POMEGRANATES

FROM

THE PUNJAB

BY

A. L. O. E.

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Indian Stories.

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Four Full-Page Cuts.

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PREFACE.

THESE little stories, written in India, and expressly for the people of India, have been intended to act, by God's blessing, as minute files to help to free our heathen and Mahometan brethren from the chains of prejudice and superstition. A story may find its way where a tract will not, and be listened to by those who would turn away from a sermon.

The Tales are now offered to British readers, not merely in the hope to amuse, or even instruct, but with the desire that they may help to *interest* those born in the light of a Christian land in those on whom the darkness of night still rests. O dear Readers in my native Isle! plead before God for those who have left you to carry Good Tidings to India; beseech the Lord to put His own

Word into our stammering lips—to give us zeal, power, and success! And plead for the many here upon whom light is beginning to break, but who shrink from taking up the heavy heavy cross which confession of Christ must bring! We missionaries see something of their struggles and sufferings; perhaps through the medium of my little book you may also be able to form a somewhat better idea of the difficulties and darkness through which converts in Hindustan are now groping their way to the Saviour.

A. L. O. E.

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POMEGRANATES FROM THE PUNJAB.

The Two Pilgrims to Kashi.*

RAM SAHAI was one of the holiest of the sect of the Saraogis,† a strict observer of all its rules. None was more regular in ablutions, none more frequent in pilgrimages. So careful was the Hindú not to destroy animal life that he was often seen with a cloth before his mouth lest he should by accident swallow a mosquito. A lie might sometimes come from the lips of the Saraogi, but no animal food ever passed them. Rám Sahai despised chumars and mihtars,‡ but he reverenced monkeys and snakes. In his

* Káshi is the ancient name of Benares, and that by which it is best known to the Hindú. It is considered a very holy place. It is said that there are as many idols in it as there are people.

† These are a peculiar sect of Hindús. Some of their views will be explained in the tale.

‡ Shoemakers and sweepers, who are much despised.

heart anger and pride might lurk, but his vessels were ever perfectly clean.

Rám Sahai had a nephew whose name was Ganésh Dás, an orphan, whom he carefully instructed in all the rights of his worship. Rám Sahai's great desire was that the boy should be as strict a Parasnáthi as he was himself, and adopt none of the new views of religion, science, and manners which are now spreading over India. It was a trouble to the Hindú that his nephew sometimes conversed with boys who had been taught at Mission and Government schools, boys who thought it no sin to eat meat, and who sometimes forgot to wash before meals! Rám Sahai often warned his nephew against such companions, and specially against one of the name of Chandru, a boy who had read much, and who understood what he read.

One day Rám Sahai said to his nephew, "O Ganésh! we will start soon on a pilgrimage to Káshi, to bathe in the holy Ganges, and to make offerings at the shrines."

Then replied Ganésh Dás, and he smiled joyfully as he spake, "Gladly will I go with you, O uncle! Though the distance be great, yet will it seem short, for now I can do that which for long has been my chief desire—I can travel on a railway."

The countenance of Rám Sahai fell; he looked on the boy with a frown. "Far be it from us," he cried, "to enter one of those railway stations! There the holy Brahmin may be jostled by a Sudra; the train crushes beneath its iron wheels the pride of caste, and gives no time for prayers or ablutions. Better far to travel barefoot on the road, and gain merit by endurance! The dust defileth not like the touch of one who may have eaten of the sacred cow!"

Ganésh Dás listened with downcast eyes, and in silence; but the desire to travel by rail, as Chandru often had done, remained in his heart. Not all the waters of the Ganges could have washed out the wish.

Having consulted the astrologers as to whether the day were favourable, Rám Sahai and Ganésh Dás started on the morrow on foot to perform the pilgrimage to Káshi. The uncle carried the brazen vessels needed for cooking, the nephew was laden with a supply of flour and ghee. The two started on their journey, but had not gone far before Ganésh Dás chanced to sneeze, and but a short time afterwards a crow cawed from a withered tree.

"These are evil omens! We must return, O Ganésh!" exclaimed the uncle.

"O uncle!" cried Ganésh, who was impatient to pursue his journey, "if we had been in a railway carriage we might never have heard the crow; and if ten thousand crows were to caw they would not stop the train for one moment."

Rám Sahai did not choose to listen to the reasoning of his nephew; he had resolved to despise everything that was new. The proverb held good with him: "Of what use can the news of the country be to a frog in a well?" If Rám Sahai preferred his own dark well to the air and light of the plain, who could draw him out of it?

On the following day Rám Sahai and his nephew again started on their journey, and travelled till evening. Then they halted to prepare their meal by the side of a wild jungle, in which were many trees. Both the uncle and the lad were tired and footsore.

"Had we gone by train yesterday morn we would ere now have been in Káshi," thought Ganésh Dás; "now we may not reach it for weeks, for we are not even sure of our way." Then he observed aloud, "I should think that plenty of snakes lurk in that jungle;" and he looked rather anxiously at what appeared to be the track left by one on the mud.

"Silence! speak not of the worm* lest he appear," cried Rám Sahai, who, with all his reverence for snakes, would have been satisfied never to have seen another in the course of his life.

But the mind of Ganésh Dás was so full of a subject on which he had often desired to speak that he could refrain himself no longer.

"O uncle!" he cried, "is it true that my mother died from the bite of a snake?"

The countenance of the Hindú became troubled. It was not till his nephew had repeated the question in a yet more earnest tone that Rám Sahai unwillingly made reply.

"The creature had been pleased to take up his abode in the house in which thou wert born. Thy parents, of course, left it, and slept outside.† But once, during a terrible storm, thy mother ventured within for shelter, and the creature bit her foot. The next day her body was consumed on the funeral pile."

* It is deemed unlucky by some Hindús to speak of a snake after nightfall. If needful to do so, he is called "worm," or by some other name different from his own

† A missionary informed me that she had been employed in instructing a woman (probably a Saraogi), and was surprised at having to give her lessons *outside* instead of inside the house. On inquiring the reason, she was informed that a snake had taken possession!

"Did not my father kill the snake?" asked Ganésh Dás abruptly.

"Thy father was a Saraogi!" exclaimed Rám Sahai in horror. "He never took life, not that of an ant. How could he have slain the sacred creature!"

"The sacred creature took life, and a precious life!" muttered Ganésh Dás, who had sorely missed a parent's care. And he added, but not aloud, "If I had been old enough, and strong enough, I would have killed the snake that had killed my mother."

The meal was now prepared by Ganésh Dás. After he had made his fireplace and gathered dry sticks, he proceeded to make chapatties,* which he then baked on the embers. The boy was exceedingly hungry, and so was his uncle, for they had fasted for the whole of the day. However, when the meal was ready, it was not eaten directly, for suddenly seeing what seemed to be a small temple at a distance, Rám Sahai resolved to go to it to do puja† to the idol that might be within. He bade his nephew follow him, an order which the hungry boy very unwillingly obeyed.

"If we would have our journey fortunate, we

* Unleavened cakes, much eaten by natives.

† Worship.

must not neglect puja, or Mahadeo might pour his wrath upon us," said the Jain. His religion was altogether one of fear.

Rám Sahai performed his puja in the temple, repeating invocations after his custom. If, while the Hindú called out a hundred times the name of his god, his thoughts were wandering away to his dinner, the idol could not read the worshipper's heart. The proverb says, "Prayer is the pillar of religion;" if so, the prayer of Rám Sahai was as a pillar of smoke. Woe to him who should rest his hopes upon such a pillar!

As the uncle and nephew turned back to return to their cooking-place, Ganésh Dás suddenly exclaimed, "See! a monkey is stealing our chapatties!" A large monkey had indeed swung himself down from a tree, and had caught up in his hairy paws the dinner prepared for the two hungry Hindús! Ganésh Dás snatched up a large stone from the ground, and would have hurled it with sure aim at the monkey, had not Rám Sahai struck his nephew with such violence that the poor boy fell to the ground. The monkey, grinning and jabbering, escaped to the jungle, bearing off the chapatties.

Poor Ganésh Dás had struck his head against

a stone in falling, and bleeding and in pain, he now raised himself from the ground, just in time to see his dinner carried off by the monkey.

"Oh! that I had hit him!" muttered the boy.

"Wretch! wouldst thou have struck, and perhaps killed, a blessed monkey!" exclaimed his indignant uncle.

Pain and hunger made Ganésh Dás unable to hide his vexation. "Are monkeys, then, so much better than human beings?" he said. "Chandru has told me that in England there is a large house full of stuffed monkeys, and snakes, and all kinds of creatures. If it be so great a sin to strike a monkey, how is it that the gods do not take vengeance on the English, burn up their cities, and smite them with death? How is it that the English are powerful, clever, and rich, whilst we with our millions of gods are——"

"Silence! O thou son of an owl!" exclaimed Rám Sahai, with anger. He could not answer his nephew's question, so his only course was to stop the mouth of the speaker.

Poor Ganésh Dás was much cast down in spirit. He had wearied himself by long walking, and gone but a small part of his pilgrimage, when he might have travelled with swiftness

and ease. Now he was obliged to remain fasting, because a monkey had run away with his dinner. Ganésh Dás sat down by the useless fireplace, and tears came into his eyes as he said to himself, "Though we took such pains to secure a lucky day, this has turned out a very unlucky day indeed! I wonder if the cunning old Brahmin whom my uncle consulted deceived him?"

Rám Sahai was a kind-hearted man, and seeing that his nephew was troubled and in pain, he offered to amuse him with a story. Ganésh Dás would rather have had his chapatties; but as they had gone to feed monkeys, he hoped in listening to a tale to forget his troubles for awhile. Rám Sahai, as the day darkened into night, told a well-known story from the Rámayána, which Ganésh Dás had often heard before.

Rám Sahai told how, when the pious Ráma was reigning in Ayodhya, one day a Brahmin came into his court. The Brahmin had ashes on his head, and in a loud and angry voice complained that the kingdom of Ráma was under a curse on account of the prince's careless rule.

"Behold the proof!" cried the Brahmin. "My son, five years old, has suddenly died. Surely the wrath of the gods is upon us!"

"Brahmins' sons often die," thought Ganésh Dás; "but the fathers do not go to the sircar's cutcheries,* and complain that it is the fault of the Sahib-log that they do so."

"Ráma, sword in hand, proceeded to search his kingdom to find out the cause of the curse that was upon the land," the Saraogi went on. "By the side of a lake he saw a man prostrate in intense prayer. Ráma went up to the man, who, being questioned, confessed himself to be a Sudra. What! was a vile Sudra, one of low caste, one only once born, to dare to pray to the gods! This was indeed enough to bring a curse on the land. Ráma, by one stroke of his sword, severed the wretch's head from his body! Thereupon the gods showed their delight by showering down flowers, and by restoring to life the son of the Brahmin."

Ganésh Dás, as has been said, had often heard this story before, and had repeated it to Chandru. Never had it struck Ganésh that there was anything shocking or wrong in the tale till he had seen the look of indignation which it had brought to the face of his friend.

Then had followed this conversation between the two boys :—

"If Ráma had cut off a man's head for saying

* The English rulers' police courts.

his prayers under the English rule," Chandru had observed, "they would have sent the police after him, and have tried him, and hanged him for murder." Chandru knew that such punishment had actually been inflicted on the great of the land.

"Do not the English care for the anger of the gods?" Ganésh Dás had inquired.

"Oh! the God whom the English worship is kind and good," had been the reply of the boy brought up in a Mission school. "He cares for Sudras as well as for Brahmins, and would listen to the prayer of even a mihtar. It is written in the Christian's Holy Book, *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his troubles.* If I were not afraid of my mother's cursing me, and my father's beating me, and turning me out of the house, I should like to be a Christian, and pray to a God who would stoop and listen kindly to my prayers whenever I was in sorrow."

These few words of Chandru had put many new thoughts into the intelligent mind of Ganésh. "The Christian's God must indeed be kinder than our gods, since He is ready to listen to the prayers even of the poorest and lowest," reflected the boy. "And the Christian's God seems to be stronger than all our millions

of gods put together, for has He not given the rule to the English? And the Christian's God must be wiser than Vishnú or Shiva, for what says the proverb, 'Like god, like worshipper;' and who know so much as the English, who invented railways, and suchlike wonderful things!"

Rám Sahai could not tell what was passing in the mind of his nephew whilst he was listening to the story of Ráma, nor could he see how grave was the countenance of the boy, for by this time darkness had covered the land.

Then said Ganésh Dás, "O uncle! now it is my turn to tell you a story." And he began to repeat a tale which he had heard from Chandru—a kind of parable, which, like the shell of the cocoa-nut, had a kernel within.

Rám Sahai, like other Hindús, was fond of stories; so he sat by the embers of his dying fire and listened.

Then thus Ganésh Dás began his tale:—

"There was a Rajah who had a deadly enemy, who always pretended to be his friend, in order that he might more easily injure him. By flattering words, and by pretending that the gods had bestowed upon him great wisdom, this enemy contrived to gain great influence over the Rajah. The traitor determined, since he

could never overcome the Rajah by force, at least to make him as miserable as possible by his cunning. The Rajah had a daughter born to him, a beautiful babe, who was fairer to look upon than the rose, and whose face was radiant as the full moon.

"'The gods are angry with your highness,' said the enemy; 'or why should they have bestowed on you a daughter instead of a son. Slay the child, and a son shall be born in your house.'

"But the Rajah saw that his babe was very beauteous, and his heart yearned towards his first-born child. He refused to slay his daughter. Thus was the enemy's first plan defeated.

"Then came the deceiver again to the Rajah and said, 'O king of men! the astrologers have declared that your daughter will be fair, and rich, and make a most auspicious marriage, if she can but be kept from the evil eye. But many dangers threaten her, and thus only can they be avoided. You must cause your daughter's eyes to be bandaged, so that she may never see the light. You must cause iron chains to be placed on her arms, and fasten her feet in like manner, so that she may never but creep at the slowest pace. If ever the bandage

or the chains be taken off, the princess will fall under the power of the evil eye.'

"The Rajah was silly enough to believe the words of the enemy, who, if he could not kill the fair child, had resolved to make her life more bitter than death. Sad was the fate of the young princess, to whom had been given the name of Hindustan. A bandage was put round her eyes, so that she never could see the light, and heavy painful chains were fastened on her slender wrists and ankles, and all was done by way of keeping her from a danger which had really never existed."

"He was indeed a foolish father who would take such advice, and blindfold and cripple his child in order to take care of her," observed Rám Sahai.

Ganésh Dás smiled, and went on with his story:—

"So Hindustan grew up, but feeble and cramped, because of the chains which she wore. Her father dressed her in goodly raiment, but she never had her eyes opened to see it. Jewels of silver and gold were on the princess's ankles and arms, but so were the hard heavy chains. Hindustan was beautiful still, but not half so beautiful as she would have been had she been free from fetters, nor half as joyous

as she would have been had her childhood been passed in the light.

"At length a Ranee,* whose name was Wise, and who was famed for her learning, came from a neighbouring country to seek the princess in marriage for her son, whose name was Happiness. The Ranee brought many gifts, and her arrival was celebrated by a grand festival at the court of the Rajah. Nothing was spoken of or thought of but the approaching betrothal of Hindustan to the most handsome, wealthy, and excellent prince to be found on the face of the earth. With attendants bearing plates of jewels, and bales of shawls, and embroidery of gold, the Ranee Wise was admitted into the apartment where sat the young princess in state. The princess, surrounded by attendants, was resting on satin cushions, with a hookah of gold beside her. She was most exquisitely dressed, and her long hair was adorned with pearls and diamonds. But under her dress the Ranee could see the iron chains, and over the eyes of poor Hindustan was the bandage.

"'How is this?' cried the Ranee. 'Wherefore doth the princess wear fetters, and a bandage over her eyes?'

"Then replied the Rajah, who had himself

* Title of a Rajah's wife.

accompanied his honoured guest, 'To avert the evil eye, O Ranee! and to prevent misfortunes which have been foretold by the most learned Brahmins.'

"Then said the Ranee Wise, 'My son, whose name is Happiness, shall never wed one who is sightless and in chains! Remove the fetters, and remove the bandage, or I will at once return to my palace, and seek in some other land a bride for my son.'

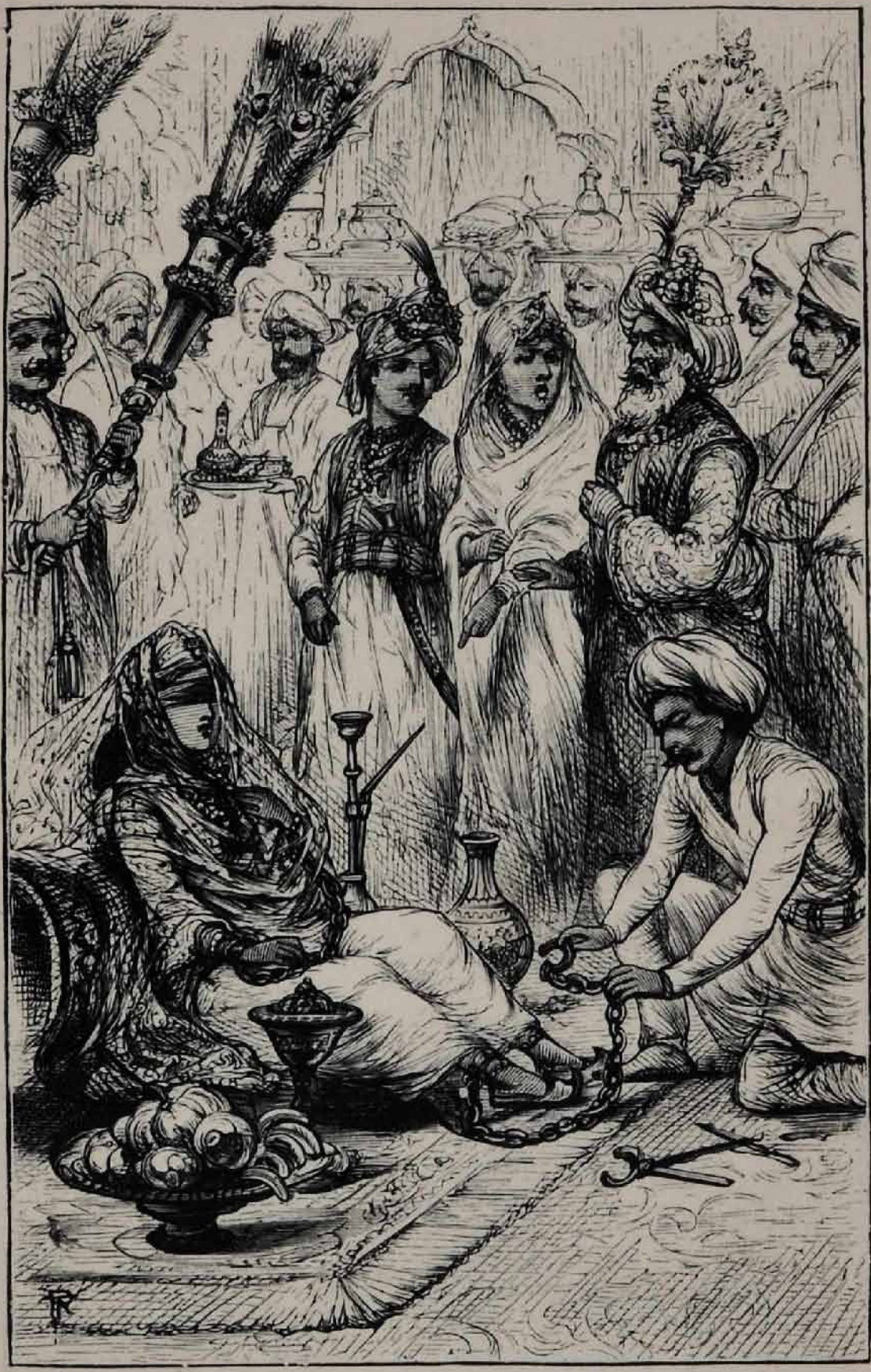
"The Rajah was in great perplexity and trouble. On the one hand he dreaded injuring his daughter, and on the other hand he feared that the Ranee, according to her threat, would depart, and bear away with her the priceless treasures which she had brought as bridal gifts. He begged that things might remain as they were; why should customs be altered? Hindustan did not feel her chains, he said, and as for darkness—she really preferred it."

"There was never such an idiot as that father!" laughed Rám Sahai.

Again Ganésh Dás went on with his tale:—

"Happily, the Ranee Wise was firm and would not yield; so she had her way at last. The Rajah gave command that, one by one, the chains should be removed from his daughter.

"This was no easy thing to do. The chains,



"The poor princess began to weep. 'Oh! leave me my chains,' she cried. 'I cannot bear to have them removed.'"—*p.* 23.

which had been put on when Hindustan was a child, had become very tight for her ankles and arms when she was a woman. They were almost cutting into her flesh, and could not be removed without causing a good deal of pain. The poor princess began to weep. 'Oh! leave me my chains!' she cried; 'I cannot bear to have them removed!'

"Still the Ranee Wise kept firm, for she knew that a little present pain would bring much future good. She stood by and watched, till, behold! with a clanking sound, the first chain fell on the floor. The name of that chain was——" Ganésh Dás stopped abruptly.

"What! had the chain a name?" asked Rám Sahai in surprise.

"There was a name on every link," replied Ganésh Dás, "but I cannot remember them all." If he had remembered them, he would have been afraid to have repeated all, for the name of the chain was DASTUR,* and on the various links were inscribed the words, SUTTEE,† INFANTICIDE,‡ CHILD-

* Custom, a word of terrible power in India.

† The custom, put a stop to by the English, of burning widows on the funeral piles of their husbands.

‡ It was long thought an honourable custom, amongst Rajpúts especially, to murder their new-born daughters.

MARRIAGE,* and suchlike evil dasturs which have cramped and tortured poor Hindustan, because of the craft of the cruel enemy.

"One by one the chains fell away," continued Ganésh Dás, "and the beautiful princess was free. What had caused her pain was removed, and she now felt the greatest relief. She was as a bird that has been confined in a narrow cage, that is set at liberty, and stretches its wings, and sings for joy. But still the bandage was over her eyes. The name of the bandage was——" Again Ganésh Dás paused abruptly.

"Had the bandage also a name?" asked his uncle.

"I think that it had," replied Ganésh Dás. He knew very well that the name of the bandage was IGNORANCE, and a very thick and cruel bandage it was.

"'That bandage must also be removed,' said the Ranee Wise. 'Happiness can never have a blind bride, however fair she may be.'

"The Rajah was exceedingly afraid to remove the bandage. 'And yet,' he said to himself, 'since I consented to take off the chains, and

Many babies also were thrown into the Ganges, a sacrifice to the heathen's fearfully false views of religion.

* The custom of joining mere little children together in India, alas! prevails still. Its evils are great.

no evil has come of my so doing, perhaps my daughter Hindustan may not fall into any great trouble even if the light be permitted to shine a little into her eyes.'"

