

WORDS, WORDS & WORDS

By MINI

ALLITERATIONS are anathema to me. Even as a seven-year-old, "Sing a song of six pence" sounded somewhat silly. But in college, the pug-nosed, pretentious professor of English popular for his purple-patched perorations, prescribed alliterations as a device to delude the dunderheads who examine the papers and as a recourse to relieve the dull drabness of dreary essays; "Nothing like it," he used to say.

Walking my weary way back home one day, from my college, I stopped to listen to a wayside warbler of well-worn political clichés haranguing to a harassed, half-awake humanity, waiting to be hustled to the hustings. "Vote," he said, "to the victory of what-not." "Elect me," he said, "if you want electricity." "I promise," he added with flamboyant flourish and repled of a string of head-rhyming promises. The lethargic listeners in a state of languor left the hall, using choice epithets about political pandrums.

My allergy for alliterations grew. "Why," I asked myself,

"wander into a wood of words and in the painful process get lost?"

The next day, the professor (cane, palpitating piteously). He had hardly slumped into the chariot-like chair, when I rose, and fearlessly flayed the fashionable frivolity of alliterative words.

The professor was indignantly irritated by the irrepressible inundation of words. "Take your seat," he said, without trying to alliterate. I was in no mood to be brushed aside by brassness.

I began again to belabour and belittle the resort to alliterations which I artfully argued was a mere artifice to arrest attention.

"Will you walk out with your wherewithal or shall I have you heaved out?" hollered the provoked professor. I was suddenly impressed that in a moment of strain he could alliterate so well. The scales fell from my eyes. I simply succumbed. I became an acknowledged addict of alliteration and the pet pupil of the proteolytising professor.

When the selection examinations came I went for alliterations like nobody's business giving the go-by to good language and I got through!

In spite of my prior personal

predilections I persuaded myself that there is nothing like alliterations.

My allergy for alliterations allayed, I put this potent panacea to purposeful use when appearing for an interview. From the dress and manner of speech of the selection board I could divine that they were U.S. returned blokes.

I answered curious queries about qualifications without qualms about king's English "Bachelor of Botany of Bombay University with zany zoology and phantom physics" is enough to drive anyone mad. Fretting and fuming, the four members of the selection fraternity flared up. "Don't show off" said one.

But I did not give in. I answered the rest of the questions in my own way. If the words had import it was incidental. Adjectives were added to adorn the alliterations. Where matter-of-fact replies would have been enough I larded them lavishly with lyrical language.

There was a magic moment of mysterious silence.

"Scram" they said in unnerving unison.

I now owe my allegiance to American slang. It is so succint!