

FULL MANY A BLOOMER

THE Colonial Empire might have thrust the English language on us but we have taken to it dearly. We can boast of Indians who can use this language skilfully and delectably, perhaps better than the British themselves. More delectable however is the class of people who misapply the words unconsciously. To those who know the nuances of difference in similar sounding words the pleasure that these malaprops give is indefinable.

One such is a friend I value greatly. A master of English literature can spend his whole life inventing malapropisms and still not come anywhere near this dear friend for sheer natural flair for bloomers.

He popped in one day early morning and I knew I was in for a treat. The only care I had to take was not to interrupt his flow except for monosyllabic interjections to keep the session going.

"The call of nature is irresistible in Bangalore, what with its venue of trees and green wild view points" he started off. "I am an out-of-doors type and never miss my early morning constitution."

"Of course, of course," I said and offered him a chair.

"You have shifted upside, I see" he said looking around my first floor apartment and added, as he sipped the coffee offered

by my wife. "There is nothing like the panorama of coffee early in the morning. It sort of prepares you for the day ahead of you."

"How true" I said.

"And, you know something. The idli is the best breakfast in the whole world. I can wallow in half a dozen of them in jiffy."

"You mean swallow?" I interrupted and bit my lips for the faux pas. There was a few minutes silence which made me more remorseful

By MINI

for having brought to a sudden end what seemed a promising monologue.

Fortunately he didn't take my impertinence to heart and resumed.

"I am supposed to be a connoisseur of good fare. I have taken the best imaginable delicacies but nothing except idli makes the lava in my mouth water" he said, expatiating further on the merits of idli, and casting a meaningful glance at the left-overs on my plate.

My wife took the hint and brought a plate of idlis for him.

"Taking idlis after coffee is like placing the cortege before the horse" he commented in his inimitable way, as he got down to attack "the best breakfast in the world."

He was continuing his chatter when a

State Transport bus screeched suddenly to a halt just outside the house. My friend went over to the window and said.

"See in what implorable condition these public conveniences are being maintained. I tell you, the only way improve things is to denationalise the drivers. The conductors are worse, without 'etiquacy' of any kind. And the administrators to whom you go with your complaints are too premature to understand our tails of woe."

To say I was getting confused is using a rather mild term but I just nodded by head.

He spoke of 'contraband population' and the usefulness of the 'Hula-hoop' in controlling it, of 'Jovial delinquents' who, he said, are 'off-springs' of the "illegitimate twentieth century," on the need for fertilizers to 'irrigate' five-year 'plants' on PL-420 and so on. He went on for a full half hour till my head reeled.

At last he got up and said, "I must be going now. I have to take my mistress to the Dentist for extortion of a tooth. Let me take leave of your permission." Then as an after thought he added "Thanks from my bottom for the idli."

It was impossible not to be affected by his quaint style and expressions. I got caught in his mood and said "I thoroughly enjoyed listening. I must say, you really have the gift of the garbage."

My wife who was nearby shouted, "Smelling salts!"