

HOME LIFE IN INDIA.—III.

BY M. FAIRWEATHER.

The "Behishtic" or "heavenly one" is the not appropriate designation of that genius of the bath, the Indian water-carrier. Various circumstances combine to shew that this title is not a sarcasm but a term of true appreciation. He is commonly a man of good caste and one of the most trustworthy and willing of the Anglo-Indian staff of household servants. His everyday costume is not extensive, neither indeed expensive, yet on festive occasions he is often gorgeous to behold, and in his own estimation and that of his admiring associates he is at least "a thing of beauty," if not "a joy forever." He is a serene man; his occupation naturally tends to keep him cool and tranquil. When others are drooping and ready to die under the scorching heat of a tropical midsummer day, he is sheltered beneath his huge leathern mushack (water-sack), while little tiny rills of tepid water trickle down over his tawny body. This is comfort, and *he is envied*. What more could mortal man desire? He is emphatically a social soul, and loves his *friend*, his *pipe* and *gossip*, especially the two latter. His most important and able aide-de-camp are the household tailor and "my lady's own maid," the Ayah. By them, the master and the master's family, their affairs and relations to one another, are reviewed and commented upon. The most trivial events are discussed with ardour, if not truth. Let one circumstance be given, and the remaining materials necessary to the construction of a thrilling and piquant *sensation* will rapidly be manufactured and supplied. The grand total being valued for accuracy even among themselves according to its intrinsic worth. How gravely mischievous therefore may these efforts become, when a European condescends to them and can be induced to listen and receive as true the tales which not unlikely are invented with no other motive than to gauge his credulity and taste for sentiment. That he has committed a sin or wrong by being false has never for a moment penetrated his inner consciousness, but he is rather satisfied that he—a humble serving man, but a *Hindoo*—has succeeded in outwitting an Englishman. The terms sin and holiness of our vocabulary do not appeal at all to them in the way they do to us. We use the words, looking from ourselves Godward along the Divine law, and our motives, words and actions, are applied by conscience to that line. The poor native never heard of a Divine law. He has no certain standard to which he can come and measure himself or his actions. He has never realized what it is to look God straight in the face, reverently, conscious of right, and feeling sure whatever may betide that his feet are upon a *Rock* which fails not.

The tailor is most often a Mohammedan, who takes great credit to himself that in one point, at least, he and his masters are at one, viz.: in their belief in the one *true God*, and consequent disapproval of idolatry.

This argument may be used as a lever to draw money out of a European pocket, while it is also a telling weapon when strife arises with the Hindoos, and he wishes to be exceptionally provoking.

As a rule, however, they are not quarrelsome with one another, and in the comparatively few little "*unpleasantnesses*" which I have been privileged to witness the comic was ever greatly the largest factor.

At these times the prominent idea of each belligerent seemed to be *self-preservation*. No one would strike lest the chastised should feel himself called upon to resort to violence in consequence.

I remember well a conflict which took place over a pile of mangoes in a garden where the fruit was raised for sale. There were seven or eight men and women engaged in it. At first each individual seemed to consider himself privileged to express his mental agitation in a very torrent of abuse, addressed in a general way to all whom it concerned; but where all are performers, and no audience, there is little encouragement. Those who were first, apparently, to recognize this common want, and yet despaired of obtaining the merited appreciation, suddenly broke away from the coveted nucleus—the mangoes—and began a rapid elliptical progress around it. Another and another seceded, until the whole party was in motion. The space traversed by each individual seemed to be nearly in inverse ratio to the intensity of his feelings, while at intervals any superfluous emotion was discharged in the shape of *flying leaps* accompanied by

an appropriate shriek. This too violent exertion, however, soon shewed symptoms of exhausting itself. One and another could be observed to suddenly drop upon his haunches, seize hold of his *clay pipe* with both hands and commence smoking right vigorously a vile mixture of strong tobacco and opium. After the narcotic influence began to take effect each person calmly retired from the field and we were unable to say which were the victors or what became of the mangoes. Everybody seemed satisfied that he had done his duty by himself, the world, and the cause.

A great trial to a native servant in European employ is the *frequent* and *always sudden* death of his maternal relative. This event may occur periodically as often as three times per annum. It sometimes becomes necessary to announce that if the lady finds herself obliged to die once more within a stated period she must consent to do without the presence of her son at the obsequies, or he will be called upon to discontinue his services. This is generally sufficient to keep her alive until the event has passed out of remembrance, when again the solemn announcement is made, and a holiday solicited, that he may join his afflicted relatives for the appointed days of mourning. If the appeal is a success he has gained two important advantages. First, a holiday without the forfeiture of any part of his wages; and second, the substitute supplied is always a needy relative for whom he thus obtains temporary relief, and is at no loss himself by his generosity. To resist is useless, hopeless. It really costs less in the end to submit than to refuse. If you will not pay willingly he will make you pay with interest anyway. The struggle is entirely unequal.

To learn to realize the native (may I say?) rendering of the English with their interpretation of our modes and customs, is a task of no ordinary interest or difficulty. It may only be done by mingling freely with them, making them forget as much as possible the presence of a foreigner; it is then, and then only, that one begins to know the native at all. It is evident that time alone can do this.

