



of the hand not being accustomed to such feats pressed it gently by the other as if feeling pain. His other property, the American Damsel, in holiday attire, knew how to work up a certain advantage. She took the pain-stricken hand in her own, pressed it to her lips and covered it with kisses. At the same time there were tears. I will not undertake to say if they were artificial; for there was nothing at all artificial about the girl and pain to her father meant pain to her.

"Oh! Pa!" she said, "don't blame the Parsi. He never did it. He would not hear of it. It was I that suggested it and invoked his assistance. He promised help provided I have your permission. And what a name and fame, reputation and respect, honour and emoluments, it will find for Ma! Every body will be asking who made that stocking. Besides, only the other day you said if you could open a stocking manufactory you would make a fortune. I interposed then that my Pa has made so many fortunes already—enough to maintain and to give in marriage a hundred such useless lumbars like me—that he hardly needs to make any more. But sure enough you shall open a stocking manufactory now. You can employ agents or enjoy the royalty. That young Parsi as you call him will help you." Mag dear, I was watching the old couple's physiognomies closely. They were all smiles and sweet scent.

"But what about the circus, my dear? How can your Pa agree to it?" gently put in the Ma.

"Oh! Pa must agree to it. Only the other day he said Mr. Timkin of the 'Great American' is simply a brick, a *pucca* burnt brick, a thorough-bred, every inch of him a gent, an out and out gent; and as to his circus why Pa you'll remember your telling me that it's the very soul of respectability and that you would not object even if a daughter of yours were to be on the board of it. Now that daughter prays to the Pa on her knees to prove the sincerity of his words."

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"Rise my daughter, rise," whimpered old Todd. "I cannot bear to see you so. You may go to the circus, go anywhere provided you remain your father's daughter and do credit to your parents and yourself. Remember Marionette you are and you must remain for ever a Mignonette and always keep nice and sweet. Your earnings must go to charity. But where is that young Parsi? Oh here he is! Come in! Come in! You need not knock," cried the girl as if she had just seen the Parsi approaching and preparing to knock. Todd, Todd the wealthy American, the millionaire, the mighty man of business, rich but never glorying in riches, luxuriant but not wasteful, elegant and yet plain, polite and not proud, strong but soft, bold but nervous, free and generous, always doing, all active and industrious, amassing but never forgetting the needy, bowed a very gracious bow and did royal welcome to his guest. "Hey-day, young sir, hey-day, a fine day, how nice you look, upon my soul, never saw a better looking fellow in my life. Why, I was not a tithe like you even at four and twenty. I have read of your race, read of Persia, young sir, let me tell you that I have read of Persia and its Shahs; its heroes and its *huries*; its bold doings and its brave fighting; its days of valour, honour and glory. I have read of these, young sir, and more, read a deal about that glorious prophet of yours and his great creed all with our renowned Professor Jackson in my young days. Don't look surprised, young man, don't. If not in Persian I have read it all in English. What I could not find there I found in those books of the butchers, the Germans, you know than whom no better scholars exist. Mayhap, master Rusi, mayhap, you will teach me a bit of Persian. Glad, so glad you have studied it, aye mastered it. Forgetting one's mother-tongue is forgetting one's mother-land. Forgetting both means, remember young sir, it means forgetting ones own self, more it means forgetting race feeling, forgetting the



pride and prestige of race, forgetting honour, forgetting courage, forgetting enterprise, culture, progress, religion and even morals."

"Todd dear, you are preaching just like a Parson," gently remonstrated Mr. Todd's spouse who was getting tired of it.

"Just like a Parson, my dear! You know it's in the family. Your great-grandfather's uncle's son-in-law was a Parson I am told, and so was one of your second cousins and so was—"

"Enough! I don't know if there are Parsons in the family," said Mrs. Todd; "but if there be any I only hope they are not like the present-day Parsi Parsons, the *Dastooors*, this young friend of ours has told us of."

"So Mr. Rusi you say Firdausi spent 30 years of his life and toiled and moiled in writing the Shah Nameh to make Persia known amongst the Parsis. It is a pity to think that his labours are as ill-requited now as they were then. His king offered him silver pieces instead of gold ones. You Parsis gave him nothing, you say, though they prate and prattle in season and out, about his glorious work. All honour to him. I wish a poet like that be born to our country; the country, my good sir, that in the words of the English poet has the proud privilege and the prerogative of rearing to freedom an undaunted race, hospitable and kind. I only wish, sir, your rulers that be and their neighbours will never forget what this land, its President and its people have done for them. That President of ours, sir, carries on his solitary shoulders the heads of all the master-minds in the world. So you are going to take this flower of mine, this Mignonette, to the circus. The circus, sir, is in itself a miniature republic if not a miniature world. It requires a strong hand like that of our friend Timkin to rule it. It's only by way of a pastime for a month or two. Take her, sir, take her. I know you are a gentleman and so is Timkin. I can rely on you both."



Mag dear this letter of mine is simply prodigious. I must cut it. Timkin was overjoyed. He had a great faith in the efficacy of advertisements. Once he launched into them he never stopped till he had seen them to the end. So a day or two after, the following advertisement adorned the best space in the New York papers and caught all the best and bad eyes of the largest number. Boys carrying placards marched through the principal streets and handbills in big letters were posted at the best corners of bylanes and streets :

BOMBAY IN NEW YORK : PERSIA IN AMERICA :

Come and see the Parsi from Bombay :

Come and see the Oostad : See the Talimbaj and his Talim :

Mr. Rus the scion of the famous race of Rustom *Pahelvan* of Persia will make his first appearance at the

GREAT AMERICAN

on Monday next and bring you all at his feet

Come and see the Pahelvan beat your best athletes :

He'll make them lick the dust before your very eyes :

BOMBAY IN NEW YORK : PERSIA IN AMERICA :

He Rusi of Indian fame will be assisted by a New York maiden who will bring the audience down with her and dance, skip, jump, sing and play the heroine with the Indian hero :

DON'T LOSE TIME :

See the plans and book your seats at once :

The hero and the heroine will give away all their earnings in charity.

Mag it would fill papers if I go on. Those who have been here and known its people will understand it all. You will realize



it when you are here. Timkin's Circus ran a roaring trade and at the end of a month and a half old Todd had the pleasure of giving away our earnings amounting to £ 1,000 into the New York Foundling Hospital.

Yours for ever,
Rusi.

Macgregor Lodge,
Bellasis Road, Byculla,
Bombay,.....19—

Dearest Rusi,

Your letter about the circus was an immense treat. Pa and I have enjoyed it hugely. Reading your letters is like seeing my Rusi in the midst of his surroundings. I am not jealous of your Mignonette. If I am, it is only because she is now where I should be. But better she be by your side than nobody at all.

Poor dear Papa! I have kept it from you so long, dearest, but I cannot do it any longer. Papa is going down, steadily down, the abyss of life. There is no mistaking it. I see it in his face, read it in his eyes, hear it in his speech and trace it in his actions. He is a marked man—the inexorable hand of Death is on him unless I am mistaken for I have heard of and even seen cases in which death was imminent, the hand of God averted it.

“Magdalene, my darling,” said he to me only yesterday, “I don’t want to frighten you, Lassie, but I feel that I am doomed. I don’t fear death for I am prepared to meet it. All my fears are about you. I now repent having parted you and Rusi and allowed him to go without you. I should have gone with you both and boldly met the monster fate in America. My dear when you are of my age you will understand it all. If a man cannot give up the ghost in his native land, he likes to do so in the place where he may have spent the best years of his



life. Mag, Maggie, my own daughter, my child, promise me that within a month of my interment you will leave for America. It is for this that I have induced the Bahadurshahs to postpone their departure. Tell Rusi, darling, that my thoughts are for you and for him only. Though born of an alien race I feel drawn to him like a father. I doubt not he'll make you happy. Give up everything Mag, everything even your religion if needs be to make the man of your choice happy ; for all religions are the same. Only the propounders appeared to the people in different forms. If by adopting another religion one become a better man or a better woman and is a better member of society let them give up their own. I have been a true Christian and yet my respect and admiration for the purity and simplicity of Rusi's faith as propounded by Zoraster, not as preached and practised by some of his priests and his people, are great."

Rusi dear, Silla is getting very strange. In fact, she has been so ever since she was with us last at Mehelooji's on that blessed day which you and I will ever cherish as the brightest and the happiest in our lives. Something surely has come over her though what that something is I cannot say. It seemed to me at first that she was taciturn and reserved and avoided me studiously. Latterly as if feeling she was in the wrong she has been near me often enough and mixed with me and talked to me but not so freely and frankly as before. She rarely, if ever, speaks of you or even refers to you. What does this mean ? Can you tell me ? I have sounded her parents about it. They do not contradict me but they set it down to the credit of caprice. They say all girls have such moods some time or other in their lives. For myself I don't think I have ever had it. But let that pass. I don't think I should have troubled you about it.

I am to meet Dastoor D-- at the Bahadurshahs' day after



to-morrow. There is to be quite a little social gathering, a sort of a *conversazione*, you know. I shall report it *in-estenso* to you, my lord and master, as in duty bound and await your opinion.

O Rusi ! Rusi ! How I long to be with you ! It seems as if we are world's apart and never could meet ; as if all that route is dreary desert and quite intraversable ; as if the sea is all turned ice and the steamers all water logged. What could it all mean, Rusi ? Silly sentimentality you will say. I have tried to think so too, but somehow the thought sticks to me in spite of myself.

Believe me for ever,
your own,
MAG.

