

WHEN A MERE MALE GOES A-SHOPPING

WHEN the husband gets a windfall in the shape of a Bonus, that too on the eve of Diwali, what does the poor wife get?

"Listen, dear," said my husband, "It is all yours. I have everything worked out. A sewing machine, a pressure cooker...."

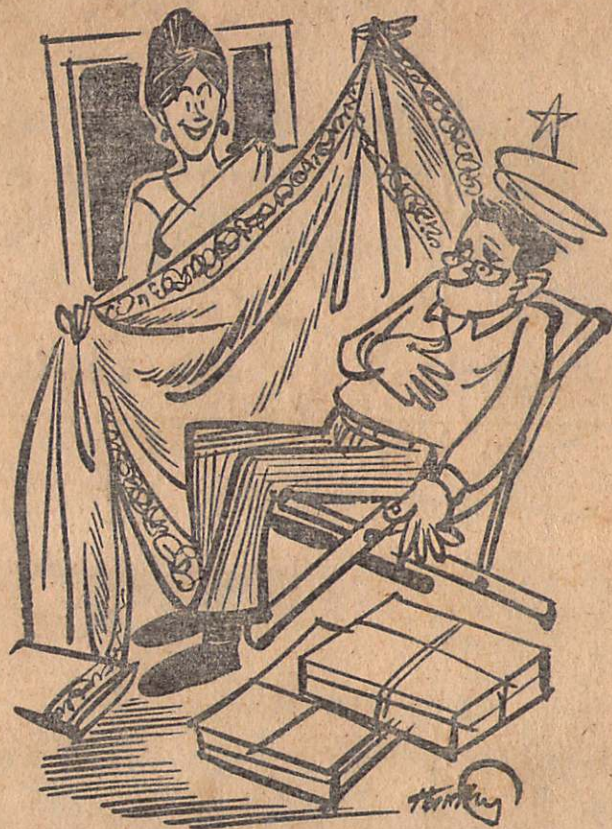
"And a floor brush!" I cut in, "So that I can darn and cook and scrub better! Have you no heart?"

"Why don't you let me finish? Where was I? Yes. And a beautiful saree for you. But the selection this time will be mine. Please don't argue," he said, with a finality.

"I don't mind," I said, resignedly, "provided it is a magenta sari with a three-inch gold border and a pallu in black."

"I'll keep your preference in mind but you can trust a man where aesthetic sense is called for," he said in a leave-it-to-me tone.

I was apprehensive. Naturally. I have still not been able to put to any good use the



six yards of monstrosity which some pavement vendor had palmed off on him. But I was sure of one thing. He wouldn't find the combination I wanted. And in a jiffy a plan had formulated itself in my mind.

"Wait till I come back," he said with a beam on his face as he put the latch of the garden gate, and off he went on the Sari Safari.

It was 7 p.m. when my husband returned from the expe-

dition. He was haggard and tired but there was a glint of triumph in his eyes and two parcels in his hands. The temptation to snatch them from his hands was held back by a nameless fear that gripped me.

"Poor lamb!" I said. "Coffee first and everything else afterwards." Inwardly, I was saying my prayers.

"I can tell you, buying a saree is not a man's job," he

The Sari Safari

By MINI

started, slowly sipping the coffee.

"My God! The number of shops I must have invaded! Not one of them had the sari you wanted. And the Sales Assistants are so many constipated cockroaches, to borrow a picturesque expression. I rummaged every almira in every shop and then a bright idea struck me. In one of the shops I found a magenta silk saree but the pallu was in light blue. So what? I bought it.

"Oh, No!" I interrupted.

"Oh, Yes! And in Commercial Street I bought one more. By the way the coffee is delicious...."

"Not two saris?" I said in an admonishing tone, ignoring the compliment.

"Yes, two, and why not? After all I don't buy saris every day; if the two of them together meet your preferred specifications, why not two?" he said triumphantly.

"Look!" he continued and untied the strings. The second one was Karpagam sari with a three-inch gold border and black pallu. They are magnificent, I mumbled to myself as my eyes avidly drank in the sheer beauty of these two selections.

"Really, I don't know how to thank you. I just couldn't believe...."

"Forget it," he said cutting me short with a look of triumph which had now taken a per-

manent lease of his face. He relaxed on the easy chair with the air of fulfilment that comes to a man but rarely.

"Now, tell me what you have been doing," he asked me getting in the mood for a genial conversation.

I began, thankful that he had provided me with an opening I was looking for.

"After you left, I went to Shanta's place. We had planned to go to a Hindi movie but strayed into a new shop which has come up in Malleswaram. It has an unbelievable selection of saris, all out of this world.

"I couldn't take my eyes off a gorgeous Banaras sari in pink with twinkling gold motifs and a lovely pallu. If I didn't buy it, I knew Shanta would. There was battle raging within me. Out of sheer despair I closed my eyes."

"You should have bought it," said my husband, in clear measured tones, the glow of triumph still on his face. Whether he meant it or said it just like that, or whether it was uttered in a moment of weakness, I don't know.

Before he could take back or qualify these fatal words I went to the next room and was back like a shot. And there it was on his laps to admire—the most gorgeous sari in the world!

He is better now and fast recovering. These men are unfathomable darlings, really!