

over the weaker. I think the connection of India with England is brought about by Providence with a view to rouse her from the lethargy of ages, so that she might again take her place among the nations of the world.

“Man must pass from old to new

From vain to real, from mistake to fact ;

From what once seemed good, to what now prove best ;

How could man have progression otherwise ?”

MANINDRA LALL BANERJI.

Third Year Class-

SIGNOR MUSTACHIO.

(A TRUE STORY)

I was a country boy and belonged to a family of *Brahmin Pandits* in the days when the steam-ship and the railway were unknown in the land although the thoughts that shake mankind had already begun to stir and to germinate amongst the younger generation of India. The new spirit was however strong enough to force from my grand-father a reluctant consent to my being educated on the English model. This was before the days of the famous Education Despatch. There were only a few English-teaching schools in the metropolis of British India in those days and I was admitted into one of them. What a change has now come over the great town ! Now every lane has its school and every street its College ! But things were far otherwise when I went to school. I lived in a relative's house in a suburban quarter of the town and set my whole heart on the pursuit of knowledge.

Let us skip over the next seven years. I was now a young man of 18, and had learnt all that my school could teach me. It was *Puja* time, and after an absence of seven long years, I was returning home. I was sailing in a country boat, in the company of my metropolitan relatives and after ten dreary days of toil some rowing and towing, not without occasional fears of river-pirates at night and of sullen gusts of wind that might give us the quietus in a moment, at last I neared my native village at sundown. A short walk from the river-side, and I was back at

home after seven years' absence. I was an only son, and I need not tell my readers how delighted my poor mother felt at the news of my return, and what a surprise my presence gave her, a lad of 11 metamorphosed into a youth of 18. All was gratulation and ecstasy that night; but the next morrow my sorrows were to begin.

Next morning I went to the *Boytok'hana* (sitting-room) where my grand-father sat in state surrounded by the old men of the village. The venerable old man was *Judge Pandit* attached to the Patna Court, and the whole village idolised him on account of his learning and his rank. He too had come home like me to spend the happy Puja time; for the worship of the goddess was annually celebrated by the pious *Pandit* with great pomp and *eclat*. I bowed low to my venerable grand-father and his companions, the old men of the village. But as soon as my face was turned up towards them after the prostration at their feet, they one and all turned blank at the sight of me. Words cannot describe the consternation depicted on the face of my grand-father. 'Why, you young scoundrel,' he at last broke out 'you have got a nasty pair of moustaches on your face! what is this? Is this abomination the gift of your English teachers? And you, a Bramhin's son! Out of my sight, you unclean wretch!' I was struck aghast at this explosion. In all innocence I had let my moustache grow, nay, it was but letting Nature have her own way. The thought had never struck me that in doing it I would be sorely offending my grandfather. I had never taken it in the light of an abominable crime. My grandfather's august command nonplussed me quite and for a few minutes I could not find a tongue in my head to attempt self-defence. The sight of his indignant mien was too much for me. I remained rooted to the spot, absolutely gorgonised by his dread eye. I was thus an unwilling listener to the discussion which followed this explosion. 'You see, my friends,' rejoined my grandfather, addressing his companions, 'this is the result of English education. From the beginning I had my doubts about the wisdom of the young man's plan of going to Calcutta for obtaining the benefits of English education; but his foolish

mother over-rode my settled convictions with her tears and sobs, and I relented when I thought of her widowed condition. Alas! my apprehensions have not proved false. I now consider it providential that his poor father is dead—for this sight of a young Hopeful with a nasty pair of moustaches would have been too much for him. The Lord hath spared him this sight in His infinite mercy. Praised be the Lord! The assembled old men all deeply commiserated my old grandfather and they all exclaimed in one voice that they had never expected that his illustrious family would be disgraced thus! I had heard enough and I now beat a precipitate retreat.

