



BOMBAY HARBOUR.

plunged in the native town. In your nostrils is the smell of the East, dear and never to be forgotten: rapturously you snuff that blending of incense and spices and garlic, and sugar and goats. The jutting houses close in over you. The decoration of Bombay henceforth is its people. The windows are frames for women, the streets become wedges of men. Only the shabbiness of the dust and dirty plaster relieves the gorgeousness of one of the most astounding collections of human animals in the world. Forty languages, it is said, are habitually spoken in its bazaars. Then every race has its own costume; so that the streets of Bombay are a tulip-garden of vermilion turbans, and crimson, orange and flame colour, of men in blue and brown and emerald waistcoats, women in cherry-coloured satin drawers, or mantles, of blazing purple or green that shines like a grasshopper. You must go to India to see such dyes. They are the very children of the sun, and seem to shine with an unreflected radiance of their own. In the gilding light the very arms and legs show like bronze or amber or the bloom on ripe damsons. You are walking in a flaring sunset, and come out of it blinking. Bombay is a beautiful queen in silver armour and a girdle of gold.

At its first onset, in Bombay, plague killed its two hundred and forty a day; now it has sunk to fifty a day, but it goes on steadily. Bombay has resigned herself to another four or five years of it—which means, at the present rate, that one-tenth of her population will die of it between now and 1904.

I had the luck to fall in with men who could show me the whole process, from cause to cure—or death. The cause was simple enough: two minutes in the native quarter, and you saw and smelt and tasted it. The cause is sheer piggery, dirt and darkness, foul air and rabbit-warren overcrowding. On stamped earth floors, between bare walls, by the dimness of one tiny window, you see shapes squatting like monkeys. They stir, lithe but always languid, and presently you see that they are human. Babies, naked children, young women and youths, mothers and fathers, shrivelled grandsires and granddames—whole families stifle together in the thick darkness.

On the door-jamb of this house are a dozen red marks—dates with a line round them, in some semi-circular, in others a complete circle. Each means a case of plague—the full circles a death, the halves a removal to hospital. For your own part you wonder that anybody in the poisonous lair is left alive.