Rám Sahai again laughed. "It was a pity," said he, "that the Rajah had not had the sense to think that a long time before. How could any one be the better for living in darkness!"

"The bandage was removed," continued Ganésh Dás, "but in a darkened chamber; for the princess, whose eyes had been weakened by wearing the bandage, could not at once have endured the full blaze of day. Gradually more and more light was admitted, and with the light came more and more joy. At last Hindustan was able to look around on the earth, and lo! it was clothed in beauty, and decked with flowers! Hindustan was able to lift up her eyes towards heaven, and behold! it was glorious and bright! At last the princess was taken from her father's house in the midst of great pomp and rejoicing, and Hindustan was wedded to Happiness, with whom she lived long in great peace and enjoyment."

"A happy ending to the story," observed Rám Sahai. "I am glad that the wicked enemy's plans were defeated, and that the old father showed some wisdom at last."

"Had you been the father," thought Ganésh Dás, "never would the chains have been taken off from poor Hindustan, nor the bandage of Ignorance have been removed from her eyes!" The lad partly understood the meaning of the story, which had been explained to him by Chandru, but to his uncle it was but as a tale.

The two travellers now went to sleep. They awoke in the morning little refreshed, for the craving of hunger was on them, and they had not much strength to perform their pilgrimage to Káshi.

The second day's journey was even more uncomfortable than had been that of the first, for the pilgrims lost their way in the jungle which they attempted to cross. Their feet were wounded by thorns; they had no food but a few roots which hunger compelled them to eat; and, which was worst of all, they found no water to drink! The day was far advanced before the Jain and his nephew made their way out of the jungle at last. They knew not where they were, but they saw before them a goodly white bungalow, which belonged to an English Padri.* The compound before it looked very gay, for the Padri was giving there a feast to all the children who were taught in

* Clergyman.

his orphan school. The feast was in honour of the birthday of his little son Henry. Oh! how the eyes of poor hungry Ganésh Dás sparkled at the sight of so much food spread on the ground before his eyes—pillao, curry and rice, and such English cakes as the young Hindú never had seen before.

The two famishing Jains came nigh to the place where the feast was spread, and in piteous tones asked for alms. Rám Sahai declared that he had not a cowrie,* though his nephew knew that the Hindú had rupees wrapt up in his kamarband at that moment. The looks of the half-starved pilgrims pleaded more for them than their words. A fair little English boy, just four years of age on that day, jumped up from his seat on the ground, and taking up the plate filled with cake, out of which he had just been eating, ran eagerly with it to the spot where the travellers were standing, and offered it first to Rám Sahai. But the Hindú drew back and shook his head. He would not have tasted the food had his life depended on his so doing; but oh! how gladly, but for the fear of his uncle, would poor Ganésh Dás have emptied the plate!

"Oh! those cruel caste rules!" thought the

* A small shell used as money, of value too minute to be expressed by comparison with any English coin.

hungry boy; "surely they were one of the horrid chains which cut into the flesh of the princess."

"Won't you eat? Are you not hungry?" asked little Henry in broken Urdú, offering the delicious food to poor Ganésh Dás.

"No, my child," said the Padri, who had himself come to the spot. "These Hindús will not eat from our dishes; they think the food unclean."

"But it is quite quite clean, and very nice, too," said the fair boy, with a look of surprise and disappointment.

"How could the touch of that sweet child bring pollution?" thought Ganésh Dás; but he dared not utter the thought aloud.

"I will order one of my servants to give these poor creatures abundance of rice, that they may cook for themselves," said the kind clergyman. "They look footsore and very weary; if they will, they can rest in our compound to-night."

"And see all the fun!" cried the little English boy; "they will like to see the big big microscope and the fireworks!"

Ganésh Dás did not understand what was said by Henry, for the boy spoke to his father in English; but every one understands looks and deeds of kindness. He knew that food was brought to supply his need, and that he was

not spurned from the Englishman's home. The Sahib and his son were the first white people with whom Ganésh Dás had had anything to do; he knew that they were probably eaters of flesh, and yet in his heart he could not think them unclean. As he saw the noble-looking Sahib going about amongst the orphans of whom he took such care, with a smile or kind word for each, making all look brighter and happier, as if his presence were sunshine, he appeared to Ganésh Dás as a higher and holier being than he had ever beheld before. And yet the Padri Sahib had no caste!

Rám Sahai and his nephew were so hungry that they devoured their rice half-cooked, and so thirsty that they drank eagerly of the water of a tank near the bungalow, not even Rám Sahai pausing to consider whether he ought not to strain it first. Then the poor weary Jain stretched himself on the ground to sleep; but Ganésh Dás could not forbear watching the merry sports of the Christian children.

"How free and happy they look!" thought he. "Perhaps Brahmins' orphans and Sudras' are there together, and they don't know any difference!" Again Chandru s story came into the mind of Ganésh Dás—the chains knocked off, the bandage removed, and Hindustan the

bride of Happiness. "I wonder if such a day will ever come!" thought the boy.

When evening drew on, at the sound of a bell all the assembled children crowded into a large outhouse, in which some amusement had been provided for them by the Sahib. The children looked so eager and delighted that Ganésh Dás's curiosity was strongly aroused.

"What are they all crowding to look at? what is to happen?" asked Rám Sahai, who had by this time awoke, somewhat refreshed, from his slumber close to the wall of the outhouse. The rush of the orphans had thoroughly aroused him.

"It is the microscope! the microscope!" cried one of the school-children, who had overheard the question. "Come too; there is room for all, even the servants are coming! The Sahib has lately received from England the largest microscope ever seen in India. It can make a mosquito as big as an eagle! He is going to show us such wonderful things!"

"A mosquito as big as an eagle!" repeated Rám Sahai in amazement; "our best conjurors can't do that. I should like to see such a strange sight."

"Let us go; oh! let us go and see the show!" exclaimed Ganésh Dás. Neither he nor his

uncle had the smallest idea as to what a microscope might be; but it was clear to them that something wonderful was to be shown. Rám Sahai had some scruples indeed as to entering the outhouse, but Ganésh Dás, full of curiosity, drew along with him his not reluctant uncle.

The place in which they now found themselves was perfectly dark, save that on one wall, over which a sheet had been stretched, there appeared a large white spot some feet in width. Towards this spot the eyes of all present were directed.

Then, in the darkness, from the farther end of the room, the pleasant voice of the Sahib was heard. And thus spoke he—

"Few things show us more of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator than does this wonderful instrument—the microscope. By it objects are magnified to many hundreds of times their natural size, so that some things become clearly visible which the unaided eye could not even perceive. Other objects, most familiar to us, can hardly be recognised. For instance, what would you take this to be?"

In an instant upon the large white spot appeared something like a long slender stick with a root at its end. No one answered the

Sahib's question till a little boy called out, "Perhaps it is something from the garden that we can put into our curry."

The clergyman could scarcely help laughing when he replied, "It is one of my hairs." And the sound of much mirth amongst the children showed their surprise and amusement.

Then from the sheet the hair disappeared, and all was blank as before.

"Now I am going to show you of what delicate material your Rajah's turbans are made," said the Sahib; and on the large spot was seen a piece of white stuff so coarse that it set all the children laughing again.

"It is like a mat!" cried one.

"A faqir would not wrap it round him," said another.

"Now let us contrast the works of God with the works of man," said the Sahib, "and see the difference between them. I am going to place in my microscope a small bit of the wing of a moth."

Then something so beautiful in colour, so delicately fine in structure, appeared on the spot, that even Rám Sahai could not refrain from joining the children in crying, "Wah! wah!" Ganésh Dás was lost in astonishment. He had never looked on anything so lovely

before. How great a contrast to the magnified muslin!

"The more closely we examine man's works the more imperfect we find them," said the Padri Sahib. "The more closely we look into God's works the more we admire and wonder."

"Oh! surely there is much wisdom given to the English!" thought Ganésh Dás. "Their God teaches them to make these wonderful instruments, and puts such good words into their mouths! I think that I am beginning to feel as the princess felt when the bandage was taken off, and light gradually shone into her eyes!"

The piece of the moth's beautiful wing now disappeared from the spot on the sheet. It was succeeded by something as beautiful and curious, part of the blossom of a very small flower, a common weed, which all had often seen, but had scarcely noticed. The Padri Sahib showed the delicate tiny-tinted veins in the petals, the perfect arrangement of the seed-vessels, and told how wonderfully God has provided for the growth and increase of the insignificant plant.

"What a wonderful world I live in!" thought Ganésh Dás; "I could look at this microscope for ever!"

"The next object which I will show to you,"

said the Sahib, "is a single drop of water taken from my tank."

If Ganésh Dás had been surprised before, he was ten times more astonished now. All over the surface of the white spot he saw numbers of little round insects rapidly moving about, and one creature, bigger and of a different shape from the others, darting from one side to the other, gobbling up its prey even as a snake might swallow up a bird.

Rám Sahai, in his amazement, caught hold of the arm of his nephew, and Ganésh Dás felt that his uncle's hand was trembling violently. The poor man saw his whole high-built fabric of holiness overturned in a moment.

"So that—can that be a drop of water from the tank out of which I have been drinking —and it is swarming with living creatures!" exclaimed the poor Saraogi in horror. He did not wait for an answer, but, with a soul filled with despair, made his way out of the room.

Ganésh Dás followed, for he was alarmed at the state of his uncle. He could not, however, get out of the crowded room quite so fast as his uncle had done. Ganésh Dás found Rám Sahai stretched on the earth outside, with his face to the ground, groaning like one in violent pain.

"Is it for this that I have for all my life-long so carefully abstained from animal food!" cried the miserable Hindú. "Is it for this that I have so scrupulously observed the laws of my sect! If in *one drop* of water there be so much life, how impossible has it been for me, with all my care, to keep from often destroying life! Woe is me! woe is me! I too am unclean, unclean!"

For long the poor Saraogi thus bewailed his misfortune, cursing his journey, cursing the hour when the microscope had opened his eyes to the truth. When the fireworks had been displayed, when the Sahib had dismissed all his guests, when the sounds of merriment had ceased, and the school-children had retired to rest, the Hindú still lay on the ground groaning, or only arose from it to beat his breast, and bewail his loss of purity!

The clergyman pitied the poor man whom he had unintentionally made so unhappy. After awhile the Sahib tried to draw some lesson of good from what had occurred.

"My friend, be not thus overcome with grief," said the Christian pastor, "you have but learned now what I learned long ago from our Holy Book, that all men, whether Hindús or Englishmen, are by nature unclean and impure.

Our best works are like the muslin seen in the microscope, but coarse and imperfect; *our righteousnesses are as filthy rags* (Isa. lxiv. 6). We have been no more able to abstain from sin than you have been able to abstain from taking life. If we do not know our sinfulness it is because the bandage of ignorance is over our eyes."

"*The bandage of ignorance!*" repeated Ganésh Dás to himself. "Does the Sahib, then, know the story told by Chandru?"

The Padri Sahib had never heard the story, but he knew well the truth contained in the story. He had read in his Bible, and believed what he read, that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. iii. 23). If we think ourselves pure it is because we still wear the bandage.

"What is the use of knowing our misery!" groaned the Jain.

"The use of knowing our misery and sinfulness is, that the knowledge of them may make us seek their cure," said the clergyman. "There is one way of becoming pure, even in the sight of a holy God; there is one way of having all our sins blotted out for ever."

But the Saraogi was as one who stoppeth his ears. He cared not to have the bandage removed

from his eyes; he shrank from having the chains knocked off from his soul. He would not even listen to the message of mercy. It was in vain that the clergyman did all that he could to comfort the Hindú, and induce him to rest at least for that night before again starting for Káshi. A weary, sick, miserable man, the pilgrim set out again on his journey. Ganésh Dás was his uncle's most unwilling companion. The boy had lost all desire to visit Káshi; he had, from listening to the Sahib, given up all hope that any good could be gained by visiting shrines, or bathing in the Ganges. Ganésh greatly desired to stay with the kind Sahib, and learn something of the way of salvation.

"O uncle! have we not already suffered enough, and all to no purpose!" cried the poor youth.

But it was in vain to entreat; the Saraogi, weary and exhausted as he was, was but the more resolved to press on.

But the poor man's long pilgrimage was near to its end. The opportunity of learning the truth, which he had despised, was the last opportunity which Rám Sahai was ever to have upon earth. The Hindú had not gone a mile on his way when his strength utterly failed

him. Rám Sahai laid himself down on the ground, from which he was never to rise again. Sore sickness had overtaken the poor man. He cried on his gods, but they could not hear him; he repeated their names, but he might as well have looked for help from the stones on which he lay! All his toils, and fastings, and sufferings had gone for nought! The proverb says, *Time shows the value of the bridge built of bad wood.* Rám Sahai had built his bridge of the ashes of wood, that would not so much as support the weight of a locust!

Ere the day broke the poor pilgrim died; he died, alas! as do millions in India, without knowledge or light. Oh! when will the day come when from the eyes of Hindustan the bandage shall be taken away, when from her limbs the fetters of *dastur* shall fall; and she shall look round her on earth with joy, and upward towards heaven with faith and hope!

When poor Ganésh Dás saw the corpse of his uncle lifeless and still, with tears in his eyes, and sorrow in his heart, he asked himself, "Whither shall I turn? I am an orphan and alone in the world. I know not how to find my way back to my village; I know still less how to find my way to Káshi, and in that great city I have not a single friend. I will return

to the house of the English Padri Sahib, tell him of the death of my uncle, and ask him to have pity on a poor Hindú boy!"

Ganésh Dás stooped down and took the rupees and some pice from the kamarband of his uncle. "These will buy wood to burn the corpse," he said to himself. The boy then, with no difficulty, made his way back to the bungalow of the Padri Sahib. There he told his sad story, and was received with pity and kindness. The boy was received into the orphan home, there to learn to gain his bread by honest labour.

And there Ganésh Dás learned many things besides, the knowledge of which was to him more precious than lakhs of rupees. He learned that God's Son, the holy Lord Jesus, pitying the state of poor lost sinners, had, more than eighteen hundred and seventy years ago, left heaven's throne to come and dwell as a man amongst men. He learned that the Saviour went about doing good; entering the abodes of sin and sorrow, yet Himself sinless, even as the sunbeam gathers no stain from the loathsome things upon which it shines. Ganésh Dás learned that the Lord Jesus not only lived to bless but died to save mankind from the punishment of their sins, and that through

Him all who truly believe are counted pure in the sight of Almighty God.

The young Hindú learned that God's Spirit is sent to dwell in the hearts of believers, to make them really clean, and fit the poorest and meanest to enter into happiness and glory. In heaven, through Christ, the Sudra may sit on a throne—the mihtar may wear the crown of a king. None are despised, none are rejected who truly believe.

Ganésh Dás listened to these glad tidings—he believed and rejoiced. He cast from him all the superstitions which had clung round his uncle like cruel bonds, eating even into the flesh. Ganésh Dás knew at last that nothing really defiles but *sin*, that nothing is unclean on which the blessing of God can rest.

Ganésh Dás met again with his friend Chandru, and the two studied the Bible together. Being both convinced of its truth, after some years had passed, the two young men were baptised together. Ganésh Dás was a Christian not only in name; more and more pure was his life as he saw more and more clearly the evil of sin, and the great love of his God and Saviour. *The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day!* (Prov. iv. 18).

The Precious Soul.

A SAGE was sitting under a tree, reading the Holy Scriptures, when two youths drew near. They were of those who live but for the pleasures of the day; to eat, to drink, to laugh, to sport was all they cared for.

In a mocking mood the two lads approached the sage.

"O father! what are you doing that you sit alone like an owl, when others laugh and feast?" exclaimed the younger of the two.

Without raising his eyes from the page, the sage made reply, "Whilst others feast the body, I am seeking to feed the soul."

Then both the youths looked at each other and smiled, but hid their mirth from the sage.

"What is the soul?" asked the elder, whose name was Ahmed, in the tone of one who seeks for knowledge, though, in truth, he wished but a theme for some jest.

Then answered the sage, "The soul is that within us which can hope, and fear, and love. The pious soul compared to the body in which it dwells, is as the jewel to the casket, or the pearl to the shell."

Then cried the younger of the youths, "The body has eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hands to grasp, and a mouth to receive food; but the soul has nought. To my mind it is but as a shadow or a name."

The sage slowly turned round so as to face the speaker as he thus made reply: "O youth! *faith* is the *eye* of the soul, with which it sees the glories of a future state. *Attention* is the *ear* of the soul, with which it listens to the commands of the Most High. *Hope* is the *hand* of the soul, stretched forth to *grasp* the promises of God. And as the *mouth* receives food, so the soul by *meditation* draws nourishment from Truth in His Word."

Then the mirth of the two mockers burst forth in laughter, and Ahmed cried, "If I have a soul at all, it must be a blind, deaf, and maimed one, for I have not faith, hope, or any such thing!"

"Say, rather, that you have *a dead soul*," said the sage, fixing his stern glance on the scorner. "A lifeless soul may be buried in a living body, and the death of the soul is death indeed!"

The youths turned away, still trying to laugh, but there was little of mirth in their laughter. Ahmed especially had felt a thrill of awe when

the calm stern gaze of the sage had been fixed upon him. Though, with his companion, Ahmed afterwards joined in gay revels, laughed, feasted and jested, he was as one who carries within his flesh a hidden thorn. Often the sage's solemn words recurred to his mind: "A lifeless soul may be buried in a living body, and the death of the soul is death indeed!"

Some months had passed away, when, as the sage was again sitting reading under the tree, Ahmed slowly approached him. There was now no mirth in the young man's face, and no mockery in his heart. Ahmed stood silently with downcast look before the sage, who was engaged in studying the Gospel of St. John. The reader raised his eyes, and beheld sorrow and shame in the countenance of the youth.

"Where is your companion?" asked he.

The reply was made by Ahmed with a trembling lip. "He was seized by cholera but yester morn," he said, "after a night spent in revels. This day his body was laid in the grave. He was cut off without time to give a thought to his soul!"

There was silence for some moments, and then Ahmed spoke again, and with tears: "I thought when I looked on my friend's corpse—so changed, so motionless, so cold—There is

none upon earth who can bring back life to a dead body. But tell me, oh! tell me, holy man, is there any one who can give life to a dead soul like mine?"

The sage silently thanked God from the depths of his heart; for the cry of repentance is in itself a sign of that new life to which he himself had lately been called. Even as a corpse feels no pain, so the dead in sin feel not sorrow for sin. The servant of God pointed to words written on the page before him: "I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE" (John xi. 25); and then turning to another part of his scroll, read aloud, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,*" (John v. 24).

"Of whom is this written?" asked Ahmed. "Can it be said by any man, 'I am the Life, and the Giver of life?'"

"The Life and the Life-giver is the Lord Jesus, of whom it is recorded: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'" (John i. 4), replied he who, after deep study, had embraced the Christian faith. "When the Lord was on earth He exclaimed to a corpse, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!' (Luke vii. 14), and the dead awoke, and the closed eyes opened

and beheld a Saviour! So now from day to day souls dead in sin hear the word 'Arise,' and the eye of faith is opened, and the dull ear is unstopped, and we behold a Saviour, and live! O Ahmed! I have learned from these pages that the soul that believeth can never die (John xi. 26). The body is laid in the tomb—the casket is broken—the shell laid aside; but the jewel—the pearl—they are not lost, they shine in the crown of the Heavenly King; the soul *lives* in His presence for ever!"

The Truthful are Trusted.

A MAN sent his two sons to reside with their uncle for six months in a city about twelve miles distant from his abode. As the lads were strong, they were to perform the journey on foot. Nur ul Dīn and Butá Khán received from their father provisions for the way, and kurtás (dresses), in each of which he had carefully sewn up twenty rupees. The parent also gave to his sons at parting such advice as should be to their souls as food, and as treasure hidden in their hearts.

"O my sons!" he said, "wherever you be,

always speak the truth, and hold fast by the truth, for the God who made us is a God of truth. Every falsehood is marked down in His book. In the Holy Scriptures we read that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. xii. 23). Take heed, then, to your ways, that ye offend not with your tongue. Let not fear, nor covetousness, nor desire of the praise of man ever make you pollute your lips with a lie."

Then the father blessed his sons, and forthwith they started on their journey.

Then said Nur ul Dīn to his brother, "We must go by the mountain path, through the village where our friend Karīm dwells, for we both promised that we would see him before we went to our uncle's."

Butá Khán made reply, "O Nurá! I will not thus needlessly go out of my way, and add more than a mile to a walk already so long. We can see Karīm a hundred times when—six months hence—we return to the home of our father."

Nur ul Dīn shook his head. "I promised Karīm that I would see him before my departure," he said, "and shall I be false to my word! No, not if the distance to be traversed were twice as great as it it!"

Butá laughed, and replied, "I am older than

you, and wiser. I will certainly not weary myself by going out of my way when on a long tiring journey. I will go by the pleasant road through the valley, and leave the hot steep mountain path to you." He was turning to depart, but Nur ul Dīn laid his hand on the arm of his brother.

"How shall we meet again if we separate now?" he inquired. "I should be very sorry to take the whole length of the journey alone."

"We shall meet at our uncle's house, I suppose," was Butá's careless reply. "I shall arrive in good time for supper; we will try to have some leavings for you."

"Nay, hear me," answered his brother. "Five miles from hence is a large banyan tree, and a fountain floweth beside it. The mountain and the valley paths join each other before that tree can be reached. Let whichever of us arrives first at that tree wait for the other, and then we shall travel happily together for the rest of the way."

"A good plan for you, but not quite so good for me," observed Butá; "for it is pretty clear to whom the waiting will fall. But be it so, I will take my rest by the fountain. Only keep me not waiting long, for my patience is not like the water that floweth for ever; nor will I,

like you, be tied down by a promise as a tree is fastened down by the roots."

So the brothers parted for awhile. Butá Khán slowly pursued the pleasant path through the valley, laughing to himself at his brother's folly in mounting the hill. Butá felt no need of haste, therefore he loitered by the way. He said to himself, "Wherefore should I hurry; I shall reach the banyan tree far sooner than that foolish brother of mine, who will climb a steep, hot, dusty hill, and go more than a mile out of his way, rather than break a promise; I would break a hundred promises, as if they were nut-shells, rather than give myself so much needless trouble. How pleasant is the shade of these trees in the valley!"

But before Butá had reached the place where the two roads met, he saw a sight which filled him with terror. A dead man lay in a little pool of blood by the side of the way! Butá's first thought was that some traveller had been robbed and murdered; but when he approached and examined the body, he saw that death must have been the result of accident. The body was not stripped, nor had even received what might have appeared a serious wound. The man had a common knife in his right hand, and had apparently been engaged in

cutting a stick for himself, when the knife, glancing aside, had gashed his left wrist. An artery had been severed, and no help being at hand, the man had accidentally bled to death. A wound little more than an inch in length had sufficed to destroy the life of a tall, strong man!

