

IN MEMORY OF THE LATE LAMENTED.

65 One day the Mirza and I were sitting in dead silence on chairs placed side by side in the verandah.

When friendship is of long duration there no longer remains any great necessity for conversation; and it is quite possible for two friends to enjoy¹ each other's silence.

That was just how it was with us. We were both lost in our own thoughts. Heaven only knows what the Mirza was thinking about, but I was pondering the unfairness of Fate.

In the distance, on the road, every other minute a motor car was passing.

66 My nature is such that whenever I see anyone's motor car, I am sure to be worried with the problem of the unfairness of Fate, and I start to evolve some plan whereby the world's wealth shall be equally divided up among all men.

If I am walking along the road, and a motor car gliding² by, fills my lungs, brain, stomach, and spleen with dust; as soon as I get home I take out the book on chemistry, which I read for my F. A. examination and read it with the express object of seeing whether it will give me any prescription for making bombs.

For a time I kept on heaving sighs. The Mirza, paid no attention. Eventually I broke the silence and turned to the Mirza, "Mirza", I said "what is the difference between us and the animals?"

"I suppose there is one", he replied, "but I don't know."

"Shall I tell you?" I asked.

1. *Lutf ardeh*: Persian—amusement gathering, collecting or gaining.
2. *Adâ se*: Literally: with grace; deportment; carriage.

"Right ho!" he replied.

"There is no difference at all," I said, "D'you hear what I say Mirza? No difference at all between us and the animals!"

"At least there is no difference between *me* and the animals!"

67 "Oh yes, I know that you are a great one for splitting hairs¹ and you will say that animals chew the cud whereas I don't; that they have tails while I have not: but you can't deduce anything from that sort of remarks—they only prove that animals are more gifted than I am. There is one point, however, on which we are both perfectly equal, and that is that we both walk on our own feet. Now what do you say to that? There is no answer of course. If you have got any remark to make, then make it—stop—hold your tongue!—you cannot say anything.

"From the day I was born up to now I have always walked on foot, on foot! you don't know what that means.

"What it means is to move over the face of the earth in such a manner that one foot or the other is always on the ground. That is to say, such has been my method of moving from one place to another my whole life long—I put one foot on the ground, and lift up the other, then I put that one down, and lift up the other—one in front and the other behind—one behind and the other in front—I swear to God that from such a life one's brain loses the power of thought—one's senses are useless—imagination dies—and a man becomes worse than an ass!"

68 During all this oration of mine the Mirza Sahib went on puffing his cigarette unconcernedly till I felt

1. Note the Urdu idiom: *tdy* means unrivalled.

inclined to burst into tears over the faithlessness of friends. I turned my face away from him with the greatest contempt and hatred. It appeared to me that he did not even believe what I said; as though all my troubles which I had described to him were imaginary; that is to say, that my complaint at having to walk on foot was not worth listening to, which meant that I had no right to any form of conveyance.

"Right ho Mirza!"; I said to myself, "you just see what I'll do now!"

I set my teeth and lent over the arm of the chair closer to the Mirza. He turned round and faced me. I smiled, but there was poison in my smile.

When the Mirza was ready to listen to me I said to him, emphasising every word, "Mirza, I am going to buy a motor car." I then looked in the other direction in an off-hand way.

"What did you say?" asked the Mirza, "What are you going to buy?"

"Didn't you hear what I said?" I asked, "I'm going to buy a motor car, which is a sort of conveyance which some people call a 'motor'; others a 'car'; but as you are rather thick headed I used both words so that you should have no difficulty in understanding."

"Humph!" said the Mirza.

Now it was my turn, not the Mirza's to smoke a cigarette in a jaunty manner. I raised my eyebrows, and kept moving my cigarette hand up and down from my mouth with such a sweep that it would have been the envy of great actors.

After a while the Mirza said, "Humph!"

I thought that my words had some effect on

him, and that he was impressed¹, but I wanted him to say something so that I could see how much he really was impressed; but all he said was "Humph!"

"Mirza," I said to him, "as far as I know you have acquired a knowledge of two or three languages at school, College, and at home; and besides that you know several words which could never be used in any school, College, or gentleman's family; and yet the only reply that you will now vouchsafe to me is 'Humph!'"

"Mirza, you are consumed with envy, your present mental state is what is called in Arabic '*hasad*'."

"No, it's not that", replied the Mirza, "I was only wondering what you meant by buying. You said you were buying a motor car. Now, my dear fellow, buying is an action which necessitates money and so on. Arranging for the 'so on' part of it may be easy enough, but what are you going to do about the money?"

This point had never struck me, but I didn't lose heart and said, "Well, I can sell some of my valuables."

"What, for example?" asked the Mirza.

"Oh, I shall sell my cigarette case for one thing". I replied.

"Good", said he, "Well, that's ten annas, and if you can fix up for the remaining two and a half or three thousand rupees in the same manner, it will all be quite satisfactory."

After this a considerable pause in the conversation was bound to ensue. So, fed up with the Mirza, I held my peace.

What I could not understand was where other

1. *Chabul chabdkar*: chewing, masticating.

1. *Ba'ḥ*. Literally: fear, awe.
Note the form *Mar'ah* two lines further down.

people got their money from. I pondered the question and decided that they must steal it. I derived some sort of comfort from this idea.

"I've got an idea for you", said the Mirza, "get a bicycle."

"That's a question of money too", I said, "just as much as the other!"

"But it is a free one!" he expostulated.

I couldn't make it out and said, "Free? How's that?"

"You can look on it as free gratis and for nothing", he reiterated, "for to take money from a friend is the height of bad form. Of course, if you don't wish to place yourself under an obligation, that is another matter."

On such occasions, when I laugh, my laughter sounds like a combination of the happiness of an innocent child, the radiant joy of youth, the music of bubbling fountains, and the song of the nightingale. So this was the manner in which I now laughed: indeed to such an extent that my mouth² did not regain its composure for a long time.

72 When I was quite sure that there was no longer any danger of heart failure as a result of the suddenness of this unexpected good news, I asked him to whom it (the bicycle) belonged.

He replied that he had one for which he no longer had any use³.

"Oh say that again, say it again!" I implored him.

1. *Jam kâ thîr*: unbroken; the very same.
2. *Bâchhen*: the corners of the lips. *Bâchhen khîndî*: to die with laughter; to laugh intensely.
3. Note the signification of *Parî' hâî*.

"My dear fellow", he replied, "I've got a bicycle, and what is mine is yours—you take it!"

I sweated all over with shame; in fact I was covered with buckets of perspiration. Such disinterestedness and self-sacrifice¹ has never been seen in the fourteenth century².

I moved my chair nearer the Mirza. I did not know how to express my penitence and my thanks.

"Mirza", I said, "first of all I want to apologise for the rudeness, brusqueness, and bