at least tell me who this Henry Sugar was and what he did? I've never even heard of him".
In five minutes on the phone, John Winston told me something about Henry Sugar's secret career. It was secret no longer. Henry was dead and would never gamble again. I listened, enthralled.
"I'll be on the next plane," I said.
"Thank you," John Winston said. "I would appreciate that".
In Lausanne, I met John Winston, now over seventy, and also Max Engelman, who was about the same age. They were both still shattered by Henry's death. Max even more so than John Winston for Max had been beside him constantly for over thirteen years. "I loved him," Max said, a shadow falling over his face. "He was a great man. He never thought about himself. He never kept a penny of the money he won, except what he needed to travel and to eat. Listen, once we were in Biarritz and he had just been to the bank and given them half a million francs to send home to John. It was lunchtime.
We went to a place and had a simple lunch, an omelette and a bottle of wine, and when the bill came, Henry hadn't got anything to pay it with. I hadn't either. He was a lovely man".
John Winston told me everything he knew. He showed me the original dark-blue notebook written by Dr John Cartwright in Bombay in 1934, and I copied it out word for word.
"Henry always carried it with him," John Winston said. "In the end, he knew the whole thing by heart".
He showed me the accounts books of ORPHANAGES S.A. with Henry's winnings recorded in them day by day over twenty years, and a truly staggering sight they were.
When he had finished, I said to him, "There's a big gap in this story, Mr Winston. You've told me almost nothing about Henry's travels and about his adventures in the casinos of the world".
"That's Max's story," John Winston said. "Max knows all about that because he was with him. But he says he wants to have a shot at writing it himself. He's already started".
"Then why not let Max write the whole thing?" I asked.
"He doesn't want to," John Winston said. "He only wants to write about Henry and Max. It should be a fantastic story if he ever gets it finished. But he is old now, like me, and I doubt he will manage it".
"One last question," I said. "You keep calling him Henry Sugar. And yet you tell me that wasn't his name. Don't you want me to say who he really was when I do the story"?
"No," John Winston said. "Max and I promised never to reveal it. Oh, it'll probably leak out sooner or later. After all, he was from a fairly well-known English family. But I'd appreciate it if you don't try to find out. Just call him plain Mr Henry Sugar".
And that is what I have done.