As Butá Khán with pity and terror bent over the corpse, he thought of words which he had often heard from his father: "Beware of what are called little sins, for if not repented of and forsaken they will as surely destroy the soul as murder itself. The small wound unbound will be fatal, and let out the very life of the soul."

Butá Khán cared not to dwell on thoughts so gloomy. He soon turned away from the corpse, and again, but in sadder mood, pursued his path through the valley.

In the meantime Nur ul Dīn had pressed forward on his upward path. He had not gone far when he saw a horseman approaching him, and even at a distance recognised the rider to be his friend Karīm.

"Ah! brother!" cried Karīm, as he reined up his horse beside Nur ul Dīn, "I heard that you were starting to-day on a journey, and I came at speed to see you before your departure."

"Did you think that I had forgotten my promise?" exclaimed the youth.

"When do you and your brother start for the home of your uncle?" asked Karīm, leaning from his horse.

"We have started already," was the reply; "only I took the longer path and Butá the shorter. Whoever arrives first at the large banyan tree by the fountain will wait for the other. I must not try Butá's patience, and therefore cannot tarry long with you, my friend."

"Nay, you shall arrive first at the tree!" cried Karīm. "The straight path of duty proves ever the shorter in the end. Mount up on my horse behind me, I will take you by the mountain way to the place where the two roads meet. My good horse will speed faster than he who goes on foot, and it will be you who will have to wait for Butá."

Nur ul Dīn, who delighted in riding, sprang joyfully on the horse. Enjoying the rapid motion, the way to him seemed only too short. The youth was sorry when the place was reached where the mountain path again joined that of the valley. He there dismounted, and thanked his friend for helping him thus far on his road.

"He who never breaks his word is a friend worth having and keeping," observed Karīm." "God will be your protector, O Nurá! for you ever walk as in His sight!" He then turned his horse, and rode back to his home.

Nur ul Dīn now looked to the right and to the left, but he could see no trace of his brother. He knew not whether Butá were before or behind him, but guessed that four legs had travelled a good deal faster than two. This was not the tarrying-place, so forward went Nur ul Dīn till he came within sight of the banyan tree by the fountain.

There were forms resting under the shade of that tree, but amongst them not that of Butá. A party of robbers had gathered at the spot, on the watch to attack unsuspicious travellers. As soon as Nur ul Dīn came near enough, two of the robbers suddenly rushed upon him, and stripped him of his wallet of provisions, and a few pice which he carried with him. As Nur ul Dīn was a mere youth, the robbers were not surprised to find so little spoil.

"We look not for honey on a gnat," observed the captain of the band, whose name was Hassan. "Let him go; he is but a boy. We are hunting for fat partridges, and care not to catch sparrows."

"How glad I am," thought Nur ul Dīn, "that these men have not stripped me of my kurtá, and know nothing of the rupees which my father sewed up within it."

Scarcely had the thought crossed the boy's mind when the captain carelessly asked, "Boy, have you any other money upon you?"

Nur ul Dīn was strongly tempted to say "No," but his father's advice flashed on his mind—"Wherever you go speak the truth, for the God who made us is a God of truth." It was hard for the youth to lose his money, but worse still for him to lose the favour of the Lord.

Hassan repeated the question in a louder tone, for he saw that the lad hesitated before making a reply—"Have you any other money upon you?"

"Yes," replied Nur ul Dīn unwillingly; "I have rupees sewn up in my kurtá."

The robbers were about eagerly to rush upon him, and strip him, but their captain sternly waived them back, and fixing his glance on Nur ul Dīn, said, "Who taught you to speak the truth?"

"My father," replied the youth.

A shade of sadness passed over the face of Hassan; the thought in his mind was, "Had I followed the precepts of *my* father, I had not

been an outlaw and outcast now." Then said the captain aloud, "Many a year has passed since I have met with one who preferred loss to lying. Touch not the boy—let him go in peace."

The robbers looked angry as dogs from whom a bone has been snatched; but their captain carried too many pistols in his belt to let them dispute his command. Nur ul Dīn was about to depart, when an interruption occurred.

"Why, here comes another boy!" exclaimed one of the thieves, "and so like the first in dress and appearance that surely they must be brothers!" The reader need scarcely be informed that the guess of the robber was correct, and that it was Butá Khán who was now approaching the tree.

"Oh! that I could warn him!" thought Nur ul Dīn; but one of the robbers, pointing to the dagger in his belt, whispered, "Your life depends on your silence!"

"Seize him, but harm him not," said the captain. "Let us see if from those who resemble each other as two lips, the same voice of truth will be heard."

Butá Khán was full of terror when he found himself in the hands of robbers; but he was much reassured when he saw Nur ul Dīn still

wearing his kurtá, and expressing no anxiety in his looks save on his brother's account. From Butá Khán, as formerly from Nur ul Dīn, his bundle was taken, and the lad rejoiced in his heart that what he had of most value was safely hidden in his kurtá.

Then said Hassan to Butá Khán, as he had before said to his brother, "Have you any other money upon you?"

"Not a pice—not a cowrie, O my lord!" cried the lad.

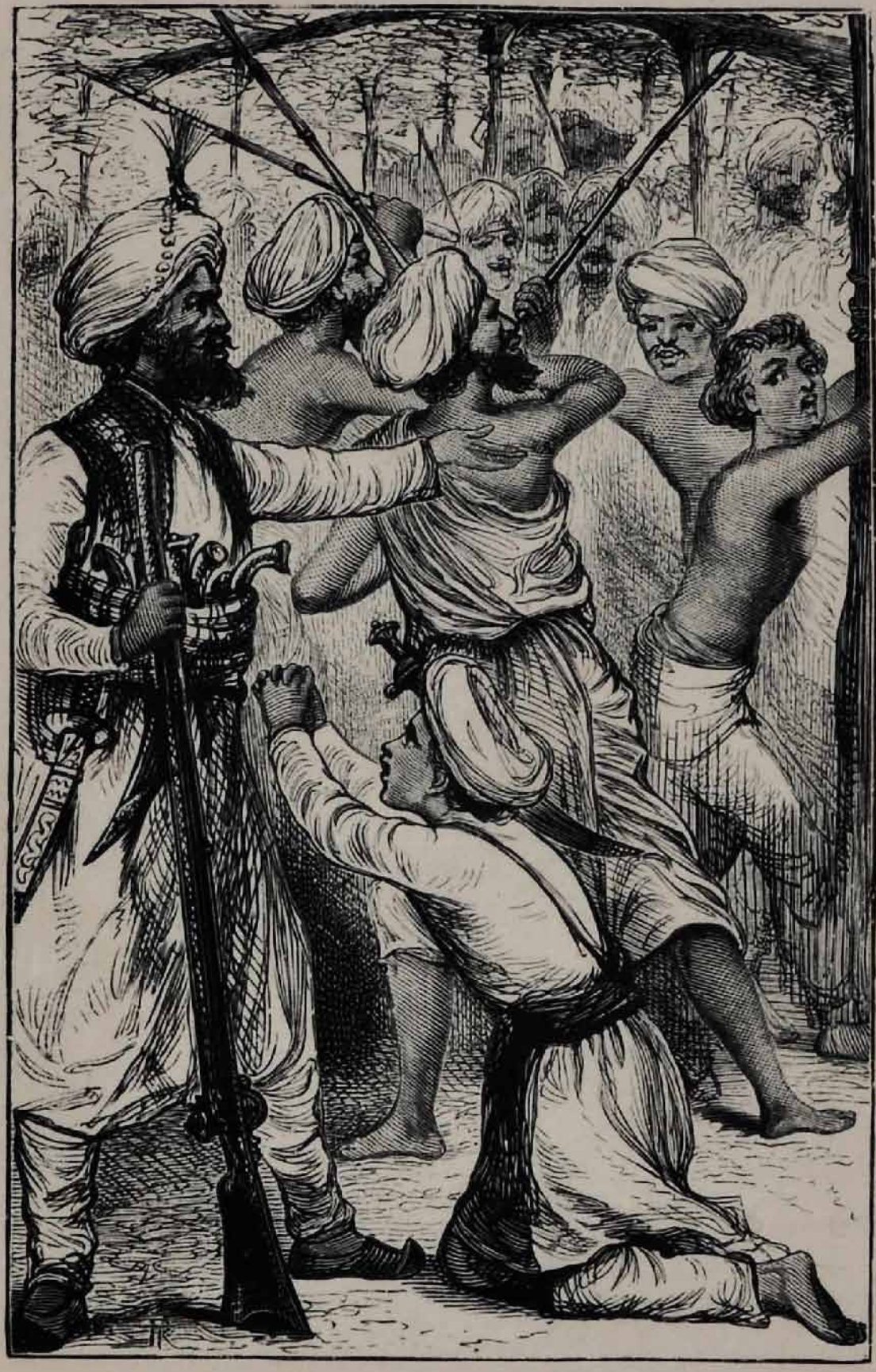
"Strip off his kurtá and search," said the captain. His command was readily obeyed. The kurtá was torn from the trembling liar, and ripped open by the eager robbers. In the lining was speedily found a store of rupees.

"How many are there?" inquired the captain.

"Twenty," was the reply.

"Then for every rupee found on him," said Hassan, with a look of contempt, "give him, in due payment, a blow of a stick on his bare back!"

In vain Nur ul Dīn pleaded and prayed; in vain Butá Khán shrieked and entreated; for the twenty rupees which he had hoped to save by a lie he received payment in a cruel whipping, given by the laughing robbers with hearty good-will.



'In vain Nur ul Dīn p'eaded and prayed, in vain Butā Khān shrieked and entreated; for the twenty rupees which he had hoped to save by a lie, he received payment in a cruel whipping."—*p.* 54.

While the poor lad was still groaning from the effects of the sore punishment inflicted by the thieves, the attention of all was suddenly turned from him towards two of the robber-gang, who had not been present, but who now came up sadly and slowly. They were bearing between them the dead body of a comrade. Butá Khán, even in the midst of his trouble, recognised the corpse which he had seen lying in the valley.

Very loud were the exclamations of surprise, grief, and fury heard amongst the robbers as they gathered round the body, for, like Butá Khán, they thought at first that the dead man had been murdered. But when those who now laid down the corpse at the captain's feet explained how they had found it, with a small gash on the wrist, which seemed to have been inflicted by the robber himself, from which he had bled to death, the fury of the thieves was lessened, though not their sorrow, for their comrade had been a favourite amongst them.

"Had any one been near to bind his wrist, he would have been alive amongst us now!" cried one of the band.

A thought suddenly occurred to the captain. He turned towards Nur ul Dīn and sternly

asked him, "From what place hast thou just come?"

Nur ul Dīn, though unwillingly, named his father's village.

"On the straight way from that village we found our dead comrade!" cried one of the robbers.

"O wretch!" said Hassan, "didst thou see him bleeding to death, and yet wouldst give him no aid?"

"I saw nothing, my lord," replied Nur ul Dīn, with a faltering lip. "I could not see the body, for I came by the mountain path."

"Wherefore didst thou take so long and steep a path?" inquired Hassan.

"To see a friend whom I had promised to visit," said Nur ul Dīn simply. His heart beat very fast, for he felt that his account was improbable, and scarcely likely to be believed, but conscious that he was speaking the truth, he looked Hassan full in the face as he spoke.

The eyes of the captain seemed to pierce him through and through, as if reading his very soul. At last Hassan observed, "The boy is no liar. The truthful are to be trusted."

Then he turned fiercely towards Butá Khán. "Didst thou see this man lying on the path?" he inquired, pointing to the corpse at his feet.

"Never—never—O my lord! I never saw him in my life!" gasped forth the miserable, terrified lad. "I too took the path by the mountain."

"That is another lie," said the captain sternly. "There is no morass on the mountain, and behold! while there is dust on the feet of the one brother, there is mud on the feet of the other."

"And a stain of blood!" cried one of the band.

"Wretched liar! think not to deceive me," said the captain. "Thou didst see our comrade bleeding to death, and yet wouldst not so much as bind a rag round his wrist to save his life."

"O my lord! he was dead—quite dead when I saw him!" exclaimed the boy, losing in his terror all presence of mind.

"Self-convicted liar! then thou *didst* see him!" cried Hassan. "Thou dost deserve to die the death!"

In a moment half-a-dozen scimitars were flashing round the head of the wretched boy.

"Oh! spare him—spare him!" cried Nur ul Dīn, throwing himself at the captain's feet.

"Put up your swords, and give him twenty more lashes," said the captain. His order was instantly obeyed. The second beating on the

bruised and bleeding back was far more terrible than the first. Butá roared aloud in his agony of pain.

Scarcely was his punishment over, when the sound of trampling hoofs was heard.

"The English sepoys are on us!" cried one of the robbers who had been placed as a scout.

"Disperse yourselves—and fly!" said the captain.

He had no occasion to give the command twice—the robbers had no wish to encounter troops under English command. The soldiers now appeared, their sabres glittering in the sun as they rode. When they came up to the tree they found no one beneath it but the fainting, bleeding Butá Khán, with his brother kneeling beside him.

Fortunately the leader amongst the soldiers happened to be a friend of the father of the two boys. He recognised them at once. He was obliged to go himself with his men in instant pursuit of the robbers, but he commanded one of the sepoys to take Butá Khán before him on his saddle, and ride back with him to his father's home.

Butá, still moaning with pain, was raised to the back of the horse, and was quickly carried back to his home by the path through the

valley. Nur ul Dīn followed more slowly, deeply reflecting on the strange events of the day.

Poor Butá Khán's sufferings brought on fever, and it was some weeks before he recovered from the effects of his terrible adventure with the robbers under the banyan tree. His distress was increased by his sense of shame, for he could not but see that his sufferings had been the result of his own fault.

"Alas!" he said one day to his father, "had I but, like my brother, obeyed your instructions, and spoken the truth about the rupees, I should have been saved my first beating, and from my word being believed might have escaped the second also. But," added the lad, "it is not always that lies are thus punished, or there would be few—in this country at least—who would have a whole skin."

"Lies are not always followed by such punishment in this world," answered his father, "though the habitual liar has usually that of not being trusted even when he speaks the truth. But every lie, as I have often told you, is noted down in God's book, and there is but one means of blotting it out.* If at the Judgment Day the record is still found on the

* 1 John i. 7.

mysterious pages, for every lie the speaker will receive a punishment compared to which the blows which you have received will be but as strokes inflicted with a feather."

Hassan the Robber.

HASSAN the robber sat alone in a jungle, buried in gloomy thought. Some of his band had been seized by the Government, and had suffered the fate of thieves; the others had deserted him, for they said that it was his leadership that had brought ill-fortune upon them. A price had been set on the head of Hassan. He had not a friend by his side. And if his prospects in this world were gloomy, they were darker as regarded the next. If the outcast thought of God, he thought of Him but as an angry judge, before whom he must one day appear to receive the reward of his crimes. Hungry and sad, Hassan sat alone in the jungle, and leaning his head on his hand, thus he communed with himself—

"I am deserted and friendless. While I live I have none to love me, and none to mourn me when I die. What avail my strength and my

courage? I am an outcast on earth, and I shall be an outcast from heaven. I could wish that when I was a babe some one had strangled me, or thrown me into a well; I had not then had a soul blackened by crime, I had not by my evil deeds brought the grey hairs of my father to the grave with sorrow and disgrace. My boyhood was a happy one. How often I and my playmate Jehanghir used to talk together of what we would be when we were men. His desire was to be a Moulvie (religious preceptor), with many disciples gathering around him; my ambition was to be an Amir (nobleman), on a prancing horse with golden trappings, a mighty leader renowned in war, and possessed of boundless wealth. No doubt Jehanghir is now honoured and happy, surrounded with friends who hold him in respect. Does he ever think of the companion of his boyhood? He is never likely to see me again,—unless, indeed, he behold my corpse dangling from some gallows! Were we to meet now we should probably not recognise each other after fifteen years of separation. It is better that we should never meet, better that my friend should forget me! If there be one thing on earth which would be more bitter than anything else to my soul, it would be to meet the contemptuous gaze of

Jehanghir." The outcast could scarcely repress a groan.

"And now what is before me?" continued Hassan, speaking half-aloud. "I hate my present life, but I have gone so far in guilt that I cannot return. I have rushed down the steep till I see the precipice yawning before me; I have no power to pause—to turn—to climb! Having lost my character, I have no means of earning my bread honestly. If I do not rob I must starve. Hated by all, and hating myself, I must plunge on through crime to some death of shame, and then encounter unknown horrors beyond the grave. It maddens me to think of these things. Would that I had never been born!"

Hassan rose from the ground in a mood of sullen despair, and slowly quitted the jungle. He would fain have avoided the abodes of men, and yet hunger drove him towards them. As the famished wild beast prowls round the village in hopes to find some prey, though knowing that every man's hand will be lifted against him, so Hassan slowly and stealthily advanced near enough to a town to hear the muzzim's call to prayer from a mosque at some little distance. "Never again," thought the robber, "will I enter a place of worship. Prayer

would be a mockery indeed from lips such as mine!"

Presently the robber saw a traveller extended on the ground in a deep sleep, his hand resting on his staff, and his wallet fastened to his waist. The evil spirit of covetousness stirred in the breast of Hassan at the sight. With step as noiseless as that of the cheetah he drew near and nearer still to the sleeping man, and then the robber bent his knee to the ground, and laid his grasp on the wallet.

"May the traveller's sleep last," thought Hassan. "He seems a strong man, and might not part with his money without a struggle. I have no wish to have his blood on my soul, as well as his gold in my hand."

But the movement of the robber's fingers as he emptied the wallet awoke the traveller. Instantly roused to a sense of danger, he grasped his staff, and sprang to his feet. For a moment the two men confronted each other, as if about to engage in a deadly struggle, then the names "Hassan!" "Jehanghir!" burst at once from the lips of either, and instead of fighting, they suddenly found themselves locked in each other's embrace. It was, however a very brief one; Hassan almost immediately drew himself back, as one who has

been surprised into a strange and unnatural action.

"Are you not Hassan," cried the traveller, "the favourite friend of my youth?"

"Not the Hassan whom you remember," replied the robber bitterly. "I am an outcast, whose company would disgrace you. I can never be anything to you, unless you choose to win the reward set on my head by delivering me up to the English Sahib-log."

"I would rather cut off my right hand," exclaimed Jehanghir.

It was a strange pleasure to Hassan in the midst of his misery to hear these words from the lips of his friend. Jehanghir had found him in the very act of committing a crime, and yet did not turn from him as if he had been a noxious reptile.

"Whither are you going?" asked the robber, after a pause.

"I am going to enlist in the English service," replied Jehanghir. (This was the year of the Indian Mutiny, A.D. 1857.) "You must know —all the world knows—the deadly strife now going on in this land, and specially around the walls of Delhi. Anarchy and murder are on every side, and I deem it the duty of every true man to take his stand on the side of order."

"Yes, I know that the sepoys have risen against those whose salt they have eaten," said Hassan, "and that the blare of the trumpet and the thunder of the guns are resounding through Hindustan."

A sudden thought struck Jehanghir. "Hassan!" he cried, "why should you not come with me, and also enlist. Brave men like you will be welcome at a time when every strong arm is needed."

"Do you mean that I should walk with my eyes open into a lion's den?" asked Hassan. "Would you have me give myself up to the Sahib-log, who have set a price on my head?"

"Is it possible that you have so broken the law as to have imperilled your life?" exclaimed Jehanghir.

"I have broken through the law as the wild boar breaks through the jungle!" cried Hassan: "tearing down—rooting up—trampling under foot!"

"Then, indeed, I would never wish you to run the risk which must be incurred should you give yourself up," said his friend.

"Risk or not, I will go with you!" cried Hassan impulsively. "I am weary of this sort of life, and care little if I be strung up by a

rope, or blown from a gun. The English, as you say, are in need of strong arms now, and may pass a sponge over my past crimes, in hopes of future services. Be that as it may, I will surrender myself to justice, and take my chance of mercy."

Jehanghir did not combat the robber's resolution; anything, in the opinion of the virtuous and honourable man, was better than continuing in a course of sin. Hassan proceeded with his friend towards the town, which was not far distant, in which, as Jehanghir knew, an English regiment had been resting during the heat of the day, on its long toilsome march towards Delhi. Strange as it may appear, though Hassan was perfectly aware of the risk which he was running, in delivering himself into the hands of Government, he felt more calm in mind than he had done for many a year. He had resolved to do what was right, to turn from a downward path of crime, and felt that with such a friend as Jehanghir beside him, he could face even a felon's death.

The two men found the town in a state of considerable excitement. The English trumpets were sounding their call, and the soldiers were turning out to recommence their long march. Crowds of natives assembled to gaze. Jehan-

ghir inquired from a coolie the way to the Colonel Sahib's quarters. Half-a-dozen voices at once gave reply—half-a-dozen fingers were pointed in the direction of a building used as a cutchery (police court).

Jehanghir and his companion proceeded in the direction indicated, but as they arrived at the door of the court-house, Jehanghir paused, and with an anxious countenance asked his friend if he still kept firm to his intention to give himself up.

"I do," was the robber's brief reply.

Jehanghir noticed that many of the crowd had followed their steps, and that eager, excited eyes were fixed upon Hassan. He was evidently recognised, and it was now too late to retreat even had he desired to do so. The two men were glad that the guard at the door made no difficulty in admitting them at once into the presence of the English commander, on Jehanghir's saying that he and his friend had come to enlist in the Company's service.

The Colonel, with uniform much dust-stained and travel-worn, and with marks of toil and care on his features, had just finished his repast, before joining his men.

"Who may you be, and for what do you

come?" he inquired, glancing at the two fine stalwart men, who had just made their salam before him.

"We have come to fight under the Company's flag, O my lord! if your honour will receive us," replied Jehanghir.

"I wish that we had ten thousand such recruits," thought the Colonel; but before he had time to speak, a cutchery clerk who was present stepped forward.

"Pause, my lord!" he exclaimed. "Nothing is known here of yon foremost man who has answered your honour; but the character of the second is too well known. He is, or was, the leader of a band of robbers, of whom two have been hanged, and a price has been set on his head. I marvel that Hassan the robber has the audacity to enter the presence of an honourable Sahib!"

"Can this be true?" cried the colonel, turning towards the outlaw, who stood with folded arms before him.

"Yes, I am Hassan the robber," was the reply; "I am he on whose head a price of five hundred rupees has been set. If your highness want my life, it is justly forfeit, and you can take it; otherwise I am ready to lay it down in your service before the walls of Delhi."

Calmly and resolutely Hassan awaited the reply of the Colonel.