I remember being struck with a native's description of a ball at the residency—Government house. The affair was a brilliant one, the grounds illuminated, etc. The ever-curious natives were as usual on the *qui vive* to watch proceedings. Numbers of them secreted themselves at every available point where a view might be had. Among these "hidden ones" was my own tailor. In giving an account of what took place to some less favoured ones I heard the following: "Ah, my brothers, how different are the customs of the English women from ours! We can only wonder why they put all the cloth on the ground; it is evident they are greatly ashamed of their feet, yet they go about before the faces of men with naked bodies. Our women cover their faces, not their feet. Men love not feet but faces." The subject of our modes of dancing next engaged them, and the description struck me as *piquant*. "First of all," exclaimed the orator, "the men and women people all got upon the floor in a mixed way. Suddenly each woman seized hold of a man and began to *jump at him*, whereupon the men being greatly agitated tried to run away, but the women pursued, and again seizing them, they all began to jump together, and how they did jump and jump and jump at one another!" The grand conclusion arrived at seemed to be that violent physical exertion is essential to an Englishman's fullest measure of enjoyment, while a tribute of approval was paid their own good sense, which dealt them pleasure without fatigue and happiness for gold.

INFIDELITY is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper and unholy speculation, employed not in examining the evidences of Christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing Christians.—Robert Hall.

ACCORDING to the "Catholic Telegraph," had the Roman Catholic Church retained all her children there should now be in the country from 20,000,000 to 25,000,000 members of that Church, whereas there are now less than 7,000,000. It attributes the great loss to the influence of the public schools.

THERE is more than half a point in this from a western paper: "Ordinarily we do not publish series of resolutions on any subject, as our columns are always crowded, and a few words will give the substance. The resolutions of the Apostles cannot be found in the Bible, but the Acts of the Apostles can."

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

HOW THE CHILDREN PLAY IN JAPAN.

The most interesting sights are the games and sports of the children. The Japanese believe in enjoying themselves, and the young folks are as bright and merry as the children of other climes. The girls play battledoor and shuttlecock, and the boys fly kites and spin tops. The girls enjoy their game very much, and are usually dressed in their prettiest robes and bright-coloured girdles; their faces are powdered with a little rice flour, their lips are tinted crimson, and their hair is done up in a most extraordinary fashion.

They play in the open street, sometimes forming a circle of half a dozen or more, and sending the flying shuttlecock from one to the other. They are very skilful, and rarely miss a stroke. The boys like a strong wind, that their kites may soar high; but the girls sing a song that it may be calm, so that their shuttlecocks may go right.

The boys have wonderful kites, of tough paper pasted on light bamboo frames, and decorated with dragons, warriors, and storm hobgoblins. Across the top of the kites is stretched a thin ribbon of whalebone, which vibrates in the wind, making a peculiar humming sound. When I first walked the streets of Tokio, I could not imagine what the strange noise meant that seemed to proceed from the sky above me; the sound at times was shrill and sharp, and then low and musical. At last I discovered several kites in the air, and when the breeze freshened the sounds were greatly increased.

Sometimes the boys put glue on their kite strings, near the top, and dip the strings into pounded glass. They then fight with their kites, which they place in proper positions, and attempt to saw each other's strings with the pounded glass. When a string is severed, a kite falls, and is claimed by the victor. The boys also have play-fights with their tops.

Sometimes I met boys running a race on long stilts; at other times they would have wrestling matches, in which little six-year-old youngsters would toss and tumble one another to the ground. Their bodies were stout and chubby, and their rosy cheeks shewed signs of health and happiness. They were always good-natured, and never allowed themselves to get angry.

On the fifth day of the fifth month, the boys have their Fourth of July, which they call the "Feast of Flags." They celebrate the day very peaceably, with games and toys. They have sets of figures, representing soldiers, heroes, and celebrated warriors; with flags, daimio processions and tournaments. Outside the house a bamboo pole is erected by the gate, from the top of which a large paper fish is suspended. This fish is sometimes six feet long, and is hollow. When there is a breeze, it fills with wind, and its tail and fins flap in the air, as though it were trying to swim away. The fish is intended to shew that there are boys in the family. It is the carp, which is found in Japanese waters, and swims against the stream, and leaps over waterfalls. The boys must, therefore, learn from the fish to persevere against difficulties, and surmount every obstacle in life. When hundreds of these huge fishes are seen swimming in the breeze, it presents a very curious appearance.

The girls have their "Feast of Dolls" on the third day of the third month. During the week preceding the holiday, the shops of Tokio are filled with dolls and richly dressed figures. This "Feast of Dolls" is a great gala day for the girls. They bring out all their dolls and gorgeously dressed images, which are quite numerous in respectable families, having been kept from one generation to another. The images range from a few inches to a foot in height, and represent court nobles and ladies, with the Mikado and his household, in full costume. They are all arranged on shelves, with many other beautiful toys, and the girls present offerings of rice, fruit, and "saki" wine, and mimic all the routine of court life. The shops display large numbers of these images at this special season; after the holidays they suddenly disappear.

I once bought a large doll baby at one of the shops, to send home to my little sister; the doll was dressed in the ordinary way, having its head shaved in the style of most Japanese babies. It was so life-like, that when propped up on a chair, a person would easily suppose it to be a live baby.

In going along the Tori, I would often see a group