

inexpressible reverence before what to them is the visible symbol of God. If you go forth, therefore, at night from Baku, and approach the plain of white sand, you will behold these disciples of Zoroaster either seated in deep meditation upon the earth, or bowing their turbaned heads before the mounting flame. In the background towards the west, rise the peaks of Caucasus, enveloped in snow, and clustered round with stars; to the east extends the Caspian, heaving gently in summer, as all seas do, deriving, it may be, their tremulous uneasiness from the rotatory motion of the earth on its axis.

Listen, and you will hear the accents of an unknown language—that which preceded the dialect of the Zendavesta—muttered by some banker or ship-builder of Bombay, who in his own home on the Indian Ocean speaks English, and reads Milton and Shakspeare. But here in Okesra, in face of the sacred fire, he is another being, agitated by feelings and sentiments which have been wasted down to him over the waves of time from far beyond the Deluge, perhaps from the pre-Adamite period, when, as the Chevalier Bunsen teaches, the countrymen of Gog and Magog founded and governed empires on the table-lands of Central Asia. To study Gibbon, Burke, and Bacon, to read our novels, our journals, and our philosophical speculations, is found by the Parsee by no means incompatible with a firm and faithful acceptance of the ancient creed of the *Mides*. You may tell him what you please about civilization, about new faiths, and improvements in ethics; after attending politely to your discourse, his mind goes back with a bound to its belief in that formative principle, heat, caloric fire, which in his view created the world, and still constitutes the soul of all living things. According to his theory, warmth is life, and cold is death. He has never in intelligible language revealed to the profane the ideas which float over his mind, when having come weary and worn from afar, he contemplates the surging and brilliant element, which escaping from the crust of our planet, points visibly to the stars, with whose substance it is obviously identical. Yet these luminous phenomena are only the external manifestations of God to the Parsee, the elemental

sheath, so to speak, in which he involves his invisible power and creative energy. The vulgar processes of immobility and cooking, the fire-worshipper regards as so many gross misapplications, though perhaps necessary, of the divine element which pervades and vivifies everything, and flashes upon him brilliantly as he reclines or kneels on the white soft sand of Okesra. If you remain near at hand all night, you will behold a phenomenon nowhere seen but in Persia, which the fire-worshipper considers in the light of a confirmation of the truth of his creed. About two hours before daybreak, a mimic dawn appears in the east, where the saffron rays rise in a vast arch, and shooting up to the zenith, expand and kindle the whole sky, rendering the stars pale, and lighting up the summits of the mountains with a glow and splendor like that of the early morning. This, however, is the false dawn, which, after awakening the birds, and robing the earth with light, again fades away, and leaves the whole hemisphere above, and the face of our globe below, buried in darkness as before.

Generally, the Muslims are held to be a persecuting people—with good reason, perhaps, in one phase of their character—yet at times they are tolerant to a marvel. They despise the Hindus, they equally despise the Parsees; but they have traditions, more than half fabulous, which attribute to both those sections of mankind powers, acquired by magic or otherwise, which are denied, for good reasons, doubtless, to the believers in the Koran. When a Parsee, therefore, arrives at Baku, on his way to the eternal fires, all the true believers in the *caravansary* make place for him; first, because he inspires them with awe; and next, perhaps, because, wise as he may be in the wisdom of science, he is ignorant of that saving faith which belongs exclusively to their religion. Yet they have no objection to sell him food, or, in exchange, to take his fine Indian gold mohars, or English minted rupees. As has been seen, moreover, they will repair with him to the place of flame, and convert his divinity into a kitchen-fire, or into the active agent of a lime-kiln. Still, they are not without a certain mysterious feeling on the subject of the inflammable gases, and have invented stories, too long and wild