The year in which Delhi, after a long struggle, fell beneath the English arms was a year of great difficulty and peril. Courage then counted for more than gold, and some of those who had known the insides of prisons were given a chance of winning back their characters, perhaps at the price of their blood. Beside the enormous crimes of the treacherous rebels others appeared less heinous. The Colonel, whose regiment had been thinned by hardship and sickness, looked at the powerful outcast who had thrown himself on his mercy, and did not hesitate long.

"I think that I can promise you a full and free pardon for the past," he said, "if you faithfully serve us now. When I have leisure I will write to headquarters on the subject, in the meantime you shall remain and fight with our corps."

With a strange sense of relief and freedom the new recruit passed from the Colonel's presence. He was no longer an outcast, no longer a wretch dreaded and hated by all. A new life was beginning. Hassan had enlisted in an honourable service, he might even win glory and reward. Over the black pages of

his life a leaf as yet unstained was turned. Hassan inwardly resolved that nothing disgraceful should be written upon it.

When the troops, after several long marches, arrived before the walls of Delhi, it was a disappointment to the two friends to find that they could not remain together. Jehanghir was employed amongst the artillery horses; Hassan was attached to an irregular native corps. Living in different quarters, and engaged in diverse employments, weeks and even months passed without Hassan and Jehanghir being able to exchange a word. Jehanghir, however, sometimes heard of the desperate valour of his friend, how he was ever foremost in danger, charging fearlessly even up to the enemy's guns.

At last the eventful day arrived on which the efforts of the brave besiegers of Delhi were to be crowned with success. The British flag was again to float from her ramparts. Hassan, sword in hand, was amongst the first to rush into the city, but he had scarcely entered it when he fell to the earth pierced with many wounds. Weltering in blood he lay for many hours, unconscious of all that passed around him. He was roused at last from his death-like state by water being offered to his lips, and

heard, as in a dream, some voice say, "The gallant fellow has well earned his pardon, and a medal and pension besides."

The wounded man was raised by his companions, and carried on a litter into the hospital, where he received every care that the overworked surgeon could give. But it was at once seen that the case was a hopeless one; the sufferer might linger long, but he could never know health again. The once powerful frame was stretched on the charpai in weakness like that of an infant—Hassan was not so much as able to lift his hand to his head.

"All that I desire now is to see my friend Jehanghir, if he has survived this bloody day," faintly murmured the wounded man.

"There is a patient of that name in the next ward, with a wound in his arm," observed an attendant.

Inquiries were made, and it was soon found that Jehanghir was an inmate of the hospital. His wound was not severe, though for a time it disabled him for duty. By the kindness of the superintendent, Jehanghir was allowed to occupy a charpai next to that of his friend, in a small separate room, where the suffering Hassan could have more quiet than was obtainable in one of the larger wards.

Jehanghir watched over Hassan with all the tenderness of a brother. Hassan was very silent; pain wrung no groan from his lips, but the expression of his countenance betrayed the deep gloom which was brooding over his soul. Jehanghir also appeared as if a weight were on his mind; many a time he would open his lips, as if about to speak, then turn away, and perhaps kneel down and appear for some minutes engaged in prayer. Hassan noticed that his friend by no means confined himself to the five stated periods for Mahometan devotions, nor did he seem to pray in the way in which his countrymen are accustomed to pray. Hassan himself made no attempt to perform any act of devotion; not merely from weakness of body, but from an inward sense of despair. "What has a wretch like me to do with prayer!" he said to himself.

One day Jehanghir was sitting reading to himself beside the charpai of the sufferer, whom he believed to be sleeping, when a faint sigh from Hassan made him raise his eyes from his book, and inquire in a compassionate tone whether the wounded man's pain were very severe.

"It is not the pain that is intolerable," Hassan feebly replied,—"I am a man, and I can

endure. From these sufferings death will release me. But after death what is before me? A dark—a bottomless pit seems opening at my feet!" He grasped Jehanghir's hand convulsively as he went on. "I have won the forgiveness of man, but what will it avail me in the unknown state to which each hour I draw nearer! All my crimes will rise up in the judgment before me! How shall I face an angry God, how shall I escape my just doom!"

Hassan, as he spoke, looked earnestly, almost despairingly, into the face of his friend, then added with a heavy sigh, "You gave me good counsel once when you led me to surrender myself up to justice, but even you cannot counsel me now."

"Yes," said Jehanghir slowly, "I can say, surrender yourself again, but this time not to justice only, but to mercy,—not to man, but to God."

"Man had some reason for pardoning me," observed Hassan,—"I could do something to make it his interest rather to spare than to punish. But I am now a dying man, I can do nothing, absolutely *nothing*, to balance in the account against the sins which I have committed."

"Such was the case with myself," said Jehanghir in a low voice, "yet I surrendered, and I found mercy."

"You surrendered!" exclaimed Hassan in surprise. "To whom did you surrender? what had you done? what can your meaning be?"

"I had been a rebel,—I had a thousand times broken a righteous law,—a sentence of death had been passed upon me,—I saw no way of escape," replied Jehanghir.

The surprise of Hassan increased,—was it possible that his friend had ever been an outcast like himself. He listened with eager attention.

"Then when I was almost in despair," continued Jehanghir, "I heard that there was a proclamation of full free pardon to all who threw themselves unreservedly, undoubtingly on the mercy of their Prince. I heard that to win the power to bestow that pardon, the Prince had Himself undergone the sharpest punishment that could be inflicted on rebels. I believed what I heard, I sought the Prince, I prostrated myself before Him, owned my misery and guilt, and asked Him to pardon my sins. He raised me, forgave and blessed me, and not only permitted me to enlist in His

army, but promised me a rich inheritance, and adopted me as His son."

"You bewilder me!" exclaimed Hassan. "You are a soldier of the Company Bahadur, what prince can you serve?"

There was a long pause before Jehanghir replied, for he dreaded lest his answer should cut at once the tie of friendship between him and Hassan. Then, forcing himself to meet steadily the searching gaze of his friend, he made answer, "I serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and my only trust is in Him."

Hassan's wasted hand had been resting on that of Jehanghir, but he now drew it suddenly back, as if it had been stung by a scorpion. Not that Hassan, who had for years led the life of a robber, had known much or cared much for the religion of Mahomet, but he was startled at the idea of his friend having become what he deemed an apostate.

"I thought that you, of all men, must be a true believer!" Hassan exclaimed.

"Listen to me patiently, my brother," said Jehanghir, "nor condemn me before you know my reasons for changing my faith."

"*I* condemn you!" cried Hassan. "Far be it for the most worthless of men to condemn one a thousand times better than himself!

But what could induce you to forsake the religion of the Prophet—on whom be peace!"

"It was no hasty act," said Jehanghir. "For seven years I studied and read, for seven years I compared the Bible and Koran together. For seven years I prayed for light, and it came! The first thing that it showed me was that I was a sinner, and in need of mercy."

"It needs no light from above to show me that such is *my* state," observed Hassan gloomily. "But I thought that your life had been blameless."

"Blameless perhaps in the sight of man, but before God all stained and blotted with sin. Pride had been in my heart, covetousness in my thoughts, falsehood on my lips, my best deeds had been done to win the praise of mortals, not from love of my Maker."

"According to so strict a rule all men are sinners," said Hassan,—"not robbers and murderers alone."

"All men are sinners," cried Jehanghir; "all men are under that terrible sentence, *The soul that sinneth it shall die.* Now I vainly searched through the Koran to find how God could be just, and yet grant full and free pardon to sinners. I read there of a leader, of a prophet, but not of a Saviour, and a Saviour was what

I wanted. I found Him at last in the Gospel,—a Sinless Being suffering for sin, One who, having by His own death-agonies satisfied justice, could hold out to all believers the sceptre of grace. Then even as you threw yourself on the mercy of those who had condemned you, I threw myself on God's mercy in Christ, and I found it!"

"I have never read the Gospel, nor wished to read it," said Hassan.

"Yet even your own Prophet, Mahomet, acknowledged it to be truth. Is it wisdom to reject without examination a faith which—without the sword, simply through God's blessing on a Book—has won its way through persecution, has spread on every side, and continues to spread, and which offers pardon and peace here, and endless glory beyond the grave? Is it not worth while at least to examine whether these wondrous offers of salvation come not indeed from God?"

"How can I on a sick-bed—a death-bed—examine and reflect?" asked Hassan, with some irritation. "Even if all that you say be true, it is too late for me now to change."

"Would you not listen if I were to read to you a little from this Book?" asked Jehanghir.

"Read what you will," said Hassan, "but

expect not to alter me now. That would be a miracle more strange than that of making a good soldier out of a robber," he added, with a melancholy smile.

Jehanghir opened his Book, and not only then, but day after day, week after week, as Hassan was able to bear it, he read to him short portions from the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Gospels. Jehanghir compared Scripture with Scripture; he showed how exactly Christ's birthplace (Micah v. 2), His work (Isa. lxi. 1-3), miracles (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6), sufferings (Isa. liii. 2-8), and death (Zech. xiii. 7; Dan. ix. 26; Isa. liii. 12), had been described by the prophets hundreds of years before His appearance on earth. Jehanghir showed how the very nails which pierced Christ's hands and feet (Ps. xxii. 16, 17), the amount of blood-money paid for His betrayal (Zech. xi. 12, 13), the dividing of His garments, the taunts of His foes (Ps. xxii. 18, 7, 8), had all been foretold through the inspiration of the Spirit. Hassan listened at first carelessly, then with interest, till gradually his reason became convinced of the truth of the Scriptures. But his friend saw with pain that Hassan's heart appeared to be untouched. He listened to the story of Christ's unspotted life, His wondrous

mercy, His self-sacrificing love, but it was as to a relation of events with which he himself had nothing to do.

"Christ may be a Saviour to others, but not to me," thought the guilt-stained man.

Jehanghir felt disappointed and discouraged. "Alas! my friend is slowly but surely approaching the gates of the grave, the hand of the angel of death is almost upon him, and yet he will not close with the offers of mercy, he will not surrender himself up to the Saviour," —such were his bitter reflections. Many and fervent were the prayers offered by Jehanghir for the perishing soul of his companion. He knew not that but one thing stood between Hassan and that faith which receives salvation, and that was the former robber's gloomy conviction that he had sinned beyond hope of forgiveness.

It was in the stillness of a sultry night, when nothing broke the silence save the distant challenge of the sentinel on guard, when Hassan, awaking from a short feverish slumber, saw Jehanghir kneeling in prayer beside him. Hassan waited till his friend had risen from his knees, and then said in a faint voice, "I am in great pain—I cannot rest—read to me of your Christ—read of His sufferings."

Jehanghir unclosed the Gospel, and by the dim light of the lamp read from St. Luke the part of the account of the Lord's death on the cross:—

"*And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . . . And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*"

"Was that man a robber?" asked Hassan.

"He was a thief, condemned to the dreadful death of the cross," replied Jehanghir.

Hassan closed his eyes, and murmured, but in tones so low that Jehanghir could hardly catch a word, "Two *thieves* — outcasts — vile wretches, deemed unfit to live! One on the right hand, one on the left,—one blaspheming, one confessing!" Then opening his eyes, he earnestly said, "Read on!" Jehanghir again read aloud from the Gospel the account of the penitent dying thief.

"*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

"Would Christ have said so to me—*to me?*" exclaimed the dying robber, with an animation which almost startled his friend.

"If you believed as the thief believed, if you repented as the thief repented, if you threw yourself, as he did, on Christ's mercy, you would be saved, as he was saved, by the blood shed freely for sinners."

"Lord! I surrender—I believe—help me—save—receive!" struggled forth from the dying lips of Hassan. It seemed as if his eyes, fixed in an upward gaze, saw what none else could see. He tried to lift his arms, but failed in the effort; an expression of hope passed over his countenance, and then, without a groan, he expired!

"Oh! is he saved? is he saved?" cried Jehanghir, as he bent over the lifeless form of his friend.

That question could never be answered on earth; man cannot be certain whether a death-bed repentance be true repentance indeed. Hassan did not live to prove himself a faithful

soldier of Christ as he had been a brave soldier under the English flag. But let us all, ere death's angel draw near, make sure that *we* have no cause to dread his summons; let us make sure that we, once outcasts and rebels, have freely surrendered ourselves unto God. Those whom, for Christ's sake, He pardons, He enlists as soldiers, and adopts as sons; they fight under His banner against sin without, and sin within; and being, through the power of His Holy Spirit, made more than conquerors over Satan, they receive at last a crown of eternal glory that fadeth not away!

Walayat Ali.

INTRODUCTION.

In the house of one of our best native Christians in Amritsar I saw an English book with pages yellow and stained. In India books attain premature old age. This volume I soon found to be a family treasure, *though its possessor could not read it.* The work was "Sketches of Indian Martyrs," a book which I well remember perusing in England, not long after the fearful Mutiny of 1857. The interest of the

native in that English book was easily accounted for: —— is the daughter of one of the martyrs, and knows well the thrilling tale contained in the—to her—unreadable pages. No one could be surprised at the anxiety expressed by the Martyr's daughter that the story of her father's devotion should be given to his countrymen in their own native tongue; it has been a desire cherished for long in her heart. After consideration, it has been decided that a tiny book might, with advantage, be brought out, both in Roman Urdu and Persian Urdu, containing, with little additions, the story of Walayat Ali's martyrdom, extracted from the English volume. As an attempt was vainly made last year to procure "Sketches of Indian Martyrs" in London, I conclude that the work is now out of print, and if so it seems to be very desirable that one of the most interesting pictures which it contains should be preserved in another form.

The publication of the little book in India is advisable on various grounds. At a time when some thoughtful Mahometans are beginning to lose faith in their false Prophet, the tale may help to show them in more vivid light the real character of his bloodthirsty religion. To timid secret believers (of whom

there are more than the world wots of), the record of the Martyr may, with God's blessing, prove a powerful stimulant; we know the force of example. And to those of our native brethren who have already given up much and endured much for Christ, there will be great encouragement in reading of one who was enabled to hold fast the faith, even to the end. There are now in our Punjab Church men—and women too—whose devotion, I doubt not, would in the hour of darkest peril shine forth as did that of Walayat Ali; for their faith is as gold already tried in the furnace, and proved to be gold indeed.

My part in preparing the tale has been humble—little beyond that of extracting and curtailing. The Indian jewel needed no cutting or polishing; I have but to place it in a simple setting. It is gratifying to be able to add that of the rather numerous descendants of the Martyr, I have not heard of one disgracing his name. One of his daughters is a valuable Bible-woman. The blessing of the Almighty seems to rest on the lineage of His faithful servant. It is pleasant to think that Walayat Ali's widow, ere she rejoin her husband, is likely to see the little book through which he will still, as it were, preach to his countrymen

in their own tongue, telling them of a love stronger than death, and a sustaining grace which enables the Christian not only to do, but to suffer all things.

WALAYAT ALI, THE MARTYR.

WALAYAT ALI belonged to a respectable and once wealthy family in Agra. His first religious impressions were the result of Colonel Wheeler's labours. He was induced to commence reading the Bible; but though his mind was unsettled, he still clung to Mahometanism, and sought for the removal of his doubts through its priests and ceremonies. His last attempt thoroughly opened his eyes to the real nature of Mahometanism. Walayat Ali went to a Moulvie (religious teacher) of reputed sanctity, and sought to become one of his disciples; for this the Moulvie required a fee of six rupees (about twelve shillings). After hard bargaining, the fee came down to one rupee; but the Moulvie cautioned his applicant against telling any one of the small price which he had paid, and exhorted him to say that he had given the full price—six rupees. This was too much for Walayat Ali's credulity. The thought struck him, "I can sin enough without the aid of a

priest. Sin is the burden under which I am groaning, and yet this man would have me tell lies in order to fill his pockets."

From henceforth Walayat Ali turned to Christianity, and long continued to visit the missionaries in Agra. He was baptised in 1838, and from that period till his death his life was one scene of violence and persecution. His own family and neighbours threw bricks into his yard, stopped him from getting water at the well, and attempted to poison him. A younger brother commenced a law-suit against him. It was thought advisable to send the convert from Agra to Chittura, where he laboured for seven years. It then having been decided to employ a native preacher at Delhi, Walayat Ali was selected for the post.

"When I asked him to go," wrote the Rev. J. Smith, with whom he had worked at Chittura, "he hesitated for some time. He knew well the dangers and difficulties he should have to grapple with, and the peculiar hatred of the Mahometans to any one who had left their ranks, and he might well hesitate before he undertook such an arduous task. When once, however, the path of duty had been ascertained, he consulted no more with flesh and blood, but declared to me his readiness to go, though he

might be called to lay down his life for his Lord and Saviour. When he bade a sorrowful good-bye to us at Chittura, with his interesting family, little did I expect how soon he would be called to the presence of his Lord in the martyr's chariot of fire. I visited him at Delhi, and often preached with him to large and attentive crowds of people in the Chandnè Chouk bazaar, and other great thoroughfares; and I heard, the last time I was there, that his influence was being felt amongst the respectable Mahometans, and that one of the princes from the palace paid him an occasional visit during the darkness of the evening. There can be no doubt that many in Delhi who had failed to stop his mouth by fair argument, were too ready to stop it by the sword, as soon as the dread of British power was removed."

The account of Walayat Ali's martyrdom, and the triumph of his faith in the face of a violent death, is best given in the words of his widow who survives, an honoured member of Christ's Church upon earth.

"On Monday, the 11th of May, about nine o'clock in the morning, my husband was preparing to go out to preach, when a native preacher, named Phakoor, came in and told us that all the gates of the city had been closed,

that the sepoys had mutinied, and that the Mahomedans of the city were going about robbing and killing every Christian. He pressed hard on my husband to escape at once if possible, else that we would all be killed. My husband said, 'No, no, brother; the Lord's work cannot be stopped by any one.' In the meantime fifty horsemen were seen coming, sword in hand, and setting fire to the houses around. Phakoor said, 'Here they come! now what will you do? Run—run! I will, and you had better come!'

"My husband said, 'This is no time to flee, except to God in prayer!'

"Poor Phakoor ran, was seen by the horsemen, and killed.

"My husband called us all to prayer, when, as far as I recollect, he said—

"'O Lord! many of Thy people have been slain before this by the sword, and burned in the fire for Thy name's sake. Thou didst give them help to hold fast in the faith. Now, O Lord! we have fallen into the fiery trial. Lord! may it please Thee to help us to suffer with firmness. Let us not fall nor faint in heart under this sore temptation. Even to the death, oh! help us to confess, and not to deny Thee, our dear Lord. Oh! help us to bear this

cross, that we may, if we die, obtain a crown of glory!'

"After we had prayers, my husband kissed us all, and said, 'See that, whatever comes, you do not deny Christ; for if you confide in Him, and confess Him, you will be blessed, and have a crown of glory. True, our dear Saviour has told us to be wise as the serpent, as well as innocent as the dove; so, if you can flee, do so. But come what will, *don't deny Christ!*'

"Now I began to weep bitterly, when he said, 'Wife dear, I thought your faith in the Saviour was stronger than mine. Why are you so troubled? Remember God's Word, and be comforted. Know that if you die you go to Jesus, and if you are spared, Christ is your Keeper. I feel confident that if any of our missionaries live you will all be taken care of, and should they all perish, yet Christ lives for ever. If the children are killed before your face, oh! then take care that you do not deny Him who died for us. This is my last charge, and God help you!'

"Now some horsemen came up, and the faqirs who lived near us told them to kill my husband, that he was an infidel teacher, and that he had destroyed the faith of many by preaching about Jesus Christ. The troopers now asked him to

repeat the Kulma (the Mahometan confession of faith), but he would not. Two of them now fired at us, and one shot passed close by my husband's ear, and went into the wall behind us.

"Now all the children fled through a back door towards the house of Mirza Hajee, one of the shahzadas (princes), who respected my husband, and was fond of hearing of the love of God through Christ. He dressed like a faqir, and seemed partial to the Gospel. He took in my seven children who fled for refuge.

"One of the troopers now interposed, saying, 'Don't kill them.* Walayat Ali's father was a very pious Mussulman, who went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and it is likely that this man is a Christian only for the sake of money, and he may again become a good Mussulman.'

"Another trooper now asked my husband, 'Who, then, are you, and what are you?'

"He answered, 'I was at one time blind, but now I see. God mercifully opened my eyes, and I have found a refuge in Christ. Yes, I am a Christian, and I am resolved to live and die a Christian.'

* This evidently refers to Walayat Ali and his wife, who remained beside him. Their stopping behind probably enabled the children to escape.

"'Ah!' said the trooper, 'you see that he is a kafir—kill him!'

"Again he was threatened with loaded muskets pointed at his breast, and asked to repeat the kulma, with a promise of our lives and protection. My husband said, 'I have repented once, and I have also believed in Christ, so I have no need now of further repentance.'

"At this time two European gentlemen were seen running down the road leading to the river, when the troopers said, 'Let us run after these Feringhees first, then we can return and kill these infidels.'

"My husband then said to me, 'Flee! flee! Now is the time before they return!' He told me to go to the faqirs' Tuheca, while he would go to the Rev. Mr. Mackay's house and try to save him.

"I went to the Tuheca, but the faqirs would not let me go in, and would have had me killed, but for the interposition of Mirza, the shahzada, who said to the troopers, 'This woman and her husband are my friends; if you kill them I will have you all blown up!' Through fear of this they let me go, when I began to cry about my children, but Mirza Hajee told me that he had them all safe."

One might have expected that Walayat Ali's

wife would, in this hour of extreme peril, at once have thrown herself upon the protection of the generous prince, and have rejoined her seven children. But from her simple narrative it appears that her thought now was only for her husband, who had gone to attempt to save the European clergyman. We can fancy the poor native Christian woman, drawing her chaddar more closely around her, and with tremulous haste making her way through the streets of Delhi—starting at the dreadful sounds which told of violence and slaughter—perhaps witnessing fearful sights. But the most fearful of all was to come! The narrative thus proceeds:—

"I now went after my husband towards Mr. Mackay's house in Dyriagunge, the house formerly occupied by Mr. Parry, of the Delhi Bank. On the way I saw a crowd of the city Mahometans, and my husband in the midst of them. They were dragging him about on the ground, beating him on the head and in the face with their shoes; some saying, 'Now preach Christ to us! Now where is the Christ in whom you boast?' Others asked him to forsake Christianity and repeat the kulma.

"'No, I never will!' said my husband. 'My Saviour took up His cross and went to God—I

take up my life as a cross, and will follow Him to heaven!'

"They now asked him mockingly if he were thirsty, saying, 'I suppose you would like some water?'

"He said, 'When my Saviour died He got vinegar mingled with gall; I don't need your water. But if you mean to kill me, do so at once, and don't keep me in this pain. You are the true children of your Prophet Mahomet. He went about converting with his sword, and he got thousands to submit through fear; but I won't! Your swords have no terror for me; let them fall, and I fall a martyr for Christ!'

"Now a trooper came up and asked what all this was about. The Mussulmans said, 'Here we have a devil of a Christian, who will not recant; so do you kill him!'