But whither should I fly? Wheresoe'er I fly is Hell. I met the servants in the hall and they all smiled at my approach, and whispered in a tone perfectly audible to me 'our young lord has got a pair of moustaches! How queer!' I took refuge in the Zenana and there the ladies of the house raised their hands up in horror at the sight of the unseemly excrescence. Alas, where should I go? I had no Rosalind at home, otherwise I would have asked *her* if my moustache pleased her or not. At last I stood listless in the court-yard where I was presently accosted by the family barber. He gravely told me—he was all the while trying to suppress an amused smile, I plainly perceived—'Kasta (the head of the family) has sent me to shave off your moustache and make you clean?' Now this was too much. I was never a staunch supporter of the moustache. But persecution maketh faith strong. The sight of the self-sufficient barber evidently chuckling over the prospective execution of my grand-father's command was intolerable and as my grand-father's dread-inspiring face was no longer near and as a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of fun, I thought now I had my opportunity of giving him a bit of my mind. I therefore roundly told him that whoever would attempt to brush off my moustache would find his ears lopped off by a young and capable hand for his pains. Are not the moustaches a part of the human countenance, argued I, for the presence of danger sharpens our wits, *just as much as the ears?* Did they not both naturally grow?

And how could you spare the one and shear the other? The barber looked rather chap-fallen and precipitately left me, vanquished by my logic or perhaps by something in my looks and manner indicating stern resolve.

I bathed early and sat down to my breakfast. It was an hour too early for the other members of the family and I was thus alone at my meals. My mother in her gentle way took me to task for my delinquency but I made light of her words. I told her calmly that the hair on the upper lip was a natural growth, and surely there was sin in running counter to nature. I pointed out with a smile of conscious superiority that this hair on the face distinguished man from woman and it should be retained as a mark of the nobler sex. My mother was ever meek and kind-hearted; so she dropped the subject with the plaintive words "At least do shave it off to please your venerable grandfather. You don't know how your conduct has broken his heart and bowed his head." A moustache breaking a man's heart and bowing his head! Indeed, the idea was so funny that in spite of the touching appeal of my mother, I could not resist a smile.

The Pooja days passed off without any fresh disaster and I thought the storm was laid. Use reconciles things, and thus the people about me had left me at peace. Alas! no! it was only the lull before the storm. It seems that my grandfather did not like to do aught unkind during the period of festivity and so a veil was drawn over the distasteful topic. About a week later, I was summoned one morning to the august presence of my grandfather and these terrible words assailed my ears as soon as I stood before him. "Well, young man, you already know my wish. That nasty pair of moustaches must not disfigure your face. Don't you perceive how ugly, how shocking the sight is? Neatness and cleanliness are allied to virtue!" I was within an ace of cracking my joke that a *Bhattacharyya's* son need not look spruce and trim, that ugliness never comes amiss to such a humble being—but something in the grand old man's countenance stifled the rising joke, and I continued listening, for he had not yet finished. "Now, who has taught you this trick? Probably

the new learning is to blame for it. You imitate the English. But have you ever thought of the difference between your noble race and these newcomers? Wherein are they superior to us? I grant they are a sturdy race of fighters like the Pathans of old or else they would not have been here. But they are utterly ignorant of the arts of peace. The fine produce of the looms of Dacca and the silk of Moórshedabad hide their nakedness. They are so ignorant of law and justice that they hire poor Bramhins like your grandfather and pay them liberally for interpreting the law of the land to the rulers. And you imitate these people! Know, young man, that there are two great races that inherit a hoary civilisation—the Hindus and the Chinese, and both these races uphold a lofty ideal of purity and cleanliness in shaving their heads and faces, and in cultivating a tuft of hair on the crown of the head. A beard and a moustache give a wild appearance to the human face divine and suit a race of hardy warriors, grim and savage” My silence provoked the old man beyond all patience. Probably he was piqued at the thought—maddening to all pedants—that his sage arguments failed to convince me. And at last he broke out in these terrible words: “should you persist in your foolish resolve of following a course never before followed by your forefathers, I tell you, young man, this house of mine shall be no home of yours. Return to Calcutta and there seek a living for yourself. Take what wife you will; and I prophesy that you shall get a son who is sure to better your instruction and grow a long beard on his chin in the fulness of time and look like a veritable Mussulman. Oh! what an abominable sight! The Lord God be thanked that your father has been spared this sight of a moustachioed son and a grand son with a grizzled beard. Peace to his ashes! O, when shall my last hour come?”

I knew from my grandfather's stern voice that his orders were final. I left him, bade a hasty farewell to my mother—she poor, dear woman had heard everything and was in tears—and drifted back to Calcutta in search of a living, a wife and a bearded son.

L. K. B.