

CHAPTER II.

IMPRESSIONS OF BOMBAY.

A Foretaste of India—Entering Bombay Harbor—I Reach the Shore—My First Ride in a Palanquin—Mr. Pallanjee's Hotel—Appearance of Bombay—Its Situation—The First Indian Railroad—English Hospitality—American Consuls and Residents—The Parsees—Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy—His Family and Residence—Parsee Faith and Ceremonies—Bridal Processions—A Drive to Malabar Hill—Tropical Gardens—Tax on Palm-Trees—A Hindoo Temple—The Jeejeebhoy Hospital—Dr. Bhawoo Dajee.

BEFORE reaching Bombay, I had a slight foreshadowing of Indian life. The servants on the steamer being all Indians, and the passengers mostly belonging to the East India service, many peculiarities of every-day life were already familiar to me. I had mastered the mysteries of curry; I learned to say "tiffin" instead of "lunch;" I became accustomed to being addressed as "sahib," and even ventured so far into Hindustani, as to call out boldly at table: "*pani do!*" (give me water) or: "*saf basan lao!*" (bring a clean plate). Thus the first bloom of the new land was lost to me—all those nameless slight peculiarities which surround you with an enchanted circle when you first plunge yourself into another climate and another race. Nevertheless, there was enough

left to make my landing on Indian soil a circumstance of no ordinary character.

We came slowly up the splendid bay, until within half a mile of the town. The shores being low, nothing but an array of brown tiled roofs, and a small Gothic spire, was visible behind the crowd of vessels at anchor. On the other hand, however, the islands of Elephanta and Panwell, and the ranges of the Mahratta Ghauts, were gorgeously lighted up by the evening sun. But little time was allowed for admiring them; the anchor dropped, and a fleet of boats, conveying anxious friends and relatives, gathered about us. The deck was covered with pyramids of baggage, all was noise and confusion, here shouts of joy and there weeping, here meeting and there parting, many scenes of the drama of life enacted at the same moment. Finding myself left wholly to my own resources, I set about extricating myself from the bewilderment, and accepting the first native who addressed me, I embarked for the shore before the other passengers had thought of leaving. "Rupees," said the master of the boat, holding up three of his fingers. "*Ek*," (one) I answered. Up went two fingers. "*Ek*," again; and so I went ashore for one. We came to a stone pier, with a long flight of steps leading down to the water. The top of it was thronged with natives in white dresses and red turbans. Among them were the runners of the hotels, and I soon found the one I wanted. At a small customs office on the pier, my baggage was passed unexamined, on my declaring that I had but two pounds of Turkish tobacco. A line of cabs, buggies and palanquins with their bearers was drawn up on the pier, and in order to be as Indian as possible, I took one of the latter.

It was not a pleasant sensation to lie at full length in a cushioned box, and impose one's whole weight (and I am by no means a feather) upon the shoulders of four men. It is a conveyance invented by Despotism, when men's necks were footstools, and men's heads playthings. I have never yet been able to get into it without a feeling of reluctance, as if I were inflicting an injury on my bearers. Why should they groan and stagger under my weight, when I have legs of my own?—and yet, I warrant you, nothing would please them less than for me to use those legs. They wear pads on the shoulders, on which rests the pole to which the palanquin is suspended, and go forward at a slow, sliding trot, scarcely bending their knees or lifting their feet from the ground. The motion is agreeable, yet as you are obliged to lie on your back, you have a very imperfect view of the objects you pass. You can travel from one end of India to another in this style, but it is an expensive and unsatisfactory conveyance, and I made as little use of it as possible, in my subsequent journeys.