"At this the sepoy aimed a blow with his sword which almost cut off my husband's head. His last words were, 'O Jesus! receive my soul!'"

Thus, like another Stephen, with prayer on his lips, and the love of Christ in his heart, Walayat Ali "fell asleep" in Jesus. The God in whom he trusted had answered his prayer and upheld his faith in the hour of danger. Though the Martyr's blood flowed beneath the

murderer's sword, his life was "hid with Christ in God." The worst that the brave confessor's foes could do was to send him by a shorter passage to heaven!

Let in the Daylight.

A YOUNG Babu, named Sukh Rám, dwelt in a house which had been left to him by his father, and which had been his since the day of his birth. Into that house no daylight ever had entered; it had been carefully shut out as a thing dangerous and unwholesome. Only lamps cast their light on gilded walls, and costly furniture, and garments that had once been goodly, but which had become time-stained. Sukh Rám was well contented with the feeble light; his eyes were accustomed to it, and as sunshine is to the owl, so would daylight have been to him. Sukh Rám believed that the world held no house better than his; he believed it, for he had seen no other. Even his own house he very imperfectly knew. It had been built with many presses in the walls, in which he believed that gold and other precious

things were stored; but Sukh Rám was so lazy that he kept little count of anything. The keys of his presses grew rusty, for he did not care to open them. Sukh Rám was persuaded that he was rich, and had everything in abundance, and that was enough for him.

But the mind of Sukh Rám was one day troubled by a scroll that reached him; it was written by a friend who had been also the friend of his father. The scroll was long, and contained many words, and they were words of warning such as these:—

"O Sukh Rám! to you be peace, and may the Most High grant you wisdom! Hereby I send to you word that the house in which you dwell is in a dangerous state. It has been made known to me that white ants are in the timber, and that there are besides this holes in the walls through which the wolf or the robber may enter. The wealth on which you pride yourself is not safe. Examine the state of your house; throw open every press and search through its contents; above all, live no longer in a state little better than darkness; put out the lamps, and let in the daylight."

When Sukh Rám had read thus far he frowned with displeasure. "Why should this friend trouble me with unasked-for advice,"

said he. "My house has stood well for these eighteen years; there is not a better one in the city. There is none that contains more beautiful things." As he spoke, the Babu fixed his eyes on an idol with jewelled eyes, that had been placed in a niche on the opposite wall. "My lamp is of gold, and is fed with fragrant oil; why should I blind my eyes by letting in the glare of daylight? I am content with the light which served my fathers before me, and I do not—I will not believe that my house is in so dangerous a state!"

So Sukh Rám rolled up the scroll, and cast it from him, then did puja to his idol. After that the young Babu sat at his ease, thinking over the treasures in goodly raiment and in bags of rupees* that he had stored up in his presses. Sukh Rám cared not to examine the presses to see if all were safe. The warning scroll was unheeded; Sukh Rám would not let in the daylight.

So much time passed away in ease and amusement. At last there came a day, sultry and still, a day which was long to be remembered. Sukh Rám, who slept much, was taking his noonday repose, thoughtless of danger, when he was roused by a trembling of the earth beneath

* A silver coin worth about 2s.

him. There was a rattling, rumbling sound heard, and then, more violently than before, the earth heaved and shook. Sukh Rám could see the walls of his house sway backwards and forwards, and then there was a crash! His furniture was scattered hither and thither, his lamp was broken and extinguished, his idol had fallen from its niche, every press had burst open, and through large cracks in the walls, through holes where shutters once had been, streamed in the unwelcome daylight! The earthquake had thrown Sukh Rám on his face, and he lay for some moments trembling and expecting the whole house to fall and crush him to dust!

As no other shock, however, came, after awhile the trembling Sukh Rám arose, and with dazzled eyes looked around him. The first thing which met his gaze was the warning scroll, which he had so impatiently thrown aside before he had finished reading it. Then the Babu beheld his broken idol, and in the clear light saw that it had never been of gold—it was but of gilded clay. One of its eyes had dropped out from the shock of the fall, and it was easy now to perceive that it was no jewel, but worthless glass. Sukh Rám lifted up his eyes to the niche from which the image had

fallen. In that niche, hitherto hidden by the idol, a serpent had reared its brood, and young snakes, flung down by the earthquake, were wriggling upon the floor! Sukh Rám, in dismay, fled to another part of the house, but wherever he fled saw by the light of day things that he had never seen by the lamp-light. Spiders' webs thickly mantled ceiling and pillar; centipedes and scorpions nestled in many a hole; the brown lines and muddy mounds that were everywhere seen on the walls showed that the white ants had taken possession of the house. Sukh Rám turned to one press, now open, in which he had stored garments embroidered with silver and gold, such as were worthy of the wearing of a Rajah. The garments looked tarnished and faded now. He took up one, it fell to pieces in his hand, the insects had utterly destroyed it! Sukh Rám turned to another press, one which he had believed to be full of jewels and rupees. Lo! the press was utterly empty; a robber had entered whilst the master of the dwelling was sleeping, and had carried all away! Sukh Rám wrung his hands, and beat his breast, and uttered a wail that could be heard from afar. His house was tottering above him, his idol was broken and found to be worthless, and reptiles

nestled where he had thought that treasures were stored! Oh! why had he despised the warning scroll! Why had he not searched through his house! Why had he never let in the daylight!

Reader! this is a parable—can you read its meaning? The house is your own heart. You, like Sukh Rám, may for many years have believed it to be a good one. You may be proud of its treasures of merits, of your shining garments of righteousness; you may truly believe that your idol (whatever it be) is an idol of gold. But have you ever really searched your heart? Have you examined its secret holes and corners? Are no cobwebs of vanity stretched across it? Is no serpent of sin lurking in some dark niche? Are not evil thoughts, like centipedes, making their nest within it—thoughts of pride and hatred, thoughts unholy and impure? Is not falsehood, like the white ants, secretly ruining the whole?

And examine your fancied store of merits—can they bear the light of day? What have you done that deserves the approval of God, the Most Holy? Has there not been pride in the pilgrimage, ostentation in the almsgiving, profanity even in the prayer? You may think

yourself rich in good works, but the light of truth will discover to you that you are poor indeed! Oh! search your heart in time; wait not till the earthquake of death open your eyes, till you who thought yourself rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing, find yourself miserable and naked and poor in the presence of an offended God!

But you will ask, "How am I to let in the daylight? how am I to find out the state of my heart, whether it be evil or good?"

I will answer from the Holy Scriptures. *The entrance of Thy Word giveth light* (Ps. cxix. 20). It is through the daylight of the Bible that we know that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* (Jer. xvii. 9); that *in many things we offend all* (Jas. iii. 2); that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. iii. 23); yea, that our very *righteousnesses are as filthy rags!* (Isa. lxiv. 6).

But it is a bitter thing to be told that the house which we thought so firm has not a sound timber in it, that our robes are rags, that our treasure-rooms are empty, that our idols are clay! Is it not better to shut out the daylight that makes us wretched?

No, for the Bible shows us not only our

danger, but the way of escape. It shows us how our rags may be replaced by a robe of spotless righteousness, how our empty souls may be filled with heavenly treasure. God's Word shows us how evil thoughts may be driven out, and how the house which once held a gilded idol may be made a glorious temple, fit for the holy God to dwell in.

O Reader! this little parable is to you what the warning scroll was to Sukh Rám! Will you cast it from your memory? The Scriptures are easily to be procured through the length and breadth of the land, even as the daylight is shed around. If you refuse to be enlightened, if you resolve to shut out the sunshine, and believe what is pleasant, not what is true, are you not more foolish even than he who was only aroused by the earthquake? We ask you not to believe without searching and examining for yourselves whether the Christian faith be indeed the true one. It offers you a Saviour, but you will not seek Him if you do not feel yourself to be a sinner. If you think that your heart is good you will not desire a new one. Oh! ask Him who knoweth the secrets of all hearts to show you your own! Again I would earnestly beseech you, as you value your immortal souls, be not content with the feeble,

deceitful glimmer of lamps made by man; let the Word of God shine into your hearts. Oh! *let in the daylight!*

The Dangerous Tongue.

SINI, the ayah* of the Padri Sahib's wife, Mrs. Lane, came to hold conversation with Nur Begam, the wife of the bearer,† as she stood by the chik‡ of a small empty house in the compound.§ Though Sini was a Mahometan and

* The ayah answers to both our lady's maid and nurse.

† The bearer's office somewhat resembles that of a butler's in England.

‡ A kind of screen for doors or windows, made of exceedingly thin pieces of wood or bamboo.

§ Domestic arrangements in Indian houses are exceedingly different from those in England. Instead of most of the servants, the vast majority of whom are maid-servants, living under the same roof as their employers—in India the servants, who are constantly married, live in huts divided from the bungalow by a piece of ground called the compound. The ayah is probably both wife and mother. I have seen my ayah place her baby on the floor, to leave her hands free to tidy my room. In Britain an arrangement which connects a little hamlet with every large bungalow would be thought extremely

Nur Begam a Christian, the two were very fond of chatting together. Sometimes they talked about religion, for Nur Begam knew almost as much of the Scriptures as if she were a Bible-woman, and could read both Persian and Roman Urdu. But more often the two women spoke of passing events, and more especially of what happened in the Padri's house and the compound.

Sini began the conversation. "So the Mem (mistress) has had this house made all clean and neat, and has put up a fresh purdah for these newly made Christians, the Moulvie and his wife. I suppose that you were at their baptism to-day?"

"Yes, I was at church," replied Nur Begam, "and many other people were there. The Mem Sahiba appeared very happy; and Bibi Barakat looked so nice in her new white dress and chaddar,* as she stood between her husband and son! It is a joyful thing when a whole family can thus be baptised together!" The pleasant face of Nur Begam was radiant with satisfaction.

inconvenient; but arrangements resembling those of England would be impracticable in India.

* The chaddar is the graceful head-dress of the women of the Punjab, composed of a large piece of cotton cloth, or some lighter material.

Sini made no reply to the observation, but remarked, "I suppose that our Mem gave the Moulvie's wife her new dress, and will give her plenty of other things besides. People are not made Christians for nothing"

"I dare say that there will be a good deal of petting," laughed Nur Begam. "Bibi Barakat will have a chair at morning prayers, and little Yusuf a stool beside her, when both of them would be far more at their ease on a mat. And perhaps they will be asked now and then to take tea at the bungalow, to be puzzled with knives and forks, and obliged to eat English food, not half so much to their taste as their own curry-bhát and chapatties. But let our Sahib and Mem do what they will, the poor Moulvie, who has lost all his former means of living, will consider himself a poor man. Bibi Barakat will miss her hordes of old friends and relations, who all turn their backs on her now. Everything will be new and strange to her; when she goes out of purdah,* she will feel as a duck might do

* Instead of enjoying their Christian freedom, to leave the seclusion of purdah-life, which from childhood has been associated in their minds with ideas of respectability and high social position, is sometimes a great trial to converts. It is to them worse than it would be to a lady who had never traversed streets except in a carriage, to have to walk alone in crowded thoroughfares. There

if stripped of all its feathers and sent shivering into the water. You know that Bibi Barakat is of high family. Her father once kept an elephant; and she would, a year ago, have thought it as dreadful to have walked across the compound within sight of men, as if a gun had been pointed at her from each of the bungalow windows."

"Oh! she is a fine lady, is she!" said the ayah, with a sneer. "She will be thinking herself as much above us as if she were still in an elephant's howlah."

"I do not think that Barakat can be proud," observed Nur Begam, "for I hear that she is working for sale pretty network like that which folk make at Delhi. She is getting it ready to show to Captain Leary's Mem Sahiba, who is expected before long to come on a visit to the bungalow. Leary Mem Sahiba is, I hear, wondrously rich, and does not care how many lakhs she spends on her dress and jewels. Folk say that she cares a great deal more for them than she does for her Sahib and children." Then Nur Begam suddenly remembering that she had to prepare the evening meal for her own family, turned into her own house, which was

is a loss of the sense of dignity, as well as the feeling of protection.

next to that assigned by Mr. Lane to the newly baptised converts. Each house in the compound had a small open space of its own, in which its occupant could cook in the hot weather. A bamboo screen divided that of Nur Begam from that of the Moulvie's family.

Nur Begam's was a neat little home, and kept beautifully clean, for the sardar's wife was an example to all the women in the compound for her attention to order. Chickens were not allowed to run over her mats, nor sparrows to lodge in her thatch. Her cooking vessels shone as if made of burnished gold. The house had its ornaments too. On its wall were fastened framed photographs of the Padri Sahib and his Mem, the Commandments in Urdu, and a beautifully illuminated text which had been a Christmas gift from Mrs. Lane. The text was, "*I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.*" Some people suspected that the Mem had had her own reasons for choosing this text for Nur Begam. The bearer's wife was a kindly neighbour, a useful helper, a good wife and mother, and in many respects a true Christian; but the love of gossip was very strong within her. She liked to talk over the affairs of the Mem, the Mem's guests, of every one who came near the compound. Nur Begam's tongue was

eloquent in prayer; she could pray aloud for an hour together without need to pause for one minute; but the tongue was just as ready when the faults or failings of her neighbours were her theme. Nur Begam would rise from her knees and go at once from confession of sin and prayer for pardon to utter petty scandals, and gossip about matters which did not concern her. She who plays with the characters of others is as one who plays with fire; she may burn her own fingers, or, what is worse, set fire to the house of her neighbour. *Charity covereth a multitude of sins;* Nur Begam never thought of covering any, she dragged them into the light. A good story told at the expense of another was to her as a plate of metai. Solomon hath written, "*There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent;*" to Nur Begam every waking hour was a time for speaking, silence was only for the period of sleep. Alas! that a woman who could keep her house so well in order had never learned how to keep in order her *dangerous tongue!*

Mrs. Lane herself showed the Moulvie, his wife and son, into their new abode. With her own hands she fastened a picture on the wall. She knelt down with the converts when the

Moulvie uttered the first Christian prayer that had ever been heard in that house. And then, with smiles and blessings, the missionary's wife went away, praises on her lips, and joy in her heart that three precious souls had been brought to the Saviour.

Nur Begam also came in, embraced Bibi Barakat, and helped to carry in the few articles which formed the converts' possessions. She also lighted the little fire in their enclosure, the weather being too hot for cooking within the house. Nur Begam was, as has been said, a kind-hearted creature, and she welcomed the new Christians with joy. Yet it was rather a relief to Barakat when her new friend went away. To the Moulvie's wife this had been a very exciting day, and not one of unmixed joy. Her husband was a strong, brave man, who, having once counted the cost, was content to give up all things for Christ. The Moulvie could face persecution firmly, and if he could but earn his livelihood honestly, would be satisfied with but little. Cheerfully he sat down to copy papers, a work with which the missionary had supplied him, until some permanent situation could be found for the convert. Yusuf sat near his mother in the enclosure, reading the Gospel, happy in the thought that he was now numbered

amongst the Good Shepherd's flock. Bibi Barakat set to work to prepare chapatties, for she could not now keep a servant. As she clapped the átá (flour) into shape with her delicate hands, many a saddening thought came into the poor woman's mind. She could not read, and thus was prevented from gathering for herself comfort from God's holy Word. The world had still a great hold on Barakat's mind, and the power of habit was strong. Barakat's father had been the lord of five villages, and had had numerous servants; now the Moulvie's wife was placed on a level with, had to associate on equal terms with Nur Begam, whose father had been a kahar.* The mind of Barakat wandered back to the time of her own wedding; she thought of the hundreds of guests who had been present on the festive occasion, of the five hundred rupees which had been spent on feasting and fireworks, of the jewels which had been given to her, of her own sumptuous dress of red, embroidered in gold. As Barakat placed, one after another, her chapatties on the heated iron a sigh broke from her lips.

"What would my father have said if he could have seen me in this little place, baking chapatties?" she said aloud. "And even this hut

* A dhuli-bearer.

I owe to the kindness of those whom he would have called kafirs" (infidels).

"But oh! dear mother, what a home there is beyond!" cried Yusuf; and with his finger on the page of the Gospel he read aloud the Saviour's words: *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life*" (Matt. xix. 29).

Bibi Barakat smiled, and felt comforted. "I am not unhappy," she softly said, "since you and your father are left to me still."

Some words, but not all, could reach Nur Begam through the bamboo screen which divided the two enclosures. The sardar's wife, who had sharp ears as well as a long tongue, had overheard the first exclamation of Barakat, whose face had been turned in her direction. It would have been Christian charity to have forgotten, or at least never to have repeated, that which had been thoughtlessly spoken, and which had never been intended for her ears. But Nur Begam had not such Christian charity; she could not, or would not, deny herself the selfish indulgence of gossip. Before ten minutes were over Nur Begam was seated in Sini's little

enclosure, where the ayah was smoking her hookah.

"What do you think that I overheard our new-comer saying to her husband?" said Nur Begam, squatting down on the ground for a gossip. "Our Mem Sahiba would have been rather surprised could she have heard her."

The ayah took the hookah out of her mouth. "What did the Bibi say?" she asked, with a face full of curiosity.

"Oh! Bibi Barakat said, 'It would have broken my poor father's heart to have seen what a hole I have been put into by those whom he would have called kafirs.'"

"I'm sure that it is too good for the like of her; it's larger than mine," said the ayah, who was disposed to be jealous of what she thought favour shown to the newly baptised.

That night, when Sini helped her lady to put the children to bed, Mrs. Lane observed to her ayah, whose spiritual good she greatly desired, "This has been a very happy day to me, Sini. Would that every one in my compound resolved to choose the good part like Bibi Barakat."

"I should be very sorry to be as discontented and ungrateful as Bibi Barakat," replied Sini. "What does your honour think that she said to Nur Begam as soon as your honour's back was

turned? She said, 'My father, who kept an elephant, would have died rather than have seen me in such a hole as this, into which I have been put by the kafirs."

"Bibi Barakat could not have spoken thus," said the lady decidedly.

"Your honour may ask Nur Begam—you will believe her word," said the ayah.

"I should never ask Nur Begam to repeat what is said to her," observed the lady with some displeasure. "I dislike extremely anything of gossip." The lady only half believed the ayah's story; she rightly suspected exaggeration, and yet feared that there might be foundation of truth. Mrs. Lane's heart sank at the thought that, after all that she had done, after all her prayers for Barakat, and the kindness which she had shown to her for months, she had been preparing for herself a harvest of ingratitude. Barakat could hardly be a Christian at all if, on the very day of her baptism, she could speak of her benefactors as kafirs. A cloud had come over the sunshine of the missionary's joy, and her thought as she returned to her sitting-room was this, "One never knows whom to trust in this land. It would certainly be folly to expect gratitude from any native of this country."

Nur Begam went to rest that night quite cheerful and contented with herself. She never thought that the slightest harm had been done by her dangerous tongue.

Mrs. Lane visited Bibi Barakat in the morning, but the visit was not half so pleasant to either as had been that of the preceding day. Barakat was alone; her husband had gone to seek employment, and Yusuf to attend a day-school belonging to the Mission. The Moulvie's wife felt lonely, and grumbled about some difficulty in getting wood for her little fire.

The English lady could not help thinking of what she had heard about the hole and the kafirs. Her manner became a little constrained, and Barakat, who was sensitive, fancied that her best friend had already grown cold.

"The missionaries grasp our hands tightly enough till they lead us through the river of baptism," the new convert said to herself; "but when we are once through they leave us to scramble up the bank by ourselves." Barakat was unjust, but hers was an untutored mind; she had quick perceptions and warm feelings, but she had never been trained to reflect. She was as a fair but weak plant in a garden that

needs to be carefully twined round a firm support.

Mrs. Lane, on leaving Barakat's little house, turned into the next one, which was, as we know, that of Nur Begam.

"How refreshing it is to look on this dear woman's bright contented face," thought the lady. Nur Begam always welcomed the Mem Sahiba with a smile.

"Nur Begam," said Mrs. Lane, "you know, between my children, my school, and my city-work, how much my time is occupied. I cannot be with Bibi Barakat as much as I would wish to be; I depend upon her finding a friend in you. As you are aware, she cannot read; perhaps she might like you to teach her. At any rate, it is most desirable that you should read and explain the Bible to her."

Nur Begam looked more bright and pleasant than before. "I will do so with all my heart," she replied; "it is work for God, and a blessing goes with it. Not a day shall pass without my reading the Bible to Bibi Barakat."

Nur Begam was quite sincere when she spoke thus, and she kept her word. Every day she carried her Bible into Barakat's little enclosure, every day she read to her from the Holy Scriptures. Yes, Nur Begam read for perhaps

five minutes, and then chatted for an hour and a-half. Was her talk such as would help a young Christian on her difficult way? Did she cheer her companion when downcast with hopes of heaven? Did she speak to her of the Saviour's example? Was Barakat more holy or more happy for her intercourse with this experienced, well-trained Christian? Alas, no! words, idle words, mere gossip, even scandal was all that followed the reading of God's holy Word! If Nur Begam, as it were, dropped one good seed into her hearer's heart with her right hand, she choked it at once with a quantity of tare-seeds thrown in by the left. Barakat listened with amusement to stories of the follies of the mihtar's bibi, and the airs of the catechist's wife. She heard how Captain Leary Sahib was fond of brandy and water, which made his face like the comb of a cock—how he had kicked his punkah-wallah* for going to sleep, and had broken his cane over the back of the sais.† Barakat knew how much the Mem Sahiba's almira had cost, and how she had been cheated by the maker. The Moulvie's wife had always looked upon Nur Begam as a very good woman

* The man who pulls the huge fans stretched across rooms in India.

† Groom.

indeed, a kind of model Christian; she now began to think, "Christians are much like other folk; they talk just as my Mahometan neighbours used to talk. I heard a great deal before my baptism about giving up the world, and leading a holy life, and keeping my tongue from evil, but I see that it is not at all necessary to be so very strict. If I go to church and pray like Nur Begam, and do nothing shamefully wrong, now that I am baptised, I am safe, and sure to go to heaven when I die."

There are few errors more dangerous than this into which Nur Begam was leading her poor weak sister. She was making Barakat less watchful over herself, less conscientious, less anxious to keep God in all her thoughts, than she would have been had she never known this experienced Christian! Nur Begam, by her careless walk, was actually contradicting God's Word, which says that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. She was showing that she did not really believe what the Saviour declared, that *every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment!* With grief Mrs. Lane suspected that Barakat's love to her Lord was growing cold, that the newly baptised woman was more discontented, ungrateful, and worldly than she had

been before joining the Christian flock! The lady did not know, poor Nur Begam herself did not guess, that the fault chiefly lay in the trifling, silly, worldly gossip of a Christian woman's dangerous tongue!