Todd Mansion,
New York,

Date.....19—

Dearest Mag,

Your last made me so rueful. I got it late in the evening on our return from Mr. Hopkin How's-he. I sat all solitary and read it ; read it once, twice and thrice and it was not till then that I could feel the full force of it. Like close personal contact letters from those we like and love have the power, the magnetism to make us happy or miserable. Your words sounded mournful and I sat myself to find out why you should be so low-down in spirits. We all follow each other like kings in the order of succession. There are exceptions, but exceptions are not the rule. The rule is that the old die first and then the young though to the mind of an offspring its parents though ever so old are never so old. *Mutatis mutandis* a sixty years old father of a family is taken to be and put down as a child by his eighty years old parents. This is the way we go and if you look at it as I do, this is the way, Mag dear, to be happy

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and gay. A child loving and affectionate would give its life to save that of a father or a mother. And so would its parents to save the child. But you see darling the All-wise has willed otherwise. If one has to go, one will and not even a daughter, a model daughter like my own Mag, can stay it. Here at this long distance I feel that your father is not doomed but is destined to go to America where he is so badly wanted by his son-in-law elect.

As to your thinking of routes turning dreary and waste, seas turning ice and steamers lying stock still, darling, I put it all down to the credit of earnest love and affection. Though miles apart we are but one body and one soul. You remember the trite old Parsi saying, not even the clumsiest of cudgels can separate the waters of the sea. I want to rid you of your clouds Mag, so I'll introduce you off-hand to our friend Mr. Hopkin How's-he. He is the proprietor of one of the premier play-houses extant here. He always hops about and therefore takes so well after his first name. His second name is said to have had its origin in a sort of habit of constantly inquiring after other people's health. Mrs. How's-he is a soul to see but not to admire. Her husband has never admitted it in public but is said to have let it out in confidence when in his cups that if she were not a little deaf she would have been quite a terror. No master How's-he has blessed the union; but a Miss How's-he has been pleased to do so. She serves as son, daughter, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law and well keeps the place of twenty. She is always irritable, always excited, always sulky and peevish, always in hysterics and always going to faint. It is in this way that she manages to keep her old parents, especially the tender one, on the tip-toe and tenter-hooks of anxiety. You will follow me Mag into the privacy of the happy family. Mr. How's-he owns a troop and a theatre, a dramatic company of which even the Palais Royal can be well proud. You know



Mag our last coup was to be the theatre. I and Marionette *alias* Mignonette carried a letter of recommendation to How's-he from the very respectable author of her being. The three were there discussing the evening toast and tea. We were admitted to their presence as a matter of grace. How's-he was for inviting us to partake but a side look at his tender one told him that he should desist. We pretended to feel warm and went to the window. Tea over, How's-he read old Todd's letter and then handed it to his wife who hated the very sight of youth and beauty, health and harmony, wherever noticeable, like poison.

"So you want to be dramatists, do you?" she said. "You want my husband to give you a trial. Todd should have better sense. What has the theatre How's-he to do with amateurs? Hopkin," she said, turning to him "you surely don't want to ruin your reputation."

"But my dear—"

"Don't my dear me. You know I never like it especially before young people. It is this sort of thing that makes them carry on that game of hide and seek when they should be at their lessons. It may be *à la* Francé but surely not *à la* America. Well Miss what's your name?"

"My name," said the Miss so addressed, "La Mam, it's Miss Merrygold."

"Then you are English?"

"I a'n't that."

"Then you are Scottish?"

"La Mam, that I be not."

"Then you are Irish?"

"Nay Madam, I am a born and bred Yankee."

Mr. How's-he seeing the rising ire of his spouse thought it better to interpose.

"My dear this young lady is Miss Marionette Todd, the



daughter of my friend Mr. Todd of Messrs. Todd & Tweedham, the famous iron-mongers and machine manufacturers of New York."

"Horrible! Mama horrible! Why don't you send her away? She has been here too long and telling such lies too," said or rather shrieked the wise Mama's wiser daughter.

"Audible! Quite audible as you say my dear!" replied the Ma.

"Don't excite yourself, my dear, or you will faint," said Mr. Hopkin.

"And who may you be, young fellow, you cannot be a Yankee. There is nothing of that in your face," said Mrs. Hopkin.

"Venerable lady" responded I, "I honour you. I am not an American but I mean to become one before long. I am from Bombay."

"From doomsday!"

"No, my dear, Bombay," replied Hopkin, and he spelt the word through, for his dear lady's edification. "Bombay is the principal city in India; the second city in the whole of the British Dominions; the *Urbs prima in Indis* they call it."

"Oh! Horrible!" shrieked the heiress Miss How's-he.

"Horrible indeed!" shrieked the Ma. "India, that country of horrors and terrors where I am told the wilds immeasurably spread and seem lengthening as they go: Where the faithless phantoms lure the unwary traveller to his doom: Where the rats they say are as big as cats, the cats bigger than the dogs and the dogs as big as calves and the calves—"

"Mama, Mama, mother, for God's sake hold your peace. You should not have raised that picture before my eyes. Send this wild Indian away or I shall faint," shrieked the heiress.

"Don't do it! Don't do it here! my darling! Just wait till you are safe in your seclusion. When there, you know you can always faint away at your leisure. Hopkins! Hopkins!"



Don't look like an owl. I hate owls. Don't stare at me. It gives me the palsy. There ! Get up, conduct that darling to her room," howled the female parent.

"Madam " I said " if you will permit me I should like to be the discharger of that very delicate function. I am not a wild Indian. I am a Parsi. I know how to deal and how to behave with young ladies."

"O ! You are a Parsi ! Then you must be from Paris young man ? I don't like the looks of that hussie there ; but I think I am beginning to like yours. Yes you may—"

The young man from Paris was too shrewd to wait till he had heard more. He rose, bowed low, low low down to the very ground to the young American heiress who was called the American beauty by no one else but by Mr. Hopkins How's-he's hangers-on and offered his hand to her. In fact his hand was in hers and he was leading her or rather she was leading him to the inner apartment before the mistress of the house could raise any objection.

Mag darling what do you think ? Miss Hopkins did not take me to her own room but through a back door into the garden. Thence through another back door into the conservatory. She excused herself by saying that the fresh air of the garden always refreshed her and restored her and composed her and calmed her and quieted her and soothed her and—and—said she drawing a deep deep sigh solaced her too : solaced her for the loss of a sister who had died when only six months old and for the loss of a brother who had lived but six days after birth ; solaced her for all the want of a companion. I tried Mag to loosen my hand and get free but she would not allow it until we were actually in the conservatory fairly preserved and conserved. When comfortably settled on a bench I had no difficulty in making up my mind as to my fair charge's health, her temperament and all about her. The all was artificial from the

head to the neck ; from the neck down to the feet. Her health seemed to be excellent. She has very ordinary looks but she is certainly not ungainly. At any rate she could well dispense with the artificialities for another fifteen years. The conservatory is at the farthest end of the garden. Hopkins has made it all that mind and money could do. There is an electric bell connection between the house and the conservatory. A button was pressed and in ten minutes a tray with delicious viands was presented. I was hungry as a wolf. I consigned, yes I confess, I consigned Miss How's-he mentally to the winds and fell to, voraciously to do justice to the repast. Whilst so doing, I was glancing furtively at the young lady seated by me. It seemed to me that she had drawn closer to me, closer than first acquaintance and delicacy warranted ; but doubtless she thought I was her six days' old brother who had suddenly come to life after spending full thirty years in heaven to see his dear dear sister. She was looking at me admiringly, perhaps she wished she had an appetite like mine. It seemed to have just then taken birth for she ate and drank in a way as only Yankee girls can do. All this comes, dearest Mag, of making prisoner of an only daughter and forcing her to spend all her life within the four corners of the parental lock-up. I don't want to offend you Mag, but it seemed to me that if a parson were there or for the matter of that even our great Dastoor D—, Miss How's-he would have asked him to take such steps as may be necessary to lock me up in the house with her for ever. At such a distance from Bombay, our High Priest would, of course, have no such scruples or delicate dictates of conscience such as the Bombay weather engenders. Another ten minutes and just when I had managed to disengage Miss How's-he's left hand which had crept over my right, How's-he appeared in view. I thought my eyes deceived me. He had Mrs. How's-he on his right and Miss Todd on his left and was



leading them to the conservatory like a gallant. His face was now quiet clear. It was a proof that the domestic clouds had dispersed and that clear weather had set in. In nine cases out of ten such disputes are only ephemeral and vanish as rapidly as they arise.

When money runs free, there must be somebody to spend it. Men earn in the perspiration of their brow and women spend in tableau and toilet. Mr. How's-he was a man of business. He had no temptations and work was his only pleasure, so much so that he never thought of looking after his only daughter and left her entirely to her mother. The mother having begun at the lowest rung of the ladder with her husband was unable to befit her daughter for the high station in life which they now occupy. Large fortunes unenjoyed go to benefit those who never help to make them. How's-he's piles showed that they would share the same fate. On the daughter's disappearance the husband and wife had regained their composure. Just then a servant came in and informed Mrs. How's-he in reply to her inquiry that her young lady was not in her bed but in the conservatory. Mrs. How's-he took a big jump, caught Mr. How's-he by the arm and dragged him out of the room. Mr. How's-he offered no opposition but obeyed only taking care to beckon Miss Todd to join them and so they were there.

"My dear," said Mrs. How's-he, "I thought you had retired to your room."

"La Ma, it was so stuffy there; it would have made me worse so I thought I had better go to the conservatory. I am glad I did so for I have found out that this young gent has nothing of the wild Indian about him. As to that young lady there, I know nothing of her. I wish Ma you would give them free passport to our stage. I should like to go too, if—if—Mr. Parsi here—"



"Mr. Rustom," suggested Mr. How's-he.

"Yes, if Mr. Rustom will take me there," finished the daughter.

"You forget yourself, my dear, Mr. Rustom is entirely a stranger to us. I am sorry you forget all dictates of delicacy though I have taken special good care to impress them on you ever since you were a babe and I a-rocking you at your cradle," lectured the Lady-mother.

