O THE MANOR BORN

R. NORMANBY would only be in town for a couple of days, and the chance to Discuss Problems and Exchange Ideas with him was too good to miss. Mr. Normanby is, of course, apart from being secretary to the British Building Board, the manager of British Building Boards,

His hotel in the centre of town was one I have always found forbidding as combining a new-world ruthlessness of lift-operators, desk-clerks and waitresses with an old-world pomposity of armchairs, smokerooms and beds. With some trepidation therefore I picked a way across the worn bouquets of the carpet and hemmed at the reception desk.

"Hem," I repeated after a decent interval. But the henna-headed matron with the pencil behind her ear continued in forceful conversation with the tele-phone operator, "Ah, fol-de-rol," I hummed over an apologetic waiting tune I usually reserve for Government offices to let them know I'm ready for attention though far from the temper that overturns a State. The telephone girl pushed some knobs into sockets for a moment while the elder lady blew puffs of smoke up into the autographed face of Gladys Moncrieff.

"Te pom pom pom," I began to in-The ladies fell once more into bright and callous chatter, "Ah . . .?" I tried a rising note to make it sound like the continuation of some exchange we'd already had, tapping the mahogany rather restlessly. The pendulum clock deeply pronounced the time of my appointment with the English Executive. 1 got flustered.

"Er . . . Mr. Normanby . . ." I blurted. The henna head came round on a spring.

(Solution to No. 743)

PARAPHERNALIA

1 E A R N O A C R E G A R D S N Y M P H

TALENTED ARMS

SEESAWOBEYED

DEED DERISION

G T A G N

L W L

EUUEEPE

SWINDLE

E N U

T D 0 E

By "Augustus"

"I have an appointment with a Mr. Normanby at four-thirty." began feverishly thrusting home all the plugs into all the sockets.

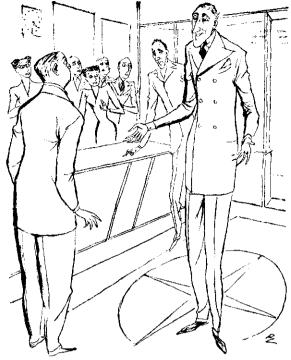
But at that moment the lift bumped to the ground, the antique door clanked open, and a lofty, tailored, stooping. thirty-fiveish man padded rapidly towards me, large pointed shoes being pressed into the carpet from sagging knees, the whole approach resembling the soft rush of a Mediterranean wave. Five yards from me a white drooping hand was flung forward as the descent continued. He came like Leda's boy friend, all in a white rush.

"Mr., er. ah . . .?" he enquired, enveloping me in benevolence and purpose. "Yes, that's right,"

He had my hand still nesting in the richness of his own, and his left hand was deflecting me towards the lounge. "Do you mind if we talk over tea? hope you haven't had yours yet? Do you take tea at this time? Do New Zealanders, I mean?"

His voice came up out of generations of Normanbys: it flowed water-cressy and willow-shaded with idle brown vowels dreaming in the depths. I was sailing, gently propelled by Mr. Normanby's arm, punting along hotel corridors and into a hotel lounge, owning them. All in a moment I had become graceful, forceful, poised, a man as likely as not to grow a clipped moustache and command stenographers. I was lowered into a leather armchair and immediately regretted the lack of a silver cigarette case on the back of which I might have tapped a tailor-made.

There was no one in the lounge, not even a waiter. Mr. Normanby without



"My dear boy, that's what I'm asking you!"

either hesitation or ill-feeling pressed his thumb deep into the electric bell, chatting all the time, and under my appalled eyes he pumped steadily, on and on, with his thumb. He seemed to be quite unaware that two baize doors now stood thronged with the kitchen staff, a wooden slide had opened to reveal the recesses of the cooking area, and all the functionaries of lift, office and private bar had crept in to gaze and wonder.

". . . and so, of course, it's becoming increasingly difficult, increasingly difficult

CROSSWORD

to keep up with the de-mand." he was saying. I was smiling sickly terri-fied to detach myself from his protection, equally terrified to seem to belong to him, By now two waiters, hastily clad. stood at the great man's knee.