About ten days after the Moulvie's family had come to the hut in the compound, Captain Leary and his wife paid their expected visit to the Padri Sahib. Barakat had been looking forward to Mrs. Leary's coming with great impatience. Scarcely an anna (about three halfpence) was now left in the Moulvie's house; he had as yet failed in every attempt to get a permanent situation, and he would not apply for help to the missionaries, whose means were small, and who had already done so much. Bibi Barakat hoped to bring in a supply of rupees by the sale of very pretty work in net, of which she had prepared a little store. It was the first time that the Moulvie's Bibi had ever attempted to sell anything, she was half-pleased, half-frightened, half-ashamed.

It was no small effort to the woman who had lived so long in purdah to go to the missionary's house, and sell her work to a stranger lady, but necessity compelled her to do it. Wrapping her white chaddar very closely around

her, Bibi Barakat ventured across the compound, and soon found herself in the presence of Mrs. Leary, to whom Mrs. Lane had warmly recommended the newly baptised Christian.

When the Moulvie returned in the evening from an unsuccessful attempt to get a clerk's place in a warehouse, he found his wife feverish and unwell, and anything but pleased with the result of her visit to the Captain's Mem Sahiba.

"I will never go near her again!" cried Bibi Barakat. "She is proud, and rude, and does not know how to treat a Moulvie's wife. I wish that my own Mem Sahiba had been present to teach the proud Feringhee manners. She never asked me to sit down. She called me 'tu' in her horribly bad Urdu, which I could hardly understand."

"It was probably the Sahiba's ignorance that was the cause of her rudeness," observed the Moulvie.

"I was shown into her dressing-room," continued Barakat, "where the Sahiba was brushing her hair—her long yellow hair; she had sent out her ayah with the baby. She kept me waiting for ever so long, just as if I were an ayah myself, and had to stand behind her, and obey her commands. I had nothing to do but

to look about me, and admire her jewels as they lay on the table before her. Oh! what jewels the Captain's Mem has!" exclaimed Barakat, in a loud tone of admiration, "they were fit for a Rajah's wife! There were two little diamond stars, and——"

"Never mind the Mem Sahiba's jewels," said the Moulvie quietly. "Did she speak to you at last?"

The changed look on Barakat's face showed plainly that she admired the lady much less than her jewels. "Yes; when she had put up her hair she spoke to me, as if I were a beggar!" said the daughter of the lord of five villages. "She called me 'tu,' and tumbled over all my beautiful work, and examined it, and then gave it all back, saying something—I could not make out what she meant, so she repeated it sharply, as if she thought me stupid. I think that the Mem said that the work was not good enough for her liking. She did not take so much as an anna's worth, said, '*Hat ja!*' (begone!) and sent me away! I do not believe that the Captain's proud Sahiba is either a real lady or a Christian at all!"

"There are many called Christians who are such only in name," said the Moulvie, who was almost as indignant as his wife.

"It was the Captain Sahib who kicked the punkah-wallah!" muttered Barakat, pressing her hot hand against her brow, for she had a violent headache. "I dare say that his Mem Sahiba beats her ayah. Nur Begam has told me that she has heard that——"

"Do not think more about the Sahiba," said the Moulvie, who did not care to hear one of Nur Begam's long gossiping stories repeated by his wife. "Let us consider something of more importance to us. What shall we do for to-morrow's food? You told me that you have only enough átá for to-day, and I have not an anna with which to buy more."

"I have been thinking of that," said poor Barakat, tears starting to her eyes as she drew from her feverish wrists the heavy silver bracelets which she wore. "You must take these and sell them, they will bring a good many rupees."

"I cannot take the jewels from you!" exclaimed the Moulvie, who knew how dearly the women of India prize the ornaments which they wear.

"You must and shall take them, and sell them too!" cried Barakat, almost impatiently. "But don't sell them here—not in this city;

people would talk, and I cannot bear talking!" Then laying down her ornaments, she rose and with a bitter sigh went into her little hut. There she laid herself down on her charpai, and burst into tears. Either from excitement or vexation, or perhaps from the heat of the weather, fever was strong on the Moulvie's poor wife, and a day of disappointment was followed by a night without sleep.

That same evening Nur Begam had her usual treat of a gossip with Sini, whilst the latter refreshed herself by smoking her hookah. Nur Begam seldom went into her next-door neighbour's house when the Moulvie was in it; she preferred sitting with Sini.

"So your new Christian wanted to sell her work to the Captain's Mem Sahiba," said Sini, who had just taken the hookah out of her mouth.

"Poor Bibi Barakat returned not much satisfied I should think from the tone of her voice when she was speaking just now to her husband," replied Nur Begam. "She was very full of the Sahiba's jewels, some diamond stars that she saw, and spoke about their being sold in another town, I suppose that she meant bought, for it is not likely that so grand a lady

as the Captain's Mem would think of selling her jewels."

"I heard from her ayah that those diamond stars cost a lakh of rupees" (£1000), observed Sini, who, as usual, added a good deal of falsehood to truth.

"Ah, these are all worldly vanities!" observed Nur Begam. She inwardly congratulated herself that she was not so fond of finery as either the lady or the Moulvie's wife. Nur Begam had a pretty good idea of her own wisdom, and never guessed what an amount of mischief she had done in one minute with her dangerous tongue.

Bibi Barakat was so unwell in the morning that her son Yusuf begged to be allowed to stay from school to nurse her; but she would not allow him to do so.

"My Mem Sahiba will come and give me medicine," she said, "and dear, kind Nur Begam will do everything for me, I know. She has just brought me these nice chapatties of her own making. Do you eat them, my son, for I cannot taste a morsel of food. Just put the water-jar by my charpai."

The Moulvie started early, on account of the heat, for he had a long way to traverse on foot.

He was going to Panipur, a town about ten miles off, to see a native magistrate from whom he hoped to get some employment. He took his wife's bracelets with him to sell at the place.

The fiery sun had not long showed his beams above the horizon when Mrs. Leary's ayah, Molu, in a state of great excitement, ran to the little house in the compound occupied by Sini, Mrs. Lane's ayah.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" she exclaimed. "My Mem has been robbed of her two diamond stars! We have been looking for them in every corner, and nowhere are they to be found!" The poor creature beat her breast, and cried in her great distress.

"The diamond stars lost!" exclaimed Sini, "and lost in my Mem Sahiba's house! Such a thing never happened before."

"I'm sure that I never touched them—I was in my last place four years—I had the best of chits*—I would not take so much as a pin!" sobbed out poor Molu, who knew that her character was at stake.

"No, no, you never took the jewels—but I know who did!" said Sini mysteriously.

* A written character.

Molu was all interest and curiosity. "Who was it? who was it?" she cried.

"Why, Nur Begam overheard that new Christian, that smooth-tongued hypocrite, about whom my Mem makes such a fuss—Nur Begam overheard the sneaking creature tell her husband to take two diamond stars and sell them—but in some other town, the farther off the better." Sini was not sorry to get the new-comer, of whom she was jealous, into a scrape.

The word was more than enough. Back rushed Molu, breathless into the presence of Mrs. Leary, only too glad to have found out the thief, and so to be able to clear herself from suspicion.

The missionary and his wife, according to their custom during the hot weather, had gone before six o'clock to their work in the city. They little guessed what would take place during their absence. Their guests at once believed the slanderous story brought to them by the ayah.

"Of course it was that wretched native woman who stole my jewels!" exclaimed Mrs. Leary. "I am certain that they were on my toilette-table before she came in with her trashy work, for I remember, from her reflection

in my looking-glass as she stood behind me, noticing how she eyed them!"

"But were you insane enough to leave her alone in the room with them!" exclaimed the red-faced Captain.

"Oh no! I never left the room for one moment," said the lady; "but I think that I went to my desk—I cannot remember for what purpose—and as soon as my back was turned the wretch must have snapped up my diamond stars, and hidden them under her chaddar."

"I'll be off to the police station at once, and get one of the constables to help me to search the house!" cried the Captain, starting up from the lounging-chair on which he had been reclining. "I'll sift this matter to the bottom. If the jewels are in their house, I'll have both the man and the woman dragged to jail. I should like to have that hypocritical Moulvie flogged within an inch of his life."

"I don't care what you do so long as you get back my stars, my beautiful stars!" cried the lady to her husband, who had kicked off his slippers, and was now tugging to get on his boots. "To think of such vile thieves calling themselves Christians!"

Neither the Captain nor his wife were Christians themselves, though they had been baptised

when babies. The lady cared only for the things of this world—her dress, her jewels, her amusements. The Sahib was one of those who not only take no interest in missions, but regard them with an actual dislike, which they scarcely attempt to conceal. Captain Leary in a loud voice had often declared that there was not, never had been, and never would be a single real native convert in India; that all who pretended to be so were hyprocrites, and that all who believed them were fools. "I believe that there are as many white tigers as native Christians," was a favourite saying of the Captain's. Of course he was utterly ignorant on the subject; he did not even know a single language of India well enough to speak in it on religious matters. Having never himself done or given up anything for the sake of his faith, the Captain did not choose to believe that natives of India could be more earnest than himself. He was pleased that those whom he so unjustly disliked and despised should be exposed as cheats. The Captain would not have given up his box of cigars to have had all India converted. It is such men as these that cause Hindús and Mahomedans to undervalue a religion whose professors act in a way so contrary to its precepts. They might with as much justice deny

that fig-trees bear excellent fruit because they see none upon thistles.

The Captain went off in such haste to the police station that he forgot to take his white-covered umbrella, or exchange his smoking-cap for a topi. He was in such a passion that it was well for the Moulvie that he had started early for Panipur, and was therefore not in his house when the Sahib and the police came to search it for the lost jewels.

When Mrs. Lane, driven home early by the intense heat, returned much tired from her work, she was met at the door of her bungalow by poor Nur Begam, who was sobbing and wringing her hands.

"What has happened? Is anything the matter with the children?" cried the lady in great alarm.

"Oh no! not with the children," sobbed Nur Begam, who was so agitated that she scarcely could speak distinctly. "But oh! there have been such dreadful doings whilst you were away. The Captain's Sahiba's diamond stars have been stolen, and the Sahib has been furious as a tiger—you could hear his voice a mile off! And he brought the police to search Bibi Barakat's house, for he is sure and certain that she is the

thief. He would go in, though I begged and prayed him not to do so. I told him that Barakat was ill, and to have men come searching her room would break her heart, or drive her quite mad. But he stamped his foot, and in he would go, and every nook and corner was hunted—under the mat, in the vessels, amongst the thatch; but nothing was found. At last——"and here Nur Begam fairly broke down—she could not finish her sentence for weeping.

Mrs. Lane had only understood about half of the broken sentences rapidly uttered by Nur Begam, but she comprehended enough to make her greatly distressed. Bibi Barakat had been falsely accused, the privacy of her home had been rudely invaded, she was ill and in misery. Forgetful of weariness or anything but the troubles of her dear convert, the missionary lady hurried across the compound to the little house which had been lent to the Moulvie, closely followed by Nur Begam. If Mrs. Lane had not known the place she would have been guided to it by the little crowd of women and children that thronged the doorway, and by the delirious cries of the poor sufferer within.

Mrs. Lane at once turned every one out of the house except Nur Begam, whose services she required. She sent off one boy for the

doctor, and another to her bungalow for some medicine. The lady then went up to the charpai on which poor Barakat lay, and laid her hand gently on the burning brow of the fever-patient. Barakat did not recognise her friend, but, starting up to a sitting position, stared wildly around her in terror. In her delirium the sufferer mistook Nur Begam for one of the police, and shrieked to her to keep off. "I never took the stars! I will not go to jail! Begone! begone!" she wildly exclaimed; then, exhausted by her own violence, Barakat sank back senseless on the charpai.

It was not until Mrs. Lane, with the help of the trembling Nur Begam, had done all that she could for the relief of the sufferer, that she so much as asked a single question. But when the Moulvie's wife lay motionless, with a damp bandage over her brow, and no further aid could for the present be given, then Mrs. Lane, seating herself on another charpai, asked Nur Begam how it was possible that such dreadful suspicions could ever have arisen regarding one of such unblemished character as Bibi Barakat.

Nur Begam was not weeping now, she was too miserable even for tears. She was as one humbled to the dust, for she knew but too well

that she herself had been the first cause of the mischief.

"Oh! it has been all a dreadful mistake," said Nur Begam, sinking down on the mat at the feet of her lady, "The Captain's Mem's ayah says that I—that I said that I saw poor Bibi Barakat put her mistress's two diamond stars into the hand of the Moulvie, and that I heard her tell him to sell them at a place a long long way off. I never said such a thing—I never could have told such a lie. I don't believe that poor Bibi Barakat ever so much as touched the diamonds, or thought of committing the sin of stealing. I told the Captain Sahib so again and again, but he stormed and would not listen."

"But what *did* you say about Barakat and the diamonds?" asked the lady very gravely; for she felt that she had not yet got to the bottom of the truth. "If I am to be of any use in this matter, I must know exactly what has happened, and how the first mistake arose. Be frank with me, Nur Begam. Had you said anything at all about the lady's jewels?"

"Well—perhaps something—I scarcely remember what," said Nur Begam, who was so much accustomed to speak without thinking

that it was very difficult for her to recall her idle words.

"Take time to reflect," said Mrs. Lane. "Remember that this is a matter of importance."

Nur Begam thus urged, began in a hesitating tone. "I know that I overheard poor Bibi Barakat saying something to her husband about the Sahiba's diamond stars, and that they were to be sold or bought somewhere,—I don't know the name of the place. I just mentioned this to Sini, and she must have repeated my words all wrong. I'm sure that I meant no harm—I never thought of doing any mischief by talking a little to Sini!" Nur Begam hid her face in her hands.

"O Nur Begam! you listened—you overheard —you repeated!" exclaimed Mrs. Lane in much distress. "When, oh! when will you learn that such meanness is quite unworthy of a Christian! When, oh! when will you know how to govern your dangerous tongue."

The Captain returned from his fruitless search in Barakat's hut exceedingly hot, and exceedingly angry. He flung himself down on his easy-chair, stormed at the punkah-wallah for not pulling hard enough, flung off his cap, kicked off his boots, and wiped his fiery face.

"I am not going to be baffled," he said to his wife, who was reclining on a sofa near. "That Moulvie has sneaked off with the jewels, but I'll hunt him out, I'll track him if he go all the way to Calcutta. I'll have the hypocrite kicking his heels in a jail. I'll write to the magistrate at once. I see you've your desk beside you —just give me pen and paper—there's not an hour to be lost."

The lady was very unwilling to take the trouble of rising from her sofa, but she was very much afraid of her husband, especially when he was in one of his fits of temper. Slowly Mrs. Leary went up to her desk, slowly she turned the key in the lock, as if to do so were as fatiguing as to lift the load of a coolie.

"I suspected that native woman from the first moment that I set eyes upon her," observed the lady as she opened her desk. "I said to myself—dear! how odd!" The Sahiba looked astonished, amused, and then broke into a little half laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the Captain peevishly; he was not in a mood for jesting.

"Why, here are my two diamond stars!" said his wife, pleased, yet rather embarrassed.

"How funny that I should have forgotten locking them up safe in my desk!"

"Funny, do you call it!" cried the passionate Captain, starting up from his seat. "Is it fun that I have made an ass of myself before all the coolies in the compound—that I have brought the police here on a ridiculous search for what was all the time snug in the desk of my wife! Is it fun that my head aches as if it would split! I do believe that I have a touch of the sun!" The Captain threw himself again on his easy-chair in a towering rage, for he really felt sick and ill, the room seemed to be swimming around him.

"I am extremely sorry," said Mrs. Leary, who knew too well what kind of life would be hers if her husband had fever or sunstroke. "I can't think how I was so forgetful. But this horrible heat makes one's head good for nothing!"

"We shall have annoyed my cousin extremely; we shall have stirred up a nest of hornets, and shall never hear the end of the matter!" cried the angry man. "Besides, I really was hard on the woman; I thought that she was shamming sickness, but I believe that she really is ill. I should not have taken the police into her house. I do not know what the conse-

quences may be of your thoughtless folly and my impatience." The Captain, with all his faults, was an honourable man, and he reproached himself with the cruelty which he felt that he had shown towards a helpless woman.

"Oh! don't trouble yourself about the woman," said Mrs. Leary lightly; "these people don't feel as we do; no doubt the bakhshish of a rupee will make all right in a minute."

The lady would not have thus spoken had she known into what deep misery she had been the means of plunging a whole family. She went out, wearing her brilliant stars, to a dinner-party that evening; her husband, being distracted with headache, had to send his excuse. The lady did not see the bitter grief of poor Yusuf, when, on coming from school, he found his mother delirious, quite unconscious of his presence. The Moulvie returned, tired but happy, in the afternoon from his expedition to Panipur. He had sold the bracelets, and had obtained the promise of a small situation, which would make him at least independent.

"How pleased my Bibi will be!" the good man said to himself as he came in sight of the

compound. "I am almost exhausted with the heat and fatigue, but to be the bearer of such good news makes up for it all."

Mr. Lane had been on the watch for the Moulvie's return, in order to break to him gently the terrible news which awaited him. The missionary came forth from the verandah and met the Moulvie before the latter had time to reach his own little home. The grave look on Mr. Lane's face prepared the weary man to hear something painful. As gently as he could, the sympathising missionary broke to the poor convert the tidings of what had occurred in his absence, and the present condition of his wife. Her fever raged so high that the doctor gave little hope of her recovery.

The Moulvie was as a man stunned. His first feeling was that of utter misery, his next that of fiery indignation. Gradually, piece by piece, he learned from others the whole story of the gossip and exaggeration to which his poor wife had been the victim. The result of it he could see with his own eyes. His poor wife did not recognise the husband who bent in anguish over her; when he called her by her name, no reply came but a moan. Nur Begam, on her knees, was bathing with iced water the

head of her friend. The Moulvie was of too generous a nature to speak a word of reproach to the almost broken-hearted woman, but he thought in the bitterness of his soul, "Her tongue has struck deeper than any dagger; she has stabbed my wife in the dark."

There was indeed no need to speak an angry word to Nur Begam, her conscience was full of self-reproach. She now saw with fearful distinctness that she had for many many years been living in the constant commission of sin, hitherto *unrepented sin!* What a terrible number of idle words had been written down in God's book against her! How many a character she had almost unconsciously blackened; how her gossip had tended to divide friends, and make mischief in homes! How unlike—oh! how unlike had her conversation been to that which becomes a follower of the pure and holy Saviour! Had He not been listening all the time!

For fourteen days and nights Nur Begam seldom left the bedside of Bibi Barakat. The Moulvie and Yusuf did not watch the sufferer with more devoted care; the father and son did not pray more fervently that a precious life might be spared. Those earnest prayers were answered; the crisis of the fever came,

and passed; and when the doctor pronounced Barakat out of danger, all felt as if a dear one had been restored to them from the dead. Nur Begam thanked God with tears, as she and Mrs. Lane knelt together in the lady's study; and when they arose from their knees, the missionary thought that the poor woman looked ten years older after that terrible fortnight of watching and woe.

Half dizzy and ill with want of sleep, Nur Begam went back to her own little home, which, for two weeks she had seldom entered. She stood for some moments with her hands clasped, looking at the illuminated text which hung on her wall. Then slowly, and from the depths of her heart, came the humble prayer, "O my God! have mercy on me, a miserable sinner! Forgive all my past sins, specially the sin of the lips. And oh! not only on my wall, but on my heart let Thy Word be written, '*I will take heed unto my ways, that I offend not with my tongue!*'"

The Boy who Won Seven Victories.

YUSUF, the Moulvie's son, took for the first time his place in a Goverment school in the town of Panipur. It was not the first day of the term, though it was the first day of his arrival in the city, and the lad was a little late. A number of boys were already seated on the mat, with their books, their takhtas,* and their kalams† before them. The master, Mahomed Bakhsh, had just gone to his seat, where the great map was hung against the wall. Yusuf respectfully salamed to the master, and then looked to see where he could take his own place on the mat. But wherever he turned the half-circle of boys of his class huddled closer together, as if to say, "There's no room for you!" Yusuf met nothing but looks of dislike or contempt, mingled with a little curiosity. Though the master's presence prevented rude words being spoken aloud, Yusuf could easily enough read the faces of his new companions, and he saw written there anything but welcome. They

* A small wooden board used as a slate.

† A pen made of a reed.

seemed to him to say, "How dare this fellow come amongst us!" Poor Yusuf turned appealingly to the master. The countenance of Mahomed Bakhsh was stern and hard. He pointed to a place near the door, and there, like an outcast, poor Yusuf had to take his seat. With a bitter sense of humiliation, the lad put down his kalam and little ink-bottle beside him, feeling more lonely in that crowded room than he might have done in a desert.

And why was Yusuf thus despised and made to take the lowest place? Was he a liar or a thief? Had his father been hanged for murder, or transported beyond the sea? No, but his father and mother, and Yusuf himself, had been baptised as Christians. Yusuf was the noblest-looking boy in the school. His dress was spotlessly clean; his reading-book, though not a new one, showed not a blot or a crease—yet was he treated like a pariah! Buláki, the chumar's nephew, despised him; Gamu, the son of a khitmatgar, made a face at him; yet all knew that Yusuf's father was a learned Moulvie, and but six months before there was not a boy in the school but would have been proud to have called Yusuf his friend.*

* This is scarcely a fancy picture. I myself know a boy of remarkably handsome and gentlemanly appear-

What were the thoughts of poor Yusuf as he bent over his takhta, struggling to keep down tears, determined that not one should fall on the letters that he found it hard to trace while his mind was so full of trouble?

"This is almost more than I can bear!" thought the lad; "how dare these low-caste boys treat thus the son of a Moulvie! My mother's father kept an elephant, and was the owner of five villages; the parents of some of my schoolfellows may have run barefoot after him asking for alms! Am I to meet with

ance, who, from the same cause, found himself in a position much the same as that of Yusuf. My young friend and his parents (who had been Mahomedans) had been baptised in Amritsar. The father, a Moulvie (one who, before his conversion, had been greatly beloved and honoured by the followers of the faith of Islam), took a situation in a place where there were no other native Christians. The boy was sent to school, and at first was not suffered to sit beside even the lowest of his companions. He had to take his place in the doorway. Subsequently, as I hear, the Moulvie's son has won by his conduct the respect of those who once despised him. He has such a character for truth that the master says that he would take his word against the rest of the school. The boy is still very young, but already has had to bear some of the weight of the Christian's cross. He and his father have been sent away thirsty from a well, because they were known to be Christians.

insult from such as these!" Pride was strong in the heart of Yusuf.

Yes, pride was strong; but in that young heart there was something stronger than he. Yusuf was no mere picture of a Christian; there was life in his faith. He had really meant what he said when he vowed in baptism to fight manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yusuf knew that the pride of birth is of the world, and that to wrestle it down is to resist Shaitán (Satan). While Yusuf was silently writing to the master's dictation, he was even at that time both fighting and praying. Christ's words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly," were the sword with which Yusuf fought the enemy. He remembered that his Master had submitted to be despised and rejected, that He had endured even to be struck on the face!