As I was borne along, I saw, through the corners of my eyes, that we passed over a moat and through a heavy stone gateway. I then saw the bottoms of a row of fluted Grecian pillars—a church, as I afterwards found—then shops, very much in the European style, except that turbaned Hindoos and mitred Parsees stood in the doors, and finally my bearers came to a halt in a wooden verandah, where I was received by Mr. Pallanjee, the host of the British Hotel. I was ushered up lofty flights of wooden steps to the third story, and installed in a small room, overlooking a wide prospect of tiled roofs, graced here and there with a cocoa-nut or brab palm. The partitions to the rooms did not reach the ceiling; there

were no glass windows, but merely blinds, and every breeze that came, swept through the whole house. The servants were mostly Portuguese, from Goa, but as India is especially the country of servant and master, every person is expected to have one for his own use. I chose a tall Hindoo, with one red streak and two white ones (the signs of caste) on his forehead, who, for half a rupee daily, performed the duties of guide, interpreter, messenger and valet de chambre. Nothing can exceed the respect shown to Europeans by the native servants. They go far beyond the Arab and Turkish domestics of the East, or even the slaves in Egypt. No Russian serf could have a greater reverence for his lord. As a natural consequence of this, they are noted for their fidelity; the ayahs, or nurses, are said to be the best in the world.

Bombay, as a city, presents few points of interest to a traveller. It is wholly of modern growth, and more than half European in its appearance. It is divided into two parts—the Fort, as it is called, being enclosed within the old Portuguese fortifications and surrounded by a moat. It is about a mile in length, extending along the shore of the bay. Outside of the moat is a broad esplanade, beyond which, on the northern side, a new city has grown up. The fortifications are useless as a means of defence, the water of the moat breeds mosquitos and fevers, and I do not understand why the walls should not have been levelled, long since. The city within the Fort is crowded to excess. Many of the streets are narrow, dark and dirty, and as the houses are frequently of wood, the place is exposed to danger from fire. The population and trade of Bombay have increased so much within the last few years, that this keeping up of old defences is a great

inconvenience. So far are the old practices preserved, that at one particular gate, where there was a powder magazine twenty years ago, no person is permitted to smoke. Southward of the Fort is a tongue of land—formerly the island of Colaba, but now connected by a causeway—on which stands the lighthouse. To the north-west, beyond the city, rises Malabar Hill, a long, low height, looking upon the open ocean, and completely covered with the gardens and country-houses of the native and European merchants.

The mainland is distant from Bombay about fifteen miles, across the bay. Steamers run daily to Panwell, whence there is a mail-coach to Poonah, the old Mahratta capital, about seventy miles distant. Northward of the Island of Bombay, lies the large Island of Salsette, which is connected with it by two causeways, and Salsette has lately been united to the mainland by a bridge, the strait, at the northern point of the island, being less than half a mile wide. This bridge was built by the Railroad Company, who have already finished thirty-five miles of the great road which is to connect Bombay and Calcutta. The rails were laid as far as Tanna at the time of my visit, and the trains commenced running shortly afterwards. The engineers were occupied in locating that part of the line which crosses the Ghauts, and which is the most difficult and expensive portion of the road. The East India Company guarantees 5 per cent. annually on the stock, for the period of twenty years, owing to which encouragement, (without which, indeed, the undertaking were impossible,) shares were at a premium.

During my brief stay in Bombay, I made some acquaintances among the English residents, to whom I was indebted

for much cordial hospitality. The English in India are said to be the most hospitable people in the world, even to those who bring no letters of introduction. The kindness of my friends, and especially of Capt. R. Baird Smith, of the Bengal Engineers, supplied me with letters for all the principal towns in the interior, so that I had double assurance of a friendly reception. There were no American merchants in Bombay at the time, nor even a Consul. Appointments had been made, and Consuls had gone out, but none of them found the profits of the office equal to its expenses. The last one had appointed Mr. Dossabhoj Merwanjee, one of the principal Parsee merchants, his agent, but the latter had no authority to act in a Consular capacity. The house of Dossabhoj Merwanjee & Co., however, is actively engaged in American trade, most of the vessels which come out from our ports being consigned to it. I was indebted to the members of the firm for much kindness. The only American residents were some missionaries, who have established a school and church, and a Boston ice merchant, who was a man of some importance in such a climate. The ice was preserved in a large stone rotunda, and sold at the rate of four annas (12 cents) the pound. The consumption is increasing, much use of it being now made by the physicians, and with the best effect.

My good fortune in making the acquaintance of Dossabhoj Merwanjee, and other members of the celebrated Lowjee Family, to which he belongs, gave me some insight into native society here—an imperfect experience, it is true, but enough to satisfy me that in few of the English works on India which I have read, has justice been done to the character of the native population. The Parsces, especially, form a com-