"I'll accept no refusal, Ma. If this gent cannot take me, Pa must do so. You have kept me long enough at home. I must see a little of life, yes that I must. I am like a bird locked up in a cage, never singing but mopping all day. I must fly a bit now."

"Wife," ventured forth Mr. How's-he, "the child is right: Was never so much right in her life: Let her go out with me: Rely on it she shall never go wrong: I am getting old and want an assistant: Mayhap she will assist me and make a good match in time."

So, Mag dear, one young gent to two young ladies. Mrs. How's-he gave way for she was not so bad after all and we were on the stage for full three months. How's-he drew immense audience. Miss How's-he has the making of an actress in her and her talents show sign of development. Three months and we left the stage—I and Miss Todd. Miss How's-he does not intend to do so. On my life she is a different girl now. All her energies and abilities are now on the surface. This, dear Mag, ended my term of holiday-making. I am now as you are aware with Todd & Tweedham—a sober man of business working for his salvation, collecting money but not knowing why or to what end. Old Todd cannot overwork me. Punctually at five, though I worked till six, my orderlies have orders to run up the small board on the wall facing my table. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. This is painted in bold letters on



the board. The first day Todd came in to trouble me after five. His eyes caught the above words. He fell into a chair and said he had merely looked in to see if I was still in mine; that if I did not mind I could take the ladies out for an airing in his comfortable cabriolette.

"But you must have come for some important business Mr. Todd," I observed soberly. Mr. Todd must have caught the smile on my lips and felt that it was a cut. But he said calmly, "Oh never mind that Mr. Rustom; we are all born for work but should not allow it to rule supreme over us. We eat to live and not live to eat. There, lad," he said turning to the office-boy, "put up the shutters and see to the closing. Your master must leave now." So we went out arm in arm and into the cabriolette. Tweedham met us before the coachman could start the horses. He was surprised to see Todd in the cab. "Where to! Where to! So early Toddy," questioned Mr. Tweedham. "Hope there is nothing wrong. I am just returning from peck and poodle. I expected to find you in your chair."

Poor Todd! He himself did not know why he was in the *gharry* or whither he was bound. I saw his embarrassment and came to his rescue. "Mr. Tweedham, Sir, Dr. Smith says Mr. Todd is not well. Least-ways he mentioned this to Mrs. Todd. 'Mrs. Todd,' he said, 'your husband looks pale and worried. You are overworking him. He wants plenty of open air, so you must take him out daily after six'." It was a white lie but well meant and well aimed. Mrs. Todd did not contradict me. Old Todd swallowed it and so did Tweedham. Miss Todd looked merrier than usual. Her eyes chuckled and she tittered. She seemed to be choking with suppressed laughter. Mrs. Todd noticed it.

"Oh! that's it! Is it!" said Tweedham scratching his head and doubtful if he was in his senses.

The coachman felt the string pulled, crack crack sounded

the whip, the horses reared and started and off went the carriage leaving old Tweedham ruminating and wending his way slowly towards the office steps not so much as bestowing a glance at the doors and windows which were filled with employes looking curiously at this singular occurrence. From that day forward Todd & Tweedham close punctually at six.

Yours for ever,

Rusi.

Macgregor Lodge,
Bellasis Road, Byculla,
Bombay,19—

Dearest Rusi,

Here is a brief account of my interview with your Dastoor Dehkan (if you like omit the 'y' from 'your' and make it 'our'). The *Dastoor Saheb* glowing in all the glory of his grandeur and duly invested with the woollen shawl of his sacred investiture arrived in his own *gharry* and entered the council hall at Bahadur Mahal where he was to preside. There were the Bahadurshahs, there were the Meheloojis and there were the dear indispensable the rest of them Thriti and Jamshed, Jal and Roshan and dear old Ardeshir. There was a shaking of hands all round and a few introductions. It came to my turn last. His Holiness knew me but we were never formally introduced. Mr. Behman performed that ceremony in his usual stately way.

"Miss Macgregor, daughter of Mr. John Macgregor of the well-known firm of Messrs. Macgregor and Patel of London and Bombay, *Dastoor Saheb*."

"Miss Macgregor, this is our *Dastoor Saheb* Dehkan. He is so well known to one and all in Bombay and to the whole of the Zoroastrian world of which you are practically a member that I think it hardly necessary to tell you of him at greater length." I was ready with my hand. The *Dastoor Saheb* seemed



wavering but only for a trice during which Mr. Behman Bahadurshah kept his large telling eyes, which as you know have not yet lost their lustre, fixed on him. His Holiness appeared to wince under them. He extended his hand, took mine in it and shook it heartily. "I am so pleased to know you, Miss Macgregor," he said, "so very pleased that I can hardly describe it. I have known your old father for long and I knew your good uncle too; had occasional bits and snatches of very interesting converse with them. It is my good fortune to-day to ratify that friendship by a formal introduction with you."

I watched to see if the *Dastoor Sahab* would clean his right hand which had enclosed that of a *Juddin* by his pure white garment or his fine silken kerchief. But he did neither. He only adjusted and arranged his shawl which was slightly disarranged and drew it closer to him, may be to protect himself. He then seated himself into a beautifully carved old mahogany chair which belonged to Mr. Behman's ancestors and which looked like a *dais* for crowning kings and queens.

"*Dastoor Sahab*," said Mr. Behman, "we have some questions to put to you."

"A thousand if you like, my good sir," replied the *Dastoor*, bowing obsequiously.

"A thousand thanks. You know *Dastoor Sahab* why I have troubled you to be here to-day. It is to have the pleasure of your pious company and principally that you may answer a few questions which this young lady here desires to put to you, *Dastoor Sahab*."

The prelate so addressed again bowed low in solemn acquiescence.

"This young lady," proceeded Mr. Behman, "though a Christian all her life is almost a Parsi for she has lived with, dressed like and associated with the Parsis as if she were one of them. Though a Christian she has tried to gain an insight

into our religion and I may assure you, my dear *Dastoor Saheb*, that she understands it better and observes it, except in the matter of its outward symbols, better than many who call themselves Zorastrians. You cannot be aware *Dastoor Saheb* that she is formally betrothed to Bai Chandan's brother, Mr. Rustom Delaver, who is now in America."

"To be sure, *Meherban Saheb*, gracious lord, I know all that and I am glad of it for I have known Mr. Rustom from infancy upwards and have liked and loved him. He is a man after my heart. He is just what I should like to have been if I had been born a *Behdin* (layman). I often question myself, Bahadurshah Seth, if it had not been for the best for me to have taken birth in a *Behdin* family for then I should have been more natural and more free to think, to speak and to act for myself than I am in my present birth and berth."

"Then why not exchange positions, *Dastoor Saheb*, with one of us, say for instance with friend Behman," observed Mr. Meheloogi.

"That I would by my life and soul," said the *Dastoor*, "if Behmanji Seth would only allow it."

"For that my learned friend and I will have to be born again," said Mr. Bahadurshah. "We must wait till then."

"*Dastoor Dehkan*," said Mr. Behman, "some of you, amongst whom, I believe, you are one, have put forward a *Fatwa* that contact of any kind with a *Juddin* of whatever caste, colour or creed is contamination. You have just been good enough ('gracious enough,' put in Ardeshir) to shake hands with this young lady here. Don't you think you are contaminated? Your contamination must mean that of your family for you will go and mix with them. It must also mean that the sacred ceremonies and rituals essential to the practice of religious functions which you have undergone have become *Riman* or unsanctioned. If so, this lady here has done you incalculable harm."



TELEPATHY OF LOVE

"Dastoor Dehkan must have cleaned out the contamination in some secret manner unbeknown to us," observed Ardeshir. "*Dastoors* can work wonders. Dastoor Dehkan of Persian fame who was known as Daneshwar Dehkan and whose pious name our *Dastoor* here bears is said to have exercised vast influence over his king and his country by his wisdom and his learning."

"Will not our *Dastoor Sahib* here kindly tell us if Dehkan has any meaning," inquired I. "Dear Ru—('your dear Rusi,' finished Mr. Bahadurshah) yes Rusi told me that in ordinary parlance Dehkan means a boor, a villager, but that in olden times it meant much more. Our *Dastoor Sahib* here will perhaps enlighten us as to this."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the *Dastoor*. "Dastoor Dehkan lived in the times of the last of the Persian Shahs, Yezdezar Sheriar. He was as wise as he was learned, and versed in all the finest arts of the time. He was the Shah's adviser in matters spiritual as well as temporal. He it was that advised Shah Yezdezar to accept the creed of Zoraster. I am proud, my dear young lady, proud to bear his illustrious name. Dehkan also meant in olden times a peasant, a cultivator, a high official of state, a satrap or a bard."

"But," I innocently observed, "if Dehkan has so many meanings, how is one to know what a particular individual bearing that name is or how his vocation is to be distinguished?"

"I'll tell you that also, Miss Macgregor," said the *Dastoor*. "You can distinguish it in two ways: Dress and deeds."