"My Saviour was content to take the lowest place," thought the boy. "He to whom angels gave reverence, He let Himself be treated as if He were the basest of mankind! And shall I, a poor boy, murmur at meeting with a little contempt! O my God! help me to conquer this sin!" And so, before the takhta was covered with writing, Yusuf, the newly baptised Christian, had wrestled down pride.

But Yusuf had more, much more fighting to come. If his position had been painful during school-time, it was far worse when school-time was over. The boys, like a buzzing swarm of bees, went forth into the street; Yusuf more slowly followed. He found a crowd of young tormentors ready to tease and insult him.

"Here comes our Amir!" (nobleman), cried one. "Where did he get his fine clothes?"

"Oh! they were a present from the Padri Sahib, to be sure!" cried the khitmatgar's lad. "Folk don't become turncoats for nothing!"

"Here's a little work for the dhobi!" (washerman), laughed Buláki, taking up a handful of mud, and flinging it partly on Yusuf's white dress, and partly upon his face. But the worst tormentor of all was Abdulla, the teacher's son. This boy was a sharp, clever, little fellow, and being an only son, born after five daughters, he was much petted and spoiled in the zenana. Everything that Abdulla said was thought clever and witty. Now his delight was to pelt his unfortunate schoolfellow with insolent jokes, which were to the Moulvie's son worse than the mud on his dress and his face.

"What did your father get for his stooping to lick up dust by becoming a Christian?"

asked Abdulla, peering up insolently into the face of Yusuf, who was nearly a head taller than himself.

"Grief and loss!" replied Yusuf, with flashing eyes. "My father is now a poor man."

"Oh! he'll not starve, he'll not starve!" cried Abdulla, with a mocking laugh; "he and you will have all the scrapings of the Feringhees' dishes, and rob the mihtar* of his due. You'll get fat upon swine's flesh!" It was hard, very hard for Yusuf to refrain from knocking down his tormentor, and sending him sprawling into the dust.

For some time poor Yusuf had to endure this baiting; he only escaped at last by turning off into a path which led him right out of the city, and into a jungle which lay at the distance of about half-a-mile. Like a hunted animal he plunged right into the thickest part, and had the comfort of at last finding himself alone. The lad threw himself down under a tree, and

* The extreme insolence of the taunt will hardly be perceived by those unacquainted with the manners and customs of India. An Englishman's own table-servant would not condescend to eat what was left at table. The leavings go to the mihtar, or sweeper, whose caste is considered so very low that the man who waits at table, or the kahar who carries the dhuli, would feel quite degraded by associating with him at meals.

a sound, something like a sob, burst from his bosom.

"I can't attend that school!" Yusuf muttered. "I would rather die a hundred times over than have every day to endure misery like this. I will tell my father that I cannot go back. It would be better to carry loads like a coolie!"

So thought Yusuf at first, but in the quiet of that lonely place better feelings prevailed.

"My parents will be grievously disappointed if I keep from school, and they have had so much, so very much to suffer of late. My father has with difficulty paid my entrance-fee, for his pay in his new situation is so small. He has had more insults to bear than I have, and if he knew how I suffer he would have added grief. There is no other school to which I can go in this place; my father is too busy to teach me, and if I do not learn, how can I be worthy of him! I have often heard my father repeat the Lord's words, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.' I suppose that going to this hateful school is my cross; I should never have had to suffer in this way if I had not been a Christian." And then Yusuf remembered other words of the Saviour, and they were to him as water to a

thirsty soul, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Then Yusuf prayed in the quiet jungle. When he and his father had been Mahomedans they had regularly prayed five times a-day, and had conscientiously obeyed all the rules of their religion. But Yusuf felt a great difference between the formal prayers to which he had been accustomed, and his present pouring out of the heart to God. It was now to him not a mere duty, but a very great comfort to pray. The griefs which he felt that he should hide from his earthly parents, that he might not add to their heavy cares, he freely told to his Heavenly Father. And the help which his human parents could not give he could trustingly ask from his God.

Yusuf rose from his knees much refreshed; he determined to go bravely on with his studies, submit his will to God's will, and bear with courage and patience the insults of his companions.

But if Shaitán, the tempter, be resisted on the one side, he often makes a desperate attack on the other. When Yusuf thought of God, and of all that the Lord had endured, and how sweet it is to bear something for Him, then his spirit found rest. But when he turned his

thoughts to his own enemies, when he remembered the mud thrown at him by Buláki, the mocking grin of Gamu, and, above all, the stinging insults of Abdulla, his whole soul seemed to be on fire.

"They are curs—snarling, biting curs!" he exclaimed aloud, with a burst of passionate anger which astonished himself. "I should like to knock them all down, and kick them!"

Were such words meet for the lips of a Christian? Was one who could utter them indeed a follower of Him who said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you?"

Yusuf had had on that day to fight a hard battle against pride, and another against self-will, the strong desire to put away from him a cross that he found so heavy. But he had a third battle, and perhaps the hardest of all, to fight in that lonely jungle against the spirit of hatred. The struggle was too severe for his strength; Yusuf felt that he must and would hate the cruel boys to whom he had done no wrong, and who yet delighted to mock and torment him. At last Yusuf remembered that it is only through the

power of God's Holy Spirit that we can conquer the sin in our hearts, and that the Spirit is promised in answer to prayer. Again Yusuf prostrated himself on the ground, and prayed aloud to the Hearer of prayer: "O my Heavenly Father! send Thy Holy Spirit into my heart to drive out this evil spirit of hatred! I cannot now love my enemies, but Thy Spirit can teach me to do so—can make my sinful heart holy. I want to be like Him who healed the wound of His enemy, and prayed on the cross for His murderers. O my God! for Christ's sake, give me Thy Holy Spirit!" Even as he uttered the words Yusuf was able to add, "And, Lord! have mercy on those boys; let the light of the Gospel shine upon them! Oh! turn their hearts, and specially the heart of Abdulla! All things are possible to Thee!"

Before Yusuf met his father and mother on the evening of that day, the Christian boy had won three great victories, nobler victories than those which make conquerors famous. Yusuf had, with God's help, wrestled down pride, self-will, and hatred.

On the following day Yusuf took care to go very early to school, so that he avoided meeting

any of the boys on their way to the place. Abdulla, however, was before him, and his tongue had lost none of its sting.

"Here comes the son of a kafir!" he cried. "He and his renegade father have cast so much dust on their ancestors' graves that the tombs are buried out of sight, and the cattle walk over them without knowing. But may be it is no fault of yours," Abdulla added, with a provoking look of mock pity; "you let yourself be made a kafir for fear of a thrashing from your father. I dare say that when he is out of the way you'd repeat the Kulma for the sake of an anna, or even a pice."*

"My father is a Christian, and I am a Christian, and I would not repeat the Kulma for the sake of a lakh of rupees!" cried Yusuf, as he seated himself on the floor.

On the first day the young Christian had been so much troubled by the rudeness and unkindness with which he met, that he had neither read nor written with his usual clearness and correctness; but on the second day he exerted himself to the utmost.

"They shall see that a Christian boy is not an idle boy," said Yusuf to himself.

* An anna is about three halfpence; a pice is its third part.

Yusuf was clever, more so, perhaps, than any other of the pupils in the class, excepting Abdulla. His writing was so clear and even, his reply to every question so ready and correct, that the teacher began to think, "This boy will be a credit to the school." Mahomed Bakhsh's manner became less stern, and Yusuf felt that though his young companions might dislike and annoy, yet they could not really despise him. His place might be lowest on the floor, but it was likely to be highest in the class. The poor lad recovered his spirits a little.

But just when lessons were over, something occurred to try the young Christian yet more. Mahomed Bakhsh called to mind something that had greatly annoyed him that morning. He had searched for an hour in vain for a scrap of paper on which he had noted down some important calculations. To replace that paper would cost him hours of wearisome labour. It now occurred to the teacher that he might have dropped the paper in his evening walk.

"Boys," he said to his scholars, "have any of you chanced to see on the road a small bit of yellowish paper, on which some figures were written in red ink?"

A general answer of "No, your honour, I

have not seen it," arose from all the boys except Yusuf. The quick eye of the teacher noticed that the Moulvie's son was silent. Mahomed Bakhsh turned abruptly to Yusuf and repeated the question, "Did you see such a scrap of paper?"

"Yes, your honour," replied Yusuf, "I noticed a very little bit of paper with red figures on it lying on the road."

"Did you pick it up? what did you do with it?" asked the teacher, with eager impatience. "I would not lose it for twenty rupees!"

A very sharp, though very short battle went on in Yusuf's breast before he gave a reply. He knew that to speak the truth would make Mahomed Bakhsh exceedingly angry, and it would be so easy, so natural to say, "I left the paper where it was lying." A very short battle indeed it was, but in these three seconds Yusuf had time to remember that "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," and to dart upwards a little prayer for courage to speak the truth. He then to the teacher's question, repeated more loudly, gave reply, though with a trembling lip, "I am very sorry for what I did, your honour; I did not know that the scrap of paper was of use to any one; I——"

"You did *what?*" shouted out Mahomed Bakhsh fiercely, as poor Yusuf hesitated a little.

"I pushed it aside with my foot, into the gutter."

The teacher arose in a furious rage, in such a rage that he forgot his usual sense of justice. "You young ass, and son of an ass!" he exclaimed, "I'll teach you what comes of kicking valuable papers into the gutter!" and rushing upon poor Yusuf, he inflicted on him a severe beating in the presence of all the school.

Yusuf writhed under the cruel blows, but he uttered no cry. The Christian boy bore the unjustly inflicted punishment like a hero.

"He is as brave as Rustam!" thought Abdulla.

"There, get you gone!" cried the teacher, flinging from him the bruised and suffering boy. Many of Yusuf's schoolfellows laughed, but Abdulla did not laugh. It was to a reflecting mind such as his like a wonderful riddle why a lad should take a severe beating rather than utter an easy lie,—a lie which, as it seemed to Abdulla, would have done harm to no one.

"That Yusuf is the strangest fellow that I ever met with in my life," thought Abdulla; "I wonder whether his sticking to the truth

through thick and thin comes of his being a Christian!"

Yusuf was in violent pain, his back covered with bruises and wales, but his mind was in even greater suffering as once more he sought the quiet shelter of the friendly jungle. Yusuf had never been beaten before, not even with a slipper. His soul rose in fierce rebellion against a trial so new. In that miserable hour the Christian had to struggle against the worst enemy of all. Shaitán was putting into his heart doubts of the love and justice of God!

"It is in vain that I have tried to serve and please God!" exclaimed Yusuf, flinging himself on the ground. "It is in vain, that though sorely tempted, I would not give way to fear or falsehood, but kept my tongue from evil. God does not see, or does not care—what is the use of fighting or praying!" Then Yusuf was startled at the wickedness of his own thought, and was more grieved for this heart-sin than some would have been for an open crime.

"What an evil heart of unbelief is mine!" he cried. "May God forgive me for doubting His wisdom and love! Can I not trust my

Heavenly Father when I know that all things work for good to them that love Him! Ought I not to consider it an honour and not a disgrace to suffer for speaking the truth! God can and will make up for all. It is better to be miserable for a short time in this world than wretched for ever in the next. None of God's servants have ever been the worse in the end for obeying His holy commands. There is Yusuf,* whose name I bear; he was falsely accused and thrown into prison because he refused to do wrong. Did not God make his very prison the pathway to a palace! Perhaps Yusuf was, like me, tempted to think that God had forgotten him, but I am sure that he conquered such unbelief. Yes, yes, though cruelty and injustice have almost broken my heart, I will try to say, like Job, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'"

This sore conflict with temptation lasted for more than an hour, and the victory over unbelief was only won through prayer. Yusuf had just finished praying when he was suddenly startled by a loud piercing cry for help from another part of the wood. The boy sprang to his feet and listened. The cry for help came again and again! Then catching up a thick piece of

* Yusuf is the Oriental name for Joseph.

bamboo that was lying on the ground, Yusuf rushed towards the place from whence the cries proceeded. It was no easy matter to force his way through the jungle, but, careless of tearing his clothes, he pushed through the brushwood, and soon came to a small open space in the wood.

In that open space stood poor, trembling Abdulla, trying with a cane to keep off a large wolf that, open-mouthed, was running round and round him, watching for an opportunity to spring at his throat. The wolf, when single, does not usually attack human beings, but either the small size of Abdulla, or the pressure of hunger, had made the wild beast resolve to make a dinner of the poor lad. Abdulla, with his eyes almost starting from his head, looked the picture of terror. His strength was failing; he was just giving himself up as lost, when, with a shout, Yusuf rushed to his aid.

That sudden shout, and the hearty blow which came down on the head of the wolf, made the beast alter his mind. He had dared to attack one shrieking boy, but to fight two, and one of them able to hit so hard, was quite a different matter. With a howl of mingled rage and fear, the wild beast turned, rushed away, and buried himself in the thicket again.

The joy and relief to Abdulla were so great that, rather to Yusuf's surprise, he threw himself into the arms of his preserver.

"Oh! you have saved me—have saved me!" he cried; "I will never, never forget it! I have treated you so ill; my father has beaten you so hard that I should have expected you to have been rather glad than sorry if I had been torn to pieces by the wolf."

"That would not be like a Christian," replied Yusuf, with a smile.

Abdulla did not care to stop for another minute in the jungle, dreading a second attack from the wolf. The two boys returned to the open plain, where, as the city was in sight, there was no fear of the wild beast venturing to come. Then the two, so lately enemies, the Mahomedan boy and the Christian, seated themselves side by side under a tree. Abdulla made Yusuf share some fruit which he carried in his kamarband. The teacher's son, whose conscience was reproaching him for his former conduct, looked sadly at the torn and stained garments of Yusuf.

"They looked so white and clean but yesterday," he said; "now they are muddy, and stained, and tattered!"

"I shall have new ones—at least before long," replied Yusuf; he hesitated a little through a feeling of shame, and then truthfulness made him add, "I mean when my father can afford to give them."

The grateful Abdulla silently resolved that Yusuf should have a better dress than the first, without causing any expense to the Moulvie. He said nothing for several moments, and then remarked, looking earnestly into the face of Yusuf, "There is one thing that I want much to know. What is it that makes you so different from all the rest of us boys? Did you speak the truth to-day, when any one else would have told a lie, because you are a Christian?"

Yusuf nodded his head in assent.

"And did you forgive all my rudeness, and help me when I was in danger, because you are a Christian?"

"Yes; for our religion bids us forgive as we have been forgiven," said Yusuf.

"I cannot think that it is a false religion after all," observed Abdulla, "though our people say that you Christians are kafirs, and will go to Gehannam.* To show kindness, forgiveness, and truthfulness does not seem like the

* The abode of the lost.

way to that place. But I should like to ask you another question."

"Ask what you please," said Yusuf.

"Were you baptised only because your father wished you to be so, or did you know anything about the difference between the two religions yourself?"

"My father has explained to me a great deal about the difference," replied Yusuf. "He said that he would never take me blindfolded along a difficult path."

"But is the difference between the religions so very great?" asked the teacher's son. "We believe in Hasrat Isa* as you do, we think that He was born by miracle, never did any sin, came to teach mankind, and was a very great Prophet."

"We believe all this, and a great deal more," replied Yusuf. "We believe that Christ not only came to teach mankind, but to bear on the

* This is the title commonly given to our Lord by the Mahomedans in the Punjab; it might be translated as Saint Jesus. The respectful title of Hasrat is also usually given to Moses, Abraham, or other distinguished saints. I avoid using it in regard to our Lord, as it seems to put Him on a level with His servants. The false prophet is often spoken of by his followers as Mahomed Sahib, which harmless epithet I should simply translate as "Mr. Mahomed."

cross the punishment of their sins. We believe that the Lord Jesus was not only a great Prophet, but the Son of God."

"Stop—that is blasphemy!" exclaimed Abdulla. "There is but One God—the Holy, the Mighty, the Eternal. You Christians would make us believe that there are Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." The lad had heard a good deal of the dispute between the followers of Mahomet and the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After a little pause for thought, Yusuf made answer, "We also believe firmly that there is but One God—the Holy, the Mighty, the Eternal. But we believe that in this Godhead there are Three Persons. It is a great mystery, and very hard to explain."

"Quite impossible, I should say," observed Abdulla. "You, your father, all the Christians in the world can never make out that Three are One."

Yusuf remembered what he had more than once heard from his father, and met the great difficulty by introducing another.*

* Of course the writer does not pretend to the slightest originality in the simile given. It has, perhaps, been used by every missionary arguing with Mahomedans on the deeply mysterious doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

"You and I are alone here," he said, "and I am talking to you. Am I talking to one or to three?"

Abdulla stared at a question so strange. "Of course, I am but one," he replied.

"I am talking to your *body;* for you hear me with your bodily ears," said Yusuf, placing the first finger of his right hand on that of his left, as if going to count. "I am talking to your *mind*" (he touched the second finger as he spoke); "for if you were a baby or an idiot you would not understand what I say. And I am talking to your *spirit* also" (here the third finger was touched); "for if there were no spirit in you the mind would be gone, and the body be dead. Now, Abdulla, explain if you can, how you yourself are both three and one!"

"I cannot explain nor understand how it is," said Abdulla thoughtfully.

"And if we cannot explain or understand what only relates to ourselves, how can we

But the English reader will remember that the story was written for *Indian* boys, and that an idea familiar to us may have to them all the force of novelty. The conversation between Yusuf and Abdulla is a simple specimen of such as often are held in this land. The divinity and Sonship of our Lord form the special battle-ground on which the missionary to Mahomedans must make a stand.

possibly expect to explain or understand the nature of the Most High God?" said Yusuf. "We must believe the truth of the doctrine, if we believe God's Word at all, for the Lord Jesus Himself said, 'I and my Father are One. He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.' And from many verses in the Bible we can see that Christ is indeed God and the Son of God."*

Yusuf had felt weary, faint, and sad before this conversation began, but he was now so much interested, because he saw that Abdulla was earnestly listening, that he forgot his bruises. Abdulla remained silent for several minutes, tracing, without thinking of what he was doing, lines on the sand with his cane. Then he asked another question.

"What proofs can you give," said he, "that your religion is more true than ours, and your Christ greater than Mahomed Sahib?"

Yusuf silently lifted up a prayer for wisdom before he ventured to reply. Then he answered, "My father says that the principal proofs of the truth of our religion are four:—First, the holiness of Christ; secondly, the numerous

* Amongst others, Ps. ii. 7, 12; xlv. 6, 7; Isa. ix. 6; Jer. xxiii. 56; Matt. xxvi. 63, 64; John i. 1; i. 10; Heb. i., &c

prophecies regarding Him in the Old Testament Scriptures; thirdly, the miracles which Christ wrought; fourthly, the wonderful spread of His religion, which is a miracle in itself."

"How do you make out these four proofs?" asked Abdulla.

"The first is easy enough to show. Even Mahometans confess that the Lord was perfectly holy. His judge declared that he could find no fault in Christ. His enemies, who were perpetually watching Him, longing to find something wrong in His conduct, could discover nothing, and had to get up a false accusation at last because there was no ground for a true one."

"We all know that Hasrat Isa was perfectly holy," said Abdulla.

"I do not wish to make you angry," said Yusuf, "but will you just let me point out one of the differences between our Lord and your Prophet? Could any man be thought very holy who left *nine* widows behind him?"

Abdulla looked grave, but made no reply.

"The Lord Jesus forgave His enemies—Mahomet Sahib killed multitudes of his."

"Don't let us talk more of this," said Abdulla

uneasily. "Go to your second proof, that your religion is true."

"It is a very strong one, I think," observed Yusuf. "Do you not know that in the Tauret (books of Moses), the Psalms, and the Prophets numbers of things were foretold of Christ many hundreds of years before He was born? The Lord's birth, birthplace, character, sufferings, death, all these things and more besides are described in the Old Testament, and we read of their fulfilment in the New. It is as if a great king, about to visit his land in disguise, were to send his picture, a wonderful likeness, before him, that when he should come his friends should recognise him at once."

"This is a wonderful proof indeed," said Abdulla. "But how are you sure that the Christians did not put into the Old Testament all the prophecies about Christ *after he had come?*"

"That is quite impossible," said Yusuf quickly, "for the Old Testament is in the hands of the Jews, who would make an outcry indeed if the Christians were to add to it ever so little. It is as if the King's likeness were hung up in the house of His enemies, and watched and guarded by them."

"Then your second proof is very strong

indeed," said Abdulla. "I should like to read the Old Testament for myself, to see if all these wonderful prophecies of Christ are really to be found in it. You need not go on to speak of His miracles, for we all own that they were wonderful, so the third proof is as strong as the first and the second. But," he added, smiling, "I see no force at all in the fourth."

"You mean that the wonderful spread of the Christian religion is no proof that the religion is true?"

"That is what I mean," replied Abdulla. "You may just as well say that the spread of our Prophet's religion is a miracle. Look what millions of Mahometans there are and have been in the world!" The boy looked proudly at his companion, as if to that argument there could be no reply.

"Let me tell you a story—a parable, as my answer," said Yusuf. "Once upon a time there were two very remarkable men, who were both looked upon as prophets; but because their prophecies did not agree together, it was clear that not both of them could be true. To decide between their claims, a miracle was required, and the miracle was to be this. There was a large forest of cedars near the place where they

dwelt, divided by a road into two halves. Each of the leaders undertook to make half of the forest bow to the earth, as a proof that he was indeed a true prophet. The one leader gathered together a large band of strong men, put hatchets in their hands, and set them to work to cut down the trees. The trees soon lay level on the ground; but was this a very great miracle?"

Abdulla could not help smiling. "I should not call it a miracle at all," he replied. "If the men sent were numerous enough, and their axes sharp enough, the trees would go down as a matter of course."

"You cannot deny that Mahomed Sahib's followers were numerous, and their weapons sharp, and that they knew how to use them," said Yusuf.

"So their foes fell," added Abdulla.

"Now hear what the other leader did to prove the truth of his words," said Yusuf. "He sent a few servants into his half of the forest, and bade them carry no hatchets with them, only a book, which they were to read aloud as they walked. They, in obedience to his command, entered the forest of cedars. Gradually, as they walked and read, to the left, to the right, behind and before, the tall trees

bowed even to the ground! Was not that a miracle indeed?"

"A great miracle," replied Abdulla.

"That was not all," continued the Christian. "Presently the trees which had bowed to the earth, quite against the nature of cedars, became loaded with beautiful fruit! Was not this a greater miracle still?"

"I see your meaning," said Abdulla gravely, "and the force of your argument too. Christianity not only has spread, and goes on spreading in the most wonderful way, but it changes people's hearts, and makes them do things quite contrary to their nature. Yusuf, your conduct to-day when you told the truth, and bore the beating, and saved your enemy from the wolf, make me see clearly what kind of fruits grew on the cedars that had bowed to the reading of the Book."