"Oh, ah, there are," he beamed at them. 'Might we have some sandwiches, tea and please, thank you?" He took his thumb from the

The tea arrived, piping, mellow, loyingly set down. I was at a loss under the vision of the kitchen staff frenziedly hacking into bread at this preposterous hour to keep the line of the Normanbys healthy and intact. He was munching away with a joyous freedom from pinching. petty good manners. He had Manner. One long flopping leg was swung over the other, he was half-slung into the cushionest angle of his chair. while he deliberately

aimed at the butteriest part of his bread. And as an audience he was a full house.

"Go on, go on," he champed delightedly, swilling away at his tea and making my information sound as precious as pikelets to him.

"And now," he said at the end, "would you care to see something of what we've been doing in the Old Country?

"I can hardly wait."

With a reluctant force, like a carelessly constructed camel rising from the sand, he swam through the door of the lounge and into the empty vestibule. "Ahh, there was a brief-case," he suddenly burst like a carillon on Sunday air. He was paddling vaguely about the reception desk where the henna lady and the telephone girl stood frozen at the edge of the blotting paper.

"A brief-case?" he mentioned again in honeyed detonation, including in the enquiry the remote hall-porter and the lift-man six feet off the floor, paralysed in his ascent. Legs scurried in all directions, lids were flung up, cubby holes were ransacked. Before me stood a door marked Manager Strictly Private.

"Ah, perhaps it's in here." He flung open the door and was wading largely about among chromium ash-stands and glass cases stuffed with little whisky samples. He pulled out drawers here and there without expectation. By now all my countrymen were huddled in desperation at the foot of the stairs.

"But, no, of course, I remember where I left it. Come." And he discharged himself through the revolving door and down the street towards the Airways Office.

This place is all done out in egg-blue and tan. It is pretty well solid plastic from the Air Hostess's nails up to the conquered globe impacted against the ceiling. It is the very peak of man's ascent from serfdom, its inhabitants give off emancipation like an electric fan. they breeze, they charm, they traverse all levels of mankind, they are society's darling dolphins. Nobody condescends to them, nobody takes them for a ride.

"Ahh, there was a brief case!" Mr. Normanby belied from the street, and (continued on next page)

THE LISTENER"

- Prime Minister, in brief, and hindered, on the whole.
- 19. Behead this 1 across for some vegetable, curtail it for something animal.
- Variety of brush found in the garden.
- 23. This plant has part of an arrow in it.
- 24. Rest day (anag.). 25. Confused ideas.
- 18. Heard wrongly about a backward 14. When upset, would be make the maid err?
 - 16. Outstanding, but apparently lacking the necessary ability.
 - 17. Changed direction,
 - 18. Crowds of landlords?

No. 744 (Constructed by R.W.H)

- 20. This animal is all right to begin with, anyway,
- 21. Fish from a nut.

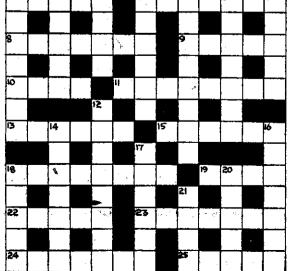
Clues Down

- 1. Actually it's a flower, but it could also be part of an animal.
- 3. Thank you, thank you, and farewell.
- You need two hands to use this implement, and with another letter substituted for the last, you could make vachts with it.
- Recuperation.
- "When ---- hang by the wall,

And Dick the shepherd blows his nail, And Tom bears logs into the hall,

And milk comes frozen home in pail"

(Shakespeare). 7. Gray's was written in a country churchyard.



- ENTOMOLOGISTS Clues Across
- 1. Vessel of skill?

FLANIR

N

- 4. Reviles in a cringing manner.
- 8. Being rich, they get mixed up with
- 9. "To serve therewith my Maker, and present my true account, lest He returning —" (Milton, "On His Blindness").
- 10. When a tenant follows this French place we find an officer.
- 11. "But the age of —— is gone" (Burke).
- 13. Commend part of the country where copra is encountered.
- 15. You can make Ron sip out of this 12. Concourse of lambs? jug.