"No offence meant to you, *Dastoor Sahib*," said I. "I am only generalising. When a person says he is a *Dastoor* and dresses like one but his thoughts, his words and his deeds are the exact opposite of those of Dastoor Dehkan of illustrious fame he is no more a *Dastoor* than I. He is worse than a villager. On the

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other hand the innocent villager who has the qualifications of Dastoor Dehkan in however crude or insignificant a form is a Dastoor Dehkan within that meaning of the word. Am not I right, *Dastoor Saheb* ? ”

“ To be sure, you are. I could not have explained it better myself, my dear young lady. I know you will now ask me what I mean to do in regard to the alleged contamination.” The *Dastoor Saheb* said this laughing and the others laughed too. He is a clever man, clever in his erudition and as clever in the tactics of evading and misapplying it. “ Any idea, my dear young lady,” he said, “ has its origin in one’s wit or fancy. After it is once born there, it becomes a thought and the wise man is he who can decide whether that thought should be converted into action or not. In this matter both the *Behdin* and the *Dastoor* are on the same level. You know our religion is based on the foundations of purity and virtue. When a man of my own community comes to me I am not inclined to shake hands with him or to offer him a seat unless I find that he is clean and tidy. The distaste to touch *Juddins* had its origin in the same. The majority of them however rich are not so clean and tidy as we Zoroastrians are. There is the same objection in shaking hands with an unclean Parsi as with an unclean Hindu or Mahomedan. No one can be unclean unless he is ignorant or means to be so. The ignorant Parsi has therefore taken it up that shaking hands with a *Juddin* or asking him to sit on a *galicha* or a *patherna* during times of ceremonies is contamination and abomination. The belief of ages, my dear young lady, cannot be shaken off in a day. We cannot uproot it without uprooting ourselves. You must side with the illiterate and ignorant majority till such time as the educated and literate minority are prepared to boldly come forward and help and support you in uprooting objectionable prejudices and irreligious practices. The literate minority



only talk and twaddle and are never in the front. As a result the illiterate majority are always in the front and fructifying. Just by the way Bahadurshah Seth, your pardon, for anticipating you. You want to ask me why we *Dastoor*s pet and pamper the illiterate and ignorant masses. The answer is simple enough. We do it because they cannot pet and pamper themselves. We do it because you do not educate them or advance them in a way as to make them see and judge for themselves. The literate minority spend their lakhs to pamper themselves and to spoil the illiterate. Education, education my dear sir, is the only means of improvement and advancement. 'It's education that forms the common mind: As the twig is bent the tree is inclined.' Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! The head that composed these lines must by far have been wiser than the wisest head of our wise age. We *Dastoor*s, Bahadurshah Seth, have bellies with bellows as big as those of the richest of *Behdins* or some of your *Behdin* journalists and authors. Our greed is the same as theirs. We earn less than we want and spend much more than we ought. A pious *Behdin* is as good as or even better at times than a *Dastoor*. He runs after lakhs and we *Dastoor*s do the same. We are as prone to society vices as the *Behdins* are but much less to blame, for, it is the *Behdins* that have taught them to us. We try to abandon them, make up our mind not to bid at races, not to speculate, not to buy and sell shares, not to do many a thing and fail as signally as the *Behdins*. Our sacred investiture and our piety and purity are powerless to help us in that. This is our state pure and simple. The rich *Behdin* stands by and enjoys the fun. A man steeped in vices is jolly glad if he is able to pull another into them. Some Theosophists and others occasionally help the *Dastoor*s on with means and money to run in and out of debt for their own selfish ends. You have often told me, Bahadurshah Seth, that once in, even a *Dastoor* cannot get out of it."

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"Because perhaps the *Dastoor Saheb's* piety and purity are not over pure and powerful," put in Mr. Mehelooji. "By the way, *Dastoor Saheb*, this young lady here, whom I now call my daughter-in-law, wrote to you some days ago and enquired if you were prepared to initiate her into the tenets and the truisms of Zoraster. You replied that you were sorry you could not do so and that you could not assign reasons for refusing to accede to her request. You will perhaps be gracious enough, dear *Dastoor Delhkan*, to give us verbally the reasons which you were unable to commit to paper."

"Certainly, Mehelooji Seth, the reasons are simple enough and I am surprised you should not have guessed them. Initiating a *Juddin*—you will pardon me for using this word—into the tenets and truisms of Zoraster plain and simple mean that I should give an undertaking to invest her with the sacred symbols of Zorastrianism by putting the *Sudreh* and *Kusti* on her, in other words that I should perform a *Navjot* or sacred thread ceremony. It is as much as taking my head from my shoulders and putting it into the hands of the hangmen. They will all be down on me and even a Mehelooji or a Bahadurshah will be unable to save me. Those who call me *Dastoor Saheb* and revere and reverence me will then call me all sorts of names. We are what we are. It is you that rule us now. You must improve our position, increase our status and strengthen both before you can expect us to guide you as in the olden times. I am delighted — very greatly delighted indeed to see a Saviour — yes a Saviour in the shape of a simple hearted but great *Behdin* has at last come forward to lift us up out of the abyss of despair and degradation into which we have plunged ; to educate and advance us and to make us self respecting and such as to exact respect and obedience from our constituents. That Saviour is no less a personage than the simple but noble minded Mr. Merwanji



Muncherji Kama who has voted no less a sum than Rupees Twenty-five lacs, all out of his own pocket, for our progress and prosperity. Like the Good Samaritan he has felt our pulse, realized our troubles and not hesitated to relieve them. May Hormuzd bless him and save him as he has blessed and saved us."

"But, my dear *Dastoor*," said Mr. Meheloogi, "I hold in my hands at this minute a letter that you wrote to me when on your travels and in which you have said that proselytism is authorized by our religion and practised as a *revaj* or custom from ages past. You have also said in that letter that the Parsis would not have numbered eighty thousand as at present but for the free introduction of alien blood into it; such introduction being considered a *poon*, that is, a pious or propitious deed, by old people even now."

"True ! True ! Sethji," replied His Holiness, "but Bombay is not Timbuktoo or China. The best of our rulers when in the land of England and when sailing over the waters of the ocean have expressed views akin to mine on various matters relating to the social, moral and material welfare of those over whom they were coming to hold sway here. Their zest and their zeal, their free speaking and their free thinking have been known to cool and to disappear queerly with the Indian harbour appearing in sight. With one leg *in-situ* and planted on Indian soil the heat and the temperature begin to affect them and the zeal and the zest mix with the air and disappear. So was it, I confess with me. I am thankful to you, Bahadurshah Seth, for calling me to this confessional to-day and inducing me to make a clean breast of it. It is an honourable confessional and I feel honoured in confessing before it. Besides, there is nothing like a confession to relieve a superfluous weight. I know some of you gentlemen say that we *Dastours* are more of a fool than a knave. Others say that we are more

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of a knave than of a fool. I make bold to say that we *Dastoors* hold the same opinion of many *Behdins* who have as little courage of their convictions as ourselves."

"Then you will not, even if I stand behind you, undertake to make a Zoroastrian of Miss Macgregor," asked Mr. Bahadurshah.

"That, I will not," said the *Dastoor*, "for I think Miss Macgregor can still be a Zoroastrian without its outward symbols. As to her becoming a Parsi, why, she has more of Parsee-ism in her than many of us put together. There can be religion, my dear Bahadurshah Seth, without rites and rituals but there can be no rites and rituals without religion. God meant that there should be only one religion though under different forms. The rites and rituals are the forms. If a man think that he can be a better man by being a Christian than by remaining a Parsi by all means let him become a Christian. Miss Macgregor thinks that as she is about to be united to a Parsi, she should be a Zoroastrian. The Parsis say however good and true you may be and whatever your love for our religion we will not admit you into our fold through the front door. There is nothing however to prevent Miss Macgregor from stealing a march into it through the back door which is the pure and simple result of closing the front door. If his wife is not admitted into Zoroastrianism Mr. Rustom might go over to Christianity and bring up his children as true and loyal followers of that faith rather than let them be half-castes and bearing contempt and contumely.

"Proselytism is a strange process of manufacture. It is self-propagating and self-progressing and most fructifying in favourable soil and circumstances. So long as the Parsis live in India, proselytism will go on whether they will have it or not, for associations are always strong. You can stop it, not by returning to Iran, for there you will be drawn towards Babi-ism which is another name for Bahaism (which, by the way, is much



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superior to idolatry, Budhi-ism and Theosophy), but by establishing a purely Parsi colony somewhere in the wilds of Africa or the antipodes." (Cries of hear hear and well said.)

"What do you think, my dear *Dastoor Saheb*, of the present prospects—social, moral and material, political and religious of our community?" asked Mr. Bahadurshah.

"Very grave, very grave, and likely to become graver still. They were never less grave. With deep-rooted superstition and long-standing and daily increasing superstitious practice on the one hand, holding strong possession of the mind even of many of your educated men and women with indiscriminate charities ending in loss of independence and self-respect, with the absence of widespread physical culture, with the disappearance of enterprise, commerce and industry, honesty of purpose and intention, with the carefully nurtured and growing distaste for higher education, with destructive doctrines of Theosophy and its sequel the Kshnoom which are both artificialities in themselves, there are rightly and truly between the devil and the deep sea, sophy is manufactured amongst us by crafty artizans, and in their hands the destiny of Parsee-ism and Zoroastrianism baneful and wasteful influences which are dressed in the of Zoroastrianism are too carefully worked to be outwitted the other artifice—Ilm-e-Kshnoom—it is but the Theosophy and too palpably horrid to do any but harm. It has run its course. The elder sister Theosophy openly friendly to it is inwardly most inimical of Ilm-e-Kshnoom will burst but the boil become chronic and will not end until it is cured. My dear friends it is getting late. I have a lecture which is to be given within an hour by a well-known Theosophist. You stare at me. In answer thereto I beg respectful

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have said here a few minutes ago.