That day, which to Yusuf had been one of such bitter trial and conflict, he ever afterwards looked back upon as a golden day in his life. It was not merely because from that day he dated a close friendship with Abdulla, and that Mahomed Bakhsh from that day treated with kindness the preserver of his son; it was that the conversation held under the tree was the

first of many more, by which the young Christian became the means of leading a soul to the Saviour. Abdulla became as true and earnest a Christian as Yusuf himself. When Yusuf had won victories over pride, self-will, hatred, fear, falsehood, and unbelief, he had won a seventh victory also, he had conquered and humbled his enemies, by changing them into his friends.

A New Way of Eating Plantains.

THERE was a young woman of the name of Ribkah, who had become a Christian, and had married a catechist. She had learned to read the Bible and to speak the truth; she was kind to all, and great was her skill in teaching children the way to heaven.

Ribkah was a real Christian, and an amiable woman; but she had a great fault—she was very fond of fine dress. She despised the modest chaddar which she had worn in the home of her mother; she desired only to wear such clothes as are worn by the English. Ribkah saw in a European shop a hat which pleased her fancy, and she spent as much money

in buying it as would have procured the family food for a week. The hat was not much larger than a banyan leaf, but it had red ribbons and yellow flowers, and green feathers besides, that stuck up almost upright from the head of the wearer. Alas! that Ribkah knew not what the English ladies thought when they saw her bad imitation of fashions that suited her not! They said the one to the other, "No dress could possibly make Ribkah look like a native of England; and in that foolish finery she no longer looks like a modest native of India!"

Wearing her gaudy hat, Ribkah went one day to visit her mother's aunt, whose name was Sukh De. An aged woman was Sukh De, one who had been baptised when her hair was grey. She was a person of wisdom as well as of years. It was with sorrow that Sukh De looked on the finery of Ribkah. The aged woman said, as she drew her white chaddar more closely around her, "O daughter! when the dove left the shade of the forest, and tried to mimic the strut and the crowing of the cock, she was mocked even by the sparrows! Wherefore dost thou mimic the English in thy manner of dress?"

Ribkah was vexed, and replied, "The English

are clever, they know many things, and I wish to be like them. I have learned to read as they read, and to pray as they pray, and I choose to dress as they dress. If I follow the Sahib-log in some things, why should I not follow them in all?"

Sukh De made no reply to the question. She rose and brought a bunch of ripe plantains, and placed them before Ribkah. Plantains were much liked by Ribkah, and breaking off one from the branch, she began to strip off the yellow rind—but Sukh De stopped her.

"Why dost thou strip off the rind, O daughter?" said the aged woman. "I desire thee to eat the plantain rind and all. Surely if the fruit be good, all of it should be eaten."

Ribkah burst out laughing. "Part is good and part is not good!" she cried. "We eat the kernel of the cocoa-nut, and drink its sweet milk, but not even monkeys would break their teeth in trying to bite the shell."

"O child!" exclaimed Sukh De, "thou hast wisdom enough in eating a plantain to take what is nourishing and good, and to leave the rind, which suits thee not; but thou hast not the wisdom to follow the English only in

that which is good—thou hast not the sense of the monkeys!"

Ribkah was somewhat angry, but she knew that it becomes not the young to reply again to the aged. While she sat silent, a friend of Sukh De, whose name was Premé, entered the room. Premé was not yet a Christian, but there were great hopes that she soon would become one. She often came to Sukh De, and listened attentively whilst hymns were sung, and the Holy Scriptures read. Premé looked with surprise and disgust at the gaudy little hat stuck on the top of Ribkah's black hair.

"What! is that the way in which Christians dress!" exclaimed Premé. "Do they go to their church, and let men behold their faces unveiled; do they not even wear a chaddar? Then never will I become a Christian—never will I let daughter of mine follow a religion which would make her do that which is so unseemly."

"It is not the Christian's religion that makes women do what is unseemly!" exclaimed Sukh De. "Hear what is written in the Bible: *I will therefore that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety* (1 Tim. ii. 8, 9). *Every woman that*

prayeth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head (1 Cor. ii. 5). Christian women of all women should be the most quiet and modest in their apparel."

Premé pointed to Ribkah. "You say what they should be, O Sukh De!" she replied, "but I see what they are. My daughters shall never be Christians!"

Then a pang shot through the heart of Ribkah. She saw that her folly was a stumbling-block in the way of her Indian sisters. Throwing off her gaudy hat, the noble Christian woman set her foot upon it, and exclaimed, "I at least will return to wearing my modest white chaddar!"

Sukh De smiled as she said, "My daughter, thou hast resolved in future when eating the sweet ripe plantain to throw away the worthless rind."

The Child in Church.

[THE following little story was the first which A. L. O. E. wrote in India, and was suggested by what she saw when travelling up country. She has never witnessed the same in Amritsar.]

ABBAS was a Christian pastor, wise, pious, and well versed in the Scriptures. When he preached the Gospel, it was as if drops of honey fell from his lips. Whoever went to his church was certain to hear profitable words, such as make men wise unto salvation.

One day when, according to his wont, Abbas was earnestly exhorting his flock, the attention of all was distracted, none gave full heed to the words of the eloquent preacher; and the cause of minds being diverted and eyes wandering was this. A little child named Mirza, son of Ahmad the goldsmith, was playing in church. He shook the bangles on his arms, tinkled the bells that adorned his ankles, and ran hither and thither, as he might have done in a compound. The child was exceedingly beautiful, and his movements were so graceful, that every

member of the congregation watched him, instead of earnestly listening to the sermon.

The heart of Abbas was pained. "What profit is there in my preaching?" thought he. "I try to sow the good seed, but, like a little bird, that child carries it all away!"

After service was over, Padri Abbas went to the house of Ahmad the goldsmith. He soon entered on the subject which was the cause of his visit.

"Brother," said the pastor, "why do you not keep your child at home, or prevent him from disturbing the congregation in the house of prayer? If, when he is young, he pay no respect to what is holy, will he not acquire habits of irreverence, and never in riper years worship in humility and godly fear?"

Ahmad was a little annoyed at the reproof from his pastor. "I love my child," said he, "and do not wish to stop his innocent mirth. The little one means no harm,—what he does is only in play."

Abbas saw that the goldsmith was angry, and being a sensible man, did not press the subject farther. He asked Ahmad to come and take dinner with him on the following day, and the goldsmith with pleasure accepted the invitation.

At the appointed hour Ahmad went to the house of the pastor, who courteously welcomed his guest. When dinner-time came a number of good viands were placed on the mat. Ahmad was fond of dainty food, and had a good appetite for his dinner. With pleasure he surveyed the pillao, the curry-bhát, and the various vegetables before him. Just as the pastor and his guest were about to eat, Abbas's little daughter, who had been playing outside, toddled into the room, her tiny hands full of sand and dust. Before the goldsmith had time to prevent her, the little girl, merrily laughing, threw the dust and sand all over the viands, then plunging her hands into the pillao, she scattered it over the mat, and trampled it under her feet!

There is a proverb which says, "A hungry man is an angry man," and Ahmad proved no exception to the rule. He was angry with the mischievous child, and more angry still with her father, who did nothing but laugh.

"Do you not care that your guest remains hungry, while a child makes havoc of all the good things which you have provided for him!" cried Ahmad.

As the smiling father made no reply, the goldsmith spoke again, and more loudly, "Will

you not stop this child before she utterly destroys the good food?"

Abbas, still smiling, replied, "Brother, I love my child, and do not wish to stop her innocent mirth. The little one means no harm,—what she does is only in play."

In rather a sulky mood the goldsmith observed, "You invited a guest to your house to eat food, and he will leave it hungry. Have I not some cause to complain?"

Then the countenance of Abbas lost all its expression of mirth, and gravely, but kindly, he said, "Listen to my words, O my brother. You think that you have cause to complain because a child prevents your benefiting by food prepared for the body; is the grievance less when that which is spoilt is food prepared for the soul? God provides for us all a feast in the Gospel; many come hungering and thirsting to receive the Word of Truth. Are parents not to blame when they suffer their children to hinder its effect by noisy mirth? Does it not become both old and young to show due reverence in the place set apart for worship? Remember, my friend, that this is written in the Word of God, and though young children cannot understand the command, they must not be allowed by unseemly behaviour to break it,—'*Keep thy*

foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.'"

The Wonderful Medicine.

PREM,* the wisest of beings, was also renowned as being the most gracious and merciful. Amongst a thousand acts of kindness shown to the poor and wretched this was one. He adopted a wretched infant whom he found, abandoned to the jackals, by the side of the road, and watched over the helpless little one as tenderly as a mother might have done. Prem brought up the child, whom he named Nur Chand, rather as a son than a servant. The boy became dear to him as his own soul.

Nur Chand, while yet a lad, was visited by a grievous affliction. During the absence of his master white spots appeared on the skin of the youth, and a dreadful fear came over his mind—a fear, alas! but too well founded—that leprosy, perhaps inherited, had broken out over his

* Prem signifies love.

body! Poor Nur Chand was so wretched that he scarcely could eat or sleep. He hid his misery from his companions; but the rapid spread of the loathsome disease showed him too plainly that it could not be hidden long.

"Alas! alas! am I doomed to this living death!" groaned the unhappy leper. "Must I become loathsome even to those who have loved me! must I be compelled to live apart, and to eat in loneliness food watered with tears! Shall I have to see members of my body eaten away by disease, till I long to hide myself in the grave! Oh! how shall I dare to tell my beloved master on his return of the misfortune that has befallen me! Even he will abhor me—I shall be driven from his presence!"

Prem returned, and was received with joyous welcome by all but Nur Chand, who felt as if a weight of lead pressed on his heart. There was no need to tell Prem, who was deeply skilled in medicine, that leprosy had attacked his unhappy servant. The master's piercing eye read the secret at once. He made a sign to Nur Chand to follow him into a private apartment, where he could speak to him alone.

"Alas! thou art a leper!" he cried,

Nur Chand threw himself weeping at his feet. "O my lord!" he sobbed forth, "will you drive me from you! Shall I be banished from your presence for ever!"

"Nay," answered the pitying Prem, "I will never forsake thee. Henceforth the aim of my studies by day and by night shall be now to find out a perfect cure for the disease with which thou art afflicted."

A little dawn of hope pierced the darkness of sorrow in the heart of Nur Chand. He said to himself, "No one has yet found out a perfect cure for leprosy, but no man on earth is so wise as well as so good as my lord. Perhaps he may succeed where every one else has failed; I must not give way to despair."

After deep study Prem one day called Nur Chand to his presence. The leprosy was now only too visible, for the face was affected; all could see the effects of the dreadful disease, and, excepting his master, none would suffer the unhappy lad to approach. The leper, bowed down with grief and shame, sat down on the ground, and covered his mouth with his mantle. Prem saw and pitied his distress.

"Be comforted, my son," said Prem. "I have discovered that a wonderful healing plant grows in a valley far from hence, called the Valley of

the Shadow of Death. It is very difficult to find this rare plant, which is a root hidden underground; so difficult, indeed, that none but one skilled like myself can find it. I will start at once for the place, taking none but yourself with me. I rejoice in having found a remedy even for sickness like thine."

Nur Chand's heart bounded with joy, for he knew that his master would never deceive him. But the leper little thought then what that master would have to endure in his search for the wonderful medicine that could give health even to him.

Prem and his afflicted servant set forth on their journey. Nur Chand carried some needful vessels and provision for the way. But his sickness had weakened the poor lad's powers, and long before the valley was reached his feeble step and drooping head attracted the master's attention.

"The burden is too great for thee—give it to me," said Prem.

He took the burden from the lad, and laid it on his own strong shoulders. Nur Chand wondered at the condescension of one so much above him.

Very long seemed the distance to the poor leper. Even when he had no other burden to

carry, the weight of his sore disease was burden enough to him.

"Thou art weary, my son; lean on me," said his master.

Wondering, the leper obeyed the command, yet he scarce dared to lay his diseased hand on the arm so able to uphold him.

At length, after many days' journey, the Valley of the Shadow of Death was reached. Standing on the top of a little hill, Nur Chand and his lord beheld it lying before them.

Nur Chand trembled when he beheld the place in which alone the wondrous healing plant could be found. Lo! it was a deep gorge, into which the foot of man had never entered; or if it had entered, it had never trod the path of return! The whole valley was choked with jungle, the haunt of the wild beast and the serpent. The air was deadly; its noxious vapours reached the twain even where they stood, it was as the very breath of pestilence and fevers. Poisonous trees with black leaves shut out the light of heaven from the valley. Nur Chand had never before looked on so horrible a place.

"Oh! go not there, my lord!" he exclaimed. "Surely in some other and less dreadful spot the healing root may be found."

"In no other spot," replied Prem, sadly but calmly. "I am going down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and I am going alone. You shall remain here awaiting my return. I will take nothing with me but the wallet in which I will place the roots of the plant which healeth the sick."

Again, in great distress, the loving servant exclaimed, "O my lord! there are certainly wild beasts in that jungle, and the air is very deadly. Risk not your precious life!"

"If I risk it not," replied Prem, "my beloved servant will die a leper. I go willingly, though I know well all that I shall have to endure. Now listen to me, O my son! for it is well that thou shouldst know beforehand how to prepare the medicine. We have brought with us a flask of the liquid called Faith. Thou hast but to steep the healing root in Faith, and so powerful a medicine will be made that a few drops, taken with Prayer, will effect a perfect cure. But without Faith no benefit whatever will follow. With Faith and Prayer the cure will be so complete that even where limbs have been eaten away by disease, they will be restored perfect as ever. My will is that not only thou, but that all the lepers in our land may receive the benefit of the wonderful medicine. When

thou art cured, take it to others—there will be enough to give healing to all."

When Nur Chand heard of the priceless blessings, not only to himself but to others, that might come from his master's descent into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he scarcely knew whether to sorrow or to rejoice. With tearful eyes he watched his Master's departure, and saw him enter the gloomy valley. In the dark, thick jungle the form of Prem was soon lost to his servant's view.

A miserable time was spent by Nur Chand during the absence of his lord. His own disease made such rapid progress that the youth felt more intense longing than he ever had done before for a perfect cure. Every drop of his blood seemed to be poisoned, he felt himself utterly unclean. Nur Chand began to doubt whether any cure could be found for so bad a case as his own. Then his anxiety for his master's safety increased.

"Hark!" he exclaimed, pausing to listen. "Surely I hear in the distance the fierce howl of the tiger! There again! louder, yet louder! it seems to shake the jungle. My beloved master is perhaps at this moment engaged in deadly fight with the savage beast—perhaps will become its prey! Even if my lord escape the fangs of

the tiger, thousands of venomous serpents must lurk in the thicket. Methinks even from this distance I can see some of huge size twining around the stems of the nearest trees! Again that fearful howling, mingled with yells of pain! Yes, a struggle is going on; my lord is in peril, and I can give no help! Oh! woe is me that he should suffer so much for the sake of a poor unworthy wretch like me! Surely never was love like his!"

It was indeed a terrible time for the servant, but a yet more terrible time for the master. None can describe what Prem went through in the Valley of the Shadow of Death in his search for a cure for the leper! Prem had indeed a battle with a furious wild beast, and in the fight was victorious, but his flesh was sorely mangled. He put his foot on the head of a serpent and crushed it, but not before he himself had received a deadly wound. It was in a dying state, with blood streaming from head and side, from hands and feet, that Prem at last met the view of his servant, issuing forth from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Nur Chand, in an agony of grief, rushed forward to meet his master, whom he beheld wounded to death. Even in his anguish the care of Prem was for others, not for himself.

"With bleeding hand he held forth a well-filled wallet, and his last words to the leper were, 'Take it—use it—give it to others! I have purchased it with my life.'"—*p.* 183.

As he lay expiring on the earth, with bleeding hand he held forth a well-filled wallet, and his last words to the leper were, "Take it—use it —give it to others! I have purchased it with my life!"

The grief of poor Nur Chand was so great that at first he could hardly think of anything but the death of his much-loved protector and friend. Then he grieved to think that he himself, diseased and unclean, was unfit to pay due honours to one whom he loved. Nur Chand could do nothing unless he first received a cure. With a trembling hand and throbbing heart, Nur Chand steeped the precious roots which the wallet contained in the water of Faith, and then touched his own burning lips with the liquid, uttering at the same time a fervent prayer. The effect of the medicine was that of a miracle. At once strength and vigour returned, the fever was gone, the leper-spots disappeared, the flesh became pure as that of a child. Nur Chand felt that he was clean, and with overflowing gratitude and joy returned thanks unto the Most High. "The precious blood of my master," he cried, "has not been shed in vain!"

And now Nur Chand remembered his lord's command. Having himself received a cure, it

was now his mission to carry to others that medicine which had been such a blessing to himself.

"I will devote myself to this work," he said, "not only from pity for the afflicted, but from love to my lord. All through the land his fame shall spread, all the world shall honour the name of my master."

Within a few days Nur Chand was on his way back to his own country, bearing with him the precious medicine. No sooner had he arrived than Nur Chand caused proclamation to be made far and wide, that all lepers should assemble together, for that wondrous good tidings should be proclaimed to them all.

The lepers heard the invitation; they came from north and south, from east and west—the lame, the maimed, the feeble, and those whose sight had been destroyed by disease.

Nur Chand looked with pity upon the miserable throng, and thanked God from his heart that he had brought with him a cure sufficient for all.

But when the faithful servant proclaimed his good news, and held up on high the wonderful medicine, he was not welcomed with the kindness, nor listened to with the gladness that might have been expected. The lepers did not seem

to care to hear of the wonderful cure, nor of the sufferings of him who had bought it so dear, and who now, through his servant, offered it freely.

"I do not think that I am very bad," said a blind old man; "I can walk, talk, and use my hands. To my mind I am not a leper at all, and therefore no cure is required."

"No doubt your master was a very good man," observed another, who was much diseased in his head; "but I do not believe that he had power, any more than any other human being, to make a leper clean."

"Only try his cure!" cried Nur Chand.

"It's all nonsense!" exclaimed a third man, whose face was quite disfigured by leprosy; and with a sneer the scoffer turned away.

Nur Chand, saddened, but not disheartened, now held out the cure to a fourth, who was of less repulsive appearance.

"Do you think that I would touch anything that has been prepared in your vessels," said the leper. "I am of very high caste indeed, and I fear pollution." And yet this poor high-caste leper was himself utterly unclean.

Another approached, whose neck was half-covered with charms. When Nur Chand offered the medicine, the lame sufferer shook his head.

"Nay," said he, "I look for my cure from these charms. I have worn them for many a year. They were hung round my neck by my mother."

"O my brother!" exclaimed Nur Chand, "was there ever a charm found that had power to heal leprosy? If so, how is it that having worn these charms so long you yet remain leprous as ever?"

The poor creature turned away—he was half an idiot. He determined to trust in his worthless bits of wood and bone rather than in the precious medicine brought to him by the servant of Prem.

A sixth leper came forward, from whose face could be seen that he was an eater of opium; moreover, he was well known to be a slave to a habit, which destroys both body and soul.

"Give me of your wonderful medicine!" cried he, stretching forth his leprous hand.

"My brother," replied Nur Chand gravely, "I have often heard from my master that the medicine has no good effect if taken without faith and prayer, or used by one who continues in wilful sin. Choose, then, between health and opium; throw the poisonous drug away, and receive the precious medicine which can make you perfectly whole."

The leper sighed when he heard those words; he looked longingly at the medicine, and yet turned slowly away. He would not give up his darling sin, though he knew that on doing so his health—nay, his very life depended.

The heart of Nur Chand became very sad. When he thought of all that his lord had done, all that his lord had suffered to save and bless these poor lepers, it was a grief to him, and a wonder, that they should refuse to be saved and blessed.

At last a seventh leper, a poor afflicted creature, came forward trembling. "Is there hope for me?" he murmured. "Can I drink and be clean?"

Strange to say, this man at once became the scorn and laughing-stock of the others.

"Does he really believe that such a medicine can do him the slightest good!" exclaimed one.

"He is a credulous fool!" said another.

"We'll never keep company with him," muttered a third.

But in spite of such mocking, the poor man reached forth his hand and took the medicine. Notwithstanding the scorn of his companions, he bent his knees in prayer, and drank of the

healing draught. Then, with a face radiant with joy, he sprang again to his feet. A new stream of life seemed to flow through his veins; he felt that his very nature was changed. With a loud voice he praised and blessed the name of him who had died that others might live, and who from the Valley of the Shadow of Death had brought the wonderful medicine that can make even lepers whole!

This story, O Reader! is a parable; in it precious truth is wrapped up in the covering of fable. Who are the hapless lepers to whom the wonderful cure is freely offered—even at this moment?

The lepers are all those who dwell in this land—all those who dwell on this earth. The leprosy of sin has infected us all; there is not one who by nature is pure in the sight of a holy God.

Is there, then, no cure for the evil? Must all souls perish because it is written, *The soul that sinneth it shall die—The wages of sin is death?*

Oh no! Eternal praise to Him who hath found a remedy, though at the cost of His life. Read in the Gospel how the Lord of Glory went down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death,

and with His own life's blood purchased salvation for us. The Lord Jesus Christ overcame Satan, that roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour; He set His foot on the serpent's head, that serpent by whom sin first entered into the world. Now all who in faith and with prayer receive the free gift which He offers are saved unto life eternal.

Who bring to you the glad tidings of free salvation? Those who have been lepers—sinners—themselves, those who would themselves have perished but for the death of their Lord. It is because they have been saved through faith that they tell you of salvation; it is because they have been healed that they would show you where healing is to be found.

But how is their message received? how have you, O Reader! received it?

Like the first leper, do you doubt that you are a sinner at all, at least so great a sinner as to need so great a Saviour?

Or, like the second, though you own Christ to be good and holy, do you regard Him merely as a man, and therefore unable to save to the uttermost?

Or, like the third leper, do you refuse to believe at all, and turn away with a sneer?

Or, like the fourth, do you allow pride and prejudice of caste to keep you away from the means of salvation?

Or, like the fifth, do you trust in the power of something else than the blood of Christ to save you from hell? Do you look to your own good works, your pilgrimages, or your prayers? They cannot save your guilty soul, as charms, even though made of gold, have no power to cure a leper.

Or have you, like the eater of opium, some cherished sin which you will not give up? No one who resolves to come to the Saviour can continue in wilful sin; it is written, *Be ye holy for I am holy.* All the followers of the Redeemer must strive in faith, and pray in sincerity for that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Or, like the seventh leper, have you come to the Source of healing, found that the Lord is gracious indeed, and heard from Him the blessed words, "Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole?"

O my brother! search for yourself in the Holy Scriptures to see if the following things be not true:—

1. That all have by nature the leprosy of sin, for which man has no cure.

2. That God hath provided a remedy.

3. That such remedy is only to be found in living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sinners.

Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him!