"My dear daughter Magdalene, if you will allow me to call you so,—for all good girls be they Parsi, Hindu or Mahomedan or hail from China, Peru or Cochin are but my daughters,—if you will take my advice, think not of becoming a Zoroastrian in this smoke-stricken atmosphere of Bombay. When you are in Europe or America ask any *Dastoor* or *Behdin* staying or passing through that land to invest you with the outward symbols if you really want them. As to the other symbols which are the prop and pride of our faith,—*Manashni*, *Chavashni* and *Kunashni*—you have them already in a greater measure than many of us. Go to America and be reconciled to the person and primitive faith of your proposed partner in life even as was Padmavati, the daughter of Maharaja Sankaldeo of Kanoj, who married our Shah Behramgoor, accepted our faith and whose name is recorded as Sapinood in Parsi chronicles." And so, Rusi, the dear—
r *Dastoor* left us—left us—but not without shaking hands
tily with me once more and promising to bring over the ladies
his household to see me. Bahadurshah tells me that I may
e this *Dastoor Sahib* as a fair specimen of his kind, learned
at afraid to make use of his learning, well thinking and well
entioned yet timid and impracticable, progressing and yet
grading, pious and yet full of prejudices, industrious and
a, full of words and yet not flowing. Poor dears! How I
hem and feel for those whose religious advancement
ement, aye whose salvation has been placed in their
hinks, *Dastoor* Dehkan is right that you *Behdins*
more than they for this very sorry situation.
more so than your bunglers and meddlers,
onstituted *Soshiants* who interpret religion
ad twist them and mould and model them
in public and detest in private.
Rusi dear, I remember your telling



me I am half a Parson myself, a little of a Pope and much more of a Prelate. Like what Mrs. Todd told her husband the Parson blood is in our family. My father and my uncle were intended for the Pulpit but they chose to join the trade.

I am paying visits to dear Motidana's schools. Mr. Jamshed and Jal and Thrity and Roshan have made the interest of the children their own. Roshan and Thrity are giving lessons thrice in the week at the Parel school where English and Parsi children take lessons. The oil paintings and the medallions are excellent. Motidana appears to be looking down lovingly and speaking to the children and smiling through every line and delineation of them. Whilst I write this, I see my Rusi doing the same from his place on my desk here and from his cosy apartments in Todd Mansion.

Yours for ever,
MAG.



CHAPTER LXII

THE JEST OF FATE COMPLETES ITSELF

*"Fate made me what I am, may make me nothing ;
But either that or nothing must I be ;
I will not live degraded."*

BYRON.

FATE is inexorable. It is famously fatal. You have to face it whether you wish it or not. Call it by any name but you cannot confound it, much less read it. It will still be Fate. It is a visitation which visits every body and whom every one is bound to entertain whether he be a fatalist or not. Fate works single-handed and double-handed. In the former case it works its own way slowly but steadily. In the latter case it works with your help and you help it to accelerate the end. Circumstances and contingencies have a great deal to do with Fate. One may be happy all his life but end in misery. One may be unhappy all his life and yet may come to a happy end.

Since Erach's death Meherbanoo was a changed woman. She became thoughtful and moody. She kept to her room for hours and would not see visitors. Her whole frame had undergone a transformation. She felt a disgust for her old abode and for her old associates. Her face had acquired a quiet dignity and her demeanour was calm but firm. All fuss and fury had deserted her. She did not ask or beg of Jamshed and Thrity or even Roshan to visit her but they did so of their own accord and she offered no resistance. Ardeshir also visited the house but never approached her and never tried to have so much as a word with her. He had read about remorse and he felt sure it was creeping over Meher-



banoo and eating away the inside of her. Remorse is temporary or permanent. He was not sure if Meherbanoo's remorse had come to stay with her. His disgust for her behaviour had strengthened his resolution to desist from making overtures of friendship. He had also to consult his pride. Jamshed told Thrity that Meherbanoo would never make friends with Ardesbir unless the offer came from him. Months rolled away in this way and at last reconciliation came in a form which was not to be resisted. A daughter was born to Roshan on the same day that a son was born to Thrity. Thrity was at her own house but Roshan was at her mother's. Thrity's confinement was easy enough but not so Roshan's. She was in severe pains which tried all the patience and skill of the doctors. It seemed that the mother should sacrifice her life to save that of her unborn one or that the child should die for the mother. Poor Roshan! All her strength seemed to be ebbing away. The doctors sat by the bed for many precious minutes and racked their brains. There were of course the instruments and there were the fine little knives ready for the medical butchery known in polite language as operation. It was a crisis. Meherbanoo hated the hacking and hewing process. "Take my word for it," she said, "leave it to nature and it will come alright in an hour." The doctors turned up their noses! Who was she to interfere! Nature indeed! Fiddle-sticks! All the same one felt the pulse, another felt the body, a third gave the opiates and the fourth busied himself generally. Minutes followed seconds and the quarters followed the minutes. After the half and the three-quarters, came the strike of the hour. The patient was in extreme pain. Nature was at work. The countenances of the doctors fell; that of Meherbanoo beamed with pleasure. She was now all alert. She cried through her tears that her daughter Roshan was now all in all to her. She, Meherbanoo, lived in her. Just then nature had asserted itself. The patient was free. It was a girl, a miniature Roshan. It would have taken the mother's life but it was not to be.

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So Dame Nature often termed Fate had saved the mother and saved the child. It had destroyed the gulf between the mother and the daughter and closed the breach. It had opened the stemmed course of the river running with the milk of human kindness. When the daughter lay between life and death, the father had occasion to come into the daughter's room loaded with messages of all kinds for the mother from those without. The ice was broken. The wife's steeled heart opened. The husband's stagnant one moved and mixed with it. Their girl's safety was the question of the moment. All else was immaterial and un consequential. The wife's quiet grief appealed to the husband and *vice-versa*. In the handing and the rehanding of things their hands touched. For the first time in her life the wife felt that the husband's interests were hers. They are now united never to part. It seemed as if they were never disunited. Necessity and misery did what the law and the bar could never have effected.



CHAPTER LXIII

THE PANORAMA

*"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late,
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his Gods?"*

MACAULAY.

THE rail road of life of the actors in this story is now smooth and even—even of Shirin. The man of the world Bahadurshah was too shrewd to leave a love-sick girl to her fate. Shirin was his only daughter and the idea of losing her was tortures for him. 'Find out a more suitable man, Bahadur,' he murmured; 'surely our community holds men better than Rusi; I will not allow my child to pine away for the sake of that——.' He was going to say something snappish about Rustom but he stopped. With him idea was action. His plan of campaign was to take Shirin out of herself. A round of visits, motor drives, change of scene and air, *soirées* and select dinners, select plays and cinemas left Shirin no time to think of Rusi. Mr. Minocher, I.C.S., a handsome sprightly young man in high pose and his sister Manijeh were companions in the holiday making. This young man who adorned the service and had risen rapidly in it was a distant cousin of Mr. Bahadurshah. He was now at his special invitation spending his well earned leave with him.

"Shirin, daughter mine, what do you think of Minocher?" enquired Bahadurshah of his daughter when he had occasion to be alone with her.



"What do I think of him, Papa? Why! What a question to ask? What is my opinion worth?" faltered the girl dropping her eyes and looking down.

"It is worth everything. Come Shirin, don't shy. Come, I'll smooth the way for you. I will not beat about the bush. Will not Minocher make a fine husband for a fine little girl, say such a one as my Shirin? Is he not in every way more desirable, if not superior, than the one you have long been thinking of in the light of matrimony without your ever knowing it? Shirin, darling, the other one I speak of is Rustom Delaver."

"I-think-of-him-as my husband! Papa! Papa! Surely it is too much even for you," murmured the girl timidly between her tears.

"My darling, I would not be your father if I did not care to watch over your interests or neglected to enter into your feelings or to read your mind. Come, darling, we will talk about it but for once. Rustom with all his faults is a fine man, I know. I also know that my innocent little darling here liked him very much, aye even to the extent of loving and marrying him. I know you were fond of him without knowing that you were."

"Papa! Papa!" cried the girl—but he did not allow himself to be disturbed. "To do justice to Rustom, Silla, I must say that he was equally innocent. He did not know of the feelings you entertained for him and was too honourable to allow you to go on if he but knew them. As to Magdalene, she would surely have sacrificed herself if she had the faintest idea that she was in your way. There! There! Cry away dear, I will not disturb you, for it is so wholesome to give vent to one's feelings in this way. That Magdalene is a saint. She is wiser in worldly wisdom than you. She will keep him well in hand and not spoil him as my Silla would perhaps have done. You were both in danger, as the novelist would say, of crossing each other in love, but there is a better love waiting for you. Come, Silla, I am sorry if I have made you cry, but I am not sorry to have been able to solve a problem for you which you



were vainly endeavouring to do for long. I have opened your mind out to you and you will doubtless thank me for it. Rustom is now practically Magdalene's own. Young Minocher is waiting to be yours if you will only allow it. You have always carried out my wishes and will not disobey me in this. He has my permission to offer his hand to you. Your mother (see, she is quietly hearing what we say) will be delighted to see you wedded to Minocher. Won't you, dear?" he said, turning to his wife. By way of answer, the dear nodded and drew her daughter close to her heart. They mingled their tears.

"We do not wish," concluded the father, "to force your inclinations darling, but by accepting Minocher you will make yourself and us so supremely happy." He patted her as if she were a babe and left the room leaving the mother and the daughter to themselves.

A month more and Shirin is now Mrs. Minocher Marshal. She does feel that her parents were right. They had worked only for her weal and not worked in vain. How many parents would have done it like this? How many fathers would have acted like Bahadur-shah?—mild but firm; kind yet decisive; frank yet outspoken, loving but not over indulgent!—Echo answers, 'very few'—

This is our last look into Bombay. It only remains for us to look into America for the last time. And then the writer and the reader will have to give up the reins of this story, the strings of which are almost woven. If the reader feel a tithe of what the writer does in preparing to part with the characters of this narrative, which are the creation of his own fancy, the writer will consider his labour well spent and well recompensed.

So let us betake ourselves to the land of the Yankees. Our hero Rustom could well have been born there. In his first letter to his darling Mag, youth like he has painted Yankee land as all gold and no glitter. Youths are not, however, so wise as Age for Yankee land is after all anything but *par-excellence*. It is like

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distance lending enchantment to the view. It is not a paradise. It has not yet entirely given up its hatred for the children of the soil, the first born babes of the mother-land, the Hubshees. The President of the Republic had a hornet's nest round his ears for daring to invite a Red Indian in high pose to dine with him. The Hubshee is not to traverse or to cross the path which the heaven-born Yankee does. He is not to travel in the same tram-car or train with him. Rogues and rascals, marauders and pick-pockets abound there as much, if not more, than in any other land. People are free with their gold, of course, but it is often flittered away. The Yankee fight for suppression of strong drink and its manufacture is nothing but a long Yankee yarn—a huge fiasco. Last but not the least—oh! horror of horrors—there is the Lynch-law which takes no count of a Hubshee being burnt alive for daring to love or even to look lovingly or daringly at a white woman. Those who prattle and prate here under the banner of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshism* may well lay this to their heart.

The relieving feature of the situation is the all-powerful Yankee Press with its masterful whip. It is the great monitor which lays its stripes here, there and everywhere. It treats the President and the publicist alike. When will the British *Raj* have such a Press? The Home Government and the Indian Government might well be under the tutelage of the Yankee Press for a while if they are to benefit themselves and their possessions.

It was the 21st day of March in the year——, the grandest day of the Parsis known as the Jamshedi Navroze which beheld the Macgregors, the Bahadurshahs, Minocher and Manijeh, Meheloogi and Chandan, Jamshed Aga and Thrity, Jal and Roshan, Meherbanoo and Ardeshir ascending the steamship *Oceania* which lifted anchor, hoisted its flag and sailed away amidst the deafening cheers, the waiving of handkerchiefs and the vociferous acclamations of the numerous friends and admirers of the fortunate families that were now about to cross the wide wide ocean to plant their feet in the



land of Columbus.

But oh ! the forgetful that I am ! I have left Dastoor Dehkan out of the list. Bahadurshah had prevailed on him to accompany them. He was to be their guest. When on the broad bosom of the sea the *Dastoor Saheb* was one of them. He laid aside his kingly state and his dignity and ate and drank to his full content. He had laid aside all his reserve and even the sacred investiture of his sanctity—the Cashmir shawl. He answered questions freely and frankly as if he were already in Freedom Land. He declared as he had never done before that Jamshedi Navroze was rightly and and properly the New Year's Day of the Parsis and that the Parsis ought to count their New Year from that day. He admitted that he had all along entertained that belief but that times and circumstances were anything but congenial for making such a declaration in his native land. "My dear Bahadurshah Seth," he said, "if the Parsis want to be classed as a progressive community they must give up their long existing factions and merge into one homogenous whole. They may call themselves *Sansahis* or *Kadims* so long as they adopt the *Dini* or *Fasli Sal* and let their prayers, their ceremonies and their rites and rituals to sway them on that basis." He admitted that their community dinners known as the *Ghambars* were unsuited to the times ; that they were always out of season and very unseasonable to boot.

"My dear Ardeshir Seth," he said, "the ladies' *Ghambar* or *Niat* which has now come into fashion is, to my mind, a huge bungle. It is a subterfuge and a hoax and has not a vestige of religion or piety about it. It is a huge mockery."

"My dear Mrs. Aga, we are indeed a community of corpse-bearers. Rightly and truly we are treating our corpse-bearers like beasts of burden and destroying all their sense of self-respect and sensibility.

"But what is worse ! We Parsis though claiming to be a highly progressive community with an economic conscience and

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an eye to advancement have locked up a mint—mind you, ladies and gents,—I say a mint of money in red earth and rubble stone in the shape and slippery substance of a hill which we call Doongerwadi. It goes to my heart to see that so much money should lie so stagnant. Ladies and gents, you start; but believe me when I say that the time is not far off when the Parsis will be seriously considering the advisability of disposing of the greater part of Doongerwadi and of utilizing the sale proceeds for the purposes of superior industries and art, mental and physical culture, upto date education, model schools and colleges, central academics, houses and asylums, places of recreation and public resort, play grounds and gymnasiums and such other purposes as are sure to tend to the rise, progress, onward movement and advancement of a community which claims to be the pioneer community all over India. I see you smile superciliously; but if I had said this in Bombay, ladies and gents, fanatic Parsis—for to be sure we have fanatics among us in legion—would have stopped short at nothing. They would have abused me, hurled all sorts of execrations at me and threatened to crush me.

“I mean no disparagement to the existing *Dokhmas* for new *Dokhmas* could be built in a distant but more congenial locality, the present ones being allowed to lie fallow until they could be effaced without encroaching upon feeling and sentiment.

“Ladies and gents, your pardon! But I would say, without risk of contradiction, that we Parsis have tied ourselves but too long to the apron strings of our rulers. It is time now we shake free of that bondage and stand on our own legs fearlessly and valiantly. It is time we husband all our means and resources; form distinct flanks and peregrinate to fresh fields and pastures green. We have been long enough here and more than discharged the debt of obligation to the alien communities and their kings who are said to have done many good turns to us in the past. Recent events have shown that



the people of India want us no more; aye! would even eject us if they could. It is but meet therefore that we should migrate to other parts and form distinct colonies if not actual territories. Times were when Iran and Australia were not prepared to receive us. Times now are when Iran is waiting for us with open arms and Australia and for the matter of that the other British Colonies are not likely to refuse to welcome us."

"Yes, you are right my dear Miss Macgregor," said the Parsi Pope smiling sweet and bowing to that young lady. "I admit that aluminium *garis* or motor cars for carrying dead bodies would be by far a superior and more decent mode of traction and more in keeping with the dictates of our religion. You say, Miss Macgregor, that you dislike your native mode of disposal of the dead, namely, interment or burial and that you prefer our *Dokhma* system and even cremation to it. I quite agree with you. There could be no dirtier, more insanitary or more dangerous mode of disposal of the dead than burial. I know it is coming into fashion amongst us. Cremation is by far the cleaner and quicker mode of disposal. It is sure to supplant all other systems, if not now, a quarter of a century hence. Our religion does not forbid cremation but it surely does forbid interment. The very earth recoils with the idea of the abomination, for a corpse, be it of a Parsi, Hindu or Mahomedan, Hebrew or Chinaman, is nothing but abomination. It pollutes and contaminates the earth. It breeds fever and typhoid, plague and pestilence and ends in disaster and distress. When so saying I certainly do not mean to urge that we Parsis need run after cremation in preference to *Dokmas* until the latter become impracticable."

"Thank you,—my young friend Jal,—thank you. I hope your applause means that you are quite one with me in the views I have just expressed."

"There! There! Bai Saheb Meherbanoo smiles. She does not speak but I read it in her eyes. She would ask why I did not say



all this in Bombay? The answer is short and simple enough. We, *Dastoor*s, in addition to our eyes, ears and nose have those little bells which are called bellies. They must be filled and so must those of our families."

"Here is to your health! Ladies and gents, I am glad, mighty glad, we are celebrating the Navroze far away and free from all taint and turmoil and all disagreement and discord on this vast piece of human skill."

"Yes, yes, ask away as many questions as you like, my little Lady of the Lake," he said, landing his pious eyes and jocularly addressing Mrs. Jal, whom we shall still address by the old and familiar name of Roshan. "Yes, my dear young lady, the ladies of our *Dastoor* families have succumbed to fashion, we must confess to our chagrin and consternation."

"Yes, yes, speak out by all means. They 'overdress' or 'underdress' and expose their limbs like any fashionable lady and make ducks and drakes of our money."

"My dear Miss Manijeh, you ask me why we don't put our foot down on it? Easier said than done. Let me ask you a question in return. Have we *Dastoor*s got any foot to speak of? Do we stand on our own legs? Have we got any backbone to boast of? The least said the soonest mended. If you remember that you remember everything."

"My dear Civilian *Saheb*, I am proud,—proud to be in the company of a Government officer of such high repute. You ask me if our *Ghe-sarna* or funeral prayer is not a misnomer. So it is! So it is! We have no funeral prayer properly so-called for we did not inherit any from our ancestors in ancient Iran. We do not know if there was any funeral prayer in the time of Zoraster appropriate to the occasion. We have, therefore, contented ourselves by merely chanting extracts from the Gathas and other prayers which have nothing to do with either the *las*, the *ravan* or the *Feroher*. The same is the case with our nuptial prayer. Nobody knows



what it was in the Zoroastrian era. Our present chantings are in *Pazund*. We certainly do require a proper funeral prayer shorter but more suitable than the present one, and one which will be acceptable in the sight of God and man. But who is to do it?" he said, bringing his uplifted hand heavily down on the table.

Jal replied, "surely the *Dastoors*; who but the *Dastoors*!"
(A ringing laugh and cries of right, right, went round.)

The *Dastoor Saheb* was quite in his element to-day. He had shaken off all the selfish about him and was for once entirely selfless.

He concluded by saying, "Ladies and gents, every member of a progressive community has the right to determine how his body shall be disposed of. If the Parsis are a progressive community then let every Parsi decide how his corpse should be dealt with. Speaking for myself, I do not care how my carcass is disposed of so long as it is not buried and provided it is not treated like the carcass of a dog but with all the *cens-ceremonium* appropriate to the occasion."

From on the steamer to the shores of America time flew and was not felt. When Columbus landed on American land he could not have received that hearty welcome and that meet reception which our party did. At Rustom's initiative a large and influential gathering was there to welcome them. There were, of course, the Todds, the Tweedhams, the How's-hes, the Timkins and their friends. They knew that those who were connected with Rustom by ties of blood or friendship must be worthy of being received and entertained right royally. They put up at Hotel Columbia. Rusti had eyes for none but for his Mag. Mag seemed to see none but Rusti. As she was in Parsi costume she was taken to be one of them. Rustom had told his Yankee friends that his *fiancée* was to be one of the party. But he had not told them that she was Scottish by birth.

The first thing Mag told Rusi when they were alone was that

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she had resolved to be a Zoroastrian before she would wed a follower of Zoroaster.

"Why not let me become a Christian, Mag? I am prepared to be one," observed Rusi laughing.

"That cannot be Rusi," returned Mag. "I shall not feel satisfied until I am a Zoroastrian for it is the wife that must prove her allegiance and her love for her husband by embracing his Faith. For then alone she could be part and parcel of her partner in life."

"Dastoor Dehkan," continued Mag, "has undertaken to render me two very valuable services. The first is to initiate me into the creed of Zoroaster by the performance of the *Narjot* ceremony. The second is to unite us into one by reciting the *Asirvad* prayer over us."

Rustom was all attention and astonished. He could hardly believe his ears. Was he awake or dreaming? All he did was to press Mag's hand, which he was holding in his own, all the harder.

"But Mag, darling, is not civil marriage all the smoother and much the shorter cut to matrimony? Besides, we must think of poor Dastoor Dehkan. Will not civilized Parsis, cultured Parsis and progressive Parsis hurl the Papal Bull of Excommunication against poor Dastoor Dehkan's devoted head and put him out of caste and communal doings for the sacrilege? He will be thinking, talking and acting freely and without fetters so long as he may be in Liberty Land. But let him be again among the Bombay Bigots and he will bid farewell to the dictates of his conscience once again. He will repent, recant, do any penance and undergo any pains and penalties that the self-constituted Parsi Popes may prescribe for him in their blind fury. Oh! A fig for the dangles who would rather on a gibbet dangle than lose their dear delight to wrangle."

"Rusi dear, don't you know," said Mag, "that there are Parsis who say that matrimony cannot be sanctified or 'religionised,' if I may say so, without the *Asirvad* and that the *Asirvad* is part and parcel of religion. Dastoor Dehkan says we may have a Civil



Marriage after the Parsi marriage and I do not see why it should not be so."

A month passed or rather flew, flew as it were on the wings of the dove, and no one knew whither it had flown. The day appointed for the *Navjot* and the wedding and which was to make Rusi and Mag the happiest couple on earth, at last dawned. Old John Macgregor was literally lifted up to the skies with joy and pleasure. He forgot all his pains and all his worries, aye, even his lumbago. Philosophy Hall was to be the centre of attraction. The cream and the elite of Yankee Society was collected and felt elated to witness the ceremonies which were to be conducted by the great Dastoor Dehkan of Bombay. Amongst the notabilities there were the President and his wife, Professor Jackson and the other Professors of the Columbia University. There were also the Parsi High Priest of Sindh and Baluchistan Dastoor Dr. Dhala, M.A., Ph.D., and Mrs. Dhala. We must not forget two young Parsi gents of great ability who were then studying at the Columbia University. They were Mr. Pavri, son of Dastoor Khurshedji Pavri, High Priest of the 'Fasli Sal Mandal,' and Mr. Dhala junior.

It was a scene to see and to remember—a vivid panorama. Dastoor Dehkan never acquitted himself so well as now. After the *Sudreh* and the *Kusti* were put on on Mag and the recital of the prayers were over he delivered a sermon. After generalizing over the intent and purport of putting on the *Sudreh* and *Kusti*, the emblems of purity and religion, the *Dastoor Saheb* gradually waxed eloquent and went over to other matters. He gave free and frank expression to his convictions. The whilst he was doing this he had drawn himself upto his full height. His delivery was clear and telling. His face was glowing and had the halo of truth and the hall mark of true religious inspiration about it. His gestures were correct and effective. He seemed to be one of the disciples of Zoraster come to life again.



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After the *Navjot* came the *Asirvad*. Dastoor Dehkan performed that equally inspiring and highly solemn ceremony, recited the prayers and sprinkled rice, pomegranate and pieces of cocoanut in the same way as he would have done it in his mother-land.

"My dear daughter here and you my dear son," said the *Dastoor Sahab*, addressing Mag and Rusi, "you are now about to be united in the sight of God and man His masterpiece. I thank Him for selecting me as an humble medium for effecting this union.

"Rustom Delaver have you not taken of your own liking this young lady who will henceforth bear the ancient Parsi name of Tehmina to be your wife and whom you are bound to love, respect and protect during the natural period of your existence?"

"That I have—*Pa-sund-ai-kerdum*," gravely replied Rusi.

"Tehmina *alias* Magdalene Macgregor, have you not of your own liking taken this young man Rustom Delaver whom you are bound to serve, love and obey to be your lawfully wedded husband in the sight of God and man?"

Magdalene lowered her head and repeated the words *Pa-sund-ai-kerdum*.

Then going over to other matters the *Dastoor Sahab* said that the audience should not think that Magdalene had entered upon her adopted faith later than she ought to have done. "No, ladies and gents, putting on the *Sudreh* and *Kusti* on children of seven, eight and nine," said the *Dastoor Sahab*, "is mere Punch and Judy show. The proper age for the *Navjot* as enjoined by our sacred books and at which children undergoing that most important ceremony are supposed to grasp its details and the gravity of the situation is double seven, that is, fourteen.

"Ladies and gents, you ask me if I have made a proselyte to-day--if I have not converted and taken over a Christian to the Zoroastrian faith? So I have and so help me God. I will do it over again if needs be, for, is not proselytism enjoined by Zoroastrianism and ordered by Zoraster? I care not for what they will say. I care for the great



dictator—Conscience. Conscience, ladies and gents, is another name for God. It is there that He is established. Besides, this young lady here, who bears the time-honoured name of Tehmina, the wife of our ancient hero Rustom, who was the name-sake of the bridegroom here, has long been a truer Parsi and a truer Zoroastrian than many born in that faith. I promise, aye, I devoutly promise, that I'll put on the *Sudreh* and *Kusti*, God giving me life and strength, on the progeny of these illustrious progenitors whose hands I have joined to-day. The bride has and her children will have the right—if I have not misread the tenets of Zoraster—to enter our Fire-Temples and all our places of worship wherever they may be. They have a right, more right to do so than many low-caste *Juddins* who are allowed to enter the precincts of our places of worship on pretext of carrying out repairs, renewals, white and colour wash and attention to electric light and fittings.

“My dear daughter Tehmina, in the light of your religious adviser let me advise you always to try and catch at the kernel and not at the outward crust and shell of Zoroastrianism which is being forced on us under the guise of Hinduism, Buddhism, Theosophism and Elum-ai-khushnooism. My dear daughter, make it a point to care more for religion than for *revaj* and ceremonies, for *revaj* and ceremonies are not religion. Remember the principle of *Ravanbookh-tagi* for that is the only way for your salvation. Remember that no *poon* or salvation can be purchased by money or ceremonies. It is like offering a bribe to the Almighty. Do not waste your money and your time which is nothing but money in religious luxuries, such as *Nirungdin*, *Humayesh* and *Vandidad*. Economy in human life is taught by economy in nature. Any one who has eyes will see that nature is economising almost every minute and every second. Nothing is wasted in nature. I have no faith in *Chandrokal* or ever-recurring *Baj* or anniversary days for name and fame are not immortal. Above all I have no faith in any new-fangled creed or sect, such as Theosophy, Babi-ism, etc. Rustom



and Tehmina, it only remains for me now to give you my blessings, such blessings as a clear and quiet conscience alone can give you. May He shower His best blessings on you. May you live long, be happy and be the progenitors of a healthy and vigorous progeny.

"Ladies and gents, I hope I have this day lighted such a candle in your land of America as will never die out but will create a zeal and a zest in your Yankee breast to study the great teachings of our Prophet Zoraster and to try and follow them in their pristine condition."

The *Dastoor Saheb* sat down amongst loud and prolonged cheers and acclamations which in the words of the novelist could be heard half a mile off.

Presents and congratulations poured in amain on the happy pair. Rustom was not the Rustom of Bombay. He had developed new looks, new stature and new presence. A gorgeous repast was served out to which those present did ample justice. The chair of honour was given to Dastoor Dehkan. The bride was on his right and the bridegroom on his left hand. Mrs. Dhala sat next to the bride and Professor Jackson was next to the bridegroom.

After the usual toasts were taken, Dastoor Dehkan gave the gathering a further and a more tangible proof of his eloquence and delivery. He was sprightly and humorous.

"Ladies and gents," said he, "if but a month ago any one had told me that I would be on this *par-excellence* land in the midst of such sympathising friends preaching and sermonising and dining with them ; if any one had told me that I would be performing here a unique ceremony such as the one you beheld in this Hall to-day, I would have taken the speaker to be a false prophet. The grand panorama which you have seen to-day will be imprinted in golden letters in the history of this land.

"Ladies and gents, though I am a *Navar* and a *Maratab* and a *Barashnoom* man to boot, I do not consider it a sacrilege to have crossed the seas and sat down to dinner here with you.



I shall not perform penance for it. Ladies and gents, I am not a votary of and do not believe in *zendervana* and *gethikharid* which plain and simple mean laying offerings of gold and silver at God's feet to secure an orchestra seat in the amphitheatre of heaven. (Loud laugh.) The Zoroastrian religion says 'as you sow so shall you reap' and no amount of prayers, *mobedism* or *Dastoorism* will save you from pains and penalties for sins which shall be visited on sinners not there but on this earth. Ladies and gents, we have just left the Jamshedi Navroze behind. That is the proper Parsi New Year's Day. The ten days preceding it are the *Farvardegan* or *Muktat* days on which the holy spirits or *Ferothers* are supposed to visit their relatives and friends here. My Bombay friends have often challenged me to make such a declaration in public. I waited to do it in the more congenial atmosphere of Freedom Land and my word of mouth will be transcribed in print in the Land of Fetters. Those who say that the *Farvardegan* days are eighteen in number are men and *mobeds* intent on feasting and fleecing. Ladies and gents, I have been at the *Fasli Sal Muktats* which are mostly free of unrighteous and unreligious forms and practices. I use the word 'mostly' advisedly as large and precious pieces of silver vases and flower bowls, costly tables offered by families rolling in riches mar the purity and simplicity of the occasion and are a danger to the poor and the mediocre."

Long before Dastoor Dehkan landed again in the land of his birth the Bombay papers were replete with full and flowing accounts of his sayings and his doings in America. Minocher had taken care to prime the papers with that powder, little knowing how soon it will ignite and create a conflagration. The American papers also pregnant with the news fanned the flame. There was commotion and stir. There were high words and low words. It was all abuse and but little praise for the *Dastoor*. The orthodox, the bigot, the hallelujah man, the hooliganist, the *alahi-bagia*, the pulpit preacher, the theosophist, the *baghat* and the *kirtankar* were all



up in arms. Let the man come here and we shall make it hot for him ! Yes—by God—that we shall !

Encomiums and eulogiums were now turned into strong adjectives and bitter invectives. Little did Dastoor Dehkan know that the sword of Damocles was hanging over his head. How could he ? For, was he not patted, pampered, extolled and made much of by his followers ? Even before the *Dastoor Sahab* touched this land again, committees were formed, meetings were held, pulpit orators and platform dancers overflowed with erudition and it was unanimously resolved that the *Dastoor* should be no longer called a *Dastoor* ; that he should be dethroned and decapitated unless and until he withdrew all that he had said in America, made penitence and recantation in public and offered an unqualified apology.

Poor Dastoor Dehkan ! He knew what the Parsi Anjuman meetings are. He knew that their resolutions which are utterly void of wisdom and common sense are never valid or worth the paper on which they are written. He knew that they would not bear the test of rules and religion for a minute. But he was afraid, mighty afraid, of the king-makers and the king-killers. They were his friend, philosopher and guide. They were the men who indulged and spoiled him and winked at all his vagaries. He had feathered his nest pretty well but if shorn of his Dastoorial wings he would have to give up not only his Cashmir shawl but his constituents. He stood firm for a time, then tottered and at last gave way. He preserved his Dastoorship at the price of his pride and his prestige and what was more important yet—his conscience which he had dubbed his God when in America. Alas for the frailty of human wishes !

Our tourists were now getting anxious to return to Bombay as our I. C. S. friend's leave was nearly up. Rusi was working his way up to a partnership in the firm of Messrs. Todd & Tweedham but he could not be a partner until he had earned the citizenship.



Mehelooji doubted the wisdom of the step he had taken as his successor's right place was by his side in Bombay. His face clouded when he thought that Rusi's interests and his marriage with a Scottish damsel would tie him down more, perhaps for ever, to America than to Bombay.

If the Parsis would only look at things more rationally and preserve the balance of their mind, couples like Rustom and Mag would keep with them and not away from them. They would not benefit other countries and other people at the expense of their own. In the present case there was also a fair prospect of Bombay's loss being the gain of America. Mehelooji thought he would not be astonished if his large gains added to America's larger hoards in the not far distant future.

"It's a splendid couple" said the Yankees, "splendid even for our Pasac—Our Happy Valley Home. To look at them is to feel perflated. We wonder if the Parsis in their far off home are all like those now with us : so nice ; so fine ; so handsome ; so elegant ; so stylish and yet so simple ; so large-hearted and so—. It would be a sorrowful day when they leave us to go and seek their mother's nest. But by God we shall not allow them to do that."

The reader will see that all this was no Yankee yarn. It was all real and earnest. The Yankees are outspoken, not exclusive and reserved, or at times, uninviting and obdurate like our friend the John Bull. No offence meant but our dear John Bull is like hard snow which melts only under haughtier heat. All the same our John Bull is very dear to us and by God all the wealth of Yankee land shall not tempt us to part with them. We and they and they and we must stand or fall together.



CHAPTER LXIV

FAREWELL

*"Farewell, if ever fondest prayer,
For other's weal availed on high
Mine would not all be lost in air
But waft thy name unto the sky."*

BYRON.

IT is as difficult a task for an author to complete a book as to commence it. The former is perhaps more so, for the author is then bidding farewell to and taking leave thereof. But the reader's task is not half so difficult. If he does not like the book he skips over and welcomes the end. Not so with the author in whom there is a peculiar partiality for his pets. His characters are his children and like all fond parents he is just as partial to the bad and the better as to the best. The pain of parting is therefore as excruciative with the father of a book as with the father of a family. The author of a book's being is with the children of his fancy, with their sayings and doings, with their fortunes and misfortunes, with their vagaries and vicissitudes and with their good luck and bad luck considerably longer than any reader who may read their history and yawn or applaud. It is sad, sad indeed, to trace human vagaries, human vices, human follies and human foibles, human sins of commission and of omission through their varied steps and stages and through their multifarious and muddy details. The only relieving and encouraging sunbeam on the author's horizon is human virtue with its mixed and unmixed goodness, for vice like virtue is not unqualified. To the pater-familias his family is, if not his world, the small republic over which he presides. It is the haunt which he constantly haunts to keep out hunters,—hunters.



animate and inanimate, who would wreak ravages and devastate and lay waste his small republic. The author's world is more extensive. It is the outside world. His family mean a multitude. He selects such as he likes and deals with them. He is at his best when he is amongst his own people and works within his own fold and does not try to penetrate into other peoples' dens. He is at his best when he builds and does not borrow, when he constructs and does not convert. Like charity his work begins at his own home. His duty is by his own home and hearth. If he can conceive and conjure, collect and create, speak and not spatter, control and not confuse, he is a good author, a successful writer and a sound critic, be he seeing or even blind. Pen and paper are a sacred charge, a divine trust. The man who trifles with them breaks His commandments and is a criminal. Pen is a dangerous weapon, a double-edged tool which if not well wielded turns round and wounds the wielder. It hurts more than it heals. It is like a razor in the hands of Darwin's two footed, who, according to that great writer, was our progenitor and whose power of caricature is so pre-eminent.

‘Tell me of any animal whom I cannot imitate’ said the ape.

‘Tell me’, said the fox, ‘of any animal that can imitate you.’

The class of writers who only borrow and do not build, who convert and do not construct, who copy and do not contemplate is like that illustrious progenitor of ours always cutting the throat and not shaving the beard. This class abounds with the penny-a-liner, the plagiarist, the platitudinarian, the social, moral, religious and economic scribbler, the conventional caterer to popular taste and prejudices, the master dancer to the gallery, be he a mere scribe, an editor, an author, a publisher or a versifier. It is this class that is always looking abroad for cut and dried food and vantage and never cares to look straight at home; who thinks that all materials for novel writing good, bad or indifferent are enshrouded in the western climes and they must either import them wholesale or convert and confuse them. It is nothing but a stratagem.



I have kept fully in sight the fact that human nature is the same all over the world and that the best fields to cultivate and that the best thing to do is to clean our own Augean stable, to remove the dust and filth from within our own fold and to wash our own dirty clothes at our own doors. We have good and bad men, clear-headed and addle-pated, educated and ignorant and plenty of material to form food for a new novel every half year.

I have selected a blind girl for my heroine for two reasons. The first is that I am blind. Though apparently all seeing, only one-fourth the world is seeing—of the rest, one-fourth is purblind. The remaining half consists of people who have eyes but will not see, who have ears but will not hear, who have tongues but will not speak. The second is that I have read novels with a blind hero or a heroine. The titles of these books are indicative of the great physical disability under which the hero or the heroine labours. The reader is led to believe that he is to read more of the blind hero or heroine or more about blindness and its concomitant of good and evil than about love and other matters. A glance, however, through only a few pages mean serious disappointment. The blind hero or the heroine is mercilessly pushed aside and the reader finds himself throat deep in the dirty waters of love-stricken lords and ladies, gents and gendarmes, rivals and the rivalry, disappointment and discord ending often in a dismal doom, dire fate and disgust and distaste for all that is human and only sometimes in subsequent peace and happiness. I am one of those in whom praise creates no ecstasy for I am not easily extolled; upon me cavil and carping inflict no cuts. I'll take all the criticism good or bad in the order of things and value them at their market prices. They are a tax on one's patience. It's not ratable. The reader who reads and digests and coolly and impartially contemplates over my pages is my best friend. He is to my mind the best judge of my humble work and worth and of my characters and their conduct. I have traced Parsi life and living, men and manners, their faults and



defaults, their religious cant and unlawful observances, their good points and their bad points, their verbosity and verbiage, their volume of talk and volleys of unavailable shots, their great sayings and little doings through their various forms and phases in my public writings and in the novels which I have ere this published in Gujarati. I leave this work in your hands with perfect confidence. Cull and collect such portions as you can take a fancy to and let the rest be buried in its own cover.

So once again I say farewell. If chance bring us together again it can only be if I be assured that what I have written is not only approved but appreciated. If I have been too much before you and have not kept behind the scenes I will ask you to excuse me for it. *Adieu.*

CHAPTER LXV

MORAL

NO story is wholesome, no novel is nice unless it has a moral. Every man has his own way of drawing morals. The author has no right to tell the reader what moral he should draw from his narrative. I shall, therefore, content myself with quoting below the reflections of the great Persian poet—the Homer of the East—Firdausi. They convey a moral which is worth its weight in gold and which fits in with this story :—

“O ye, who dwell in Youth’s inviting bowers
Waste not, in useless joy, your fleeting hours,
But rather let the tears of sorrow roll,
And sad reflection fill the conscious soul.
For many a jocund spring has passed away,
And many a flower has blossomed, to decay ;
And human life, still hastening to a close,
Finds in the worthless dust its last repose.
Still the vain world abounds in strife and hate,
And sire and son provoke each other’s fate ;
And kindred blood by kindred hands is shed.
And vengeance sleeps not—dies not, with the dead.
All nature fades—the garden’s treasures fall,
Young bud, and citron ripe—all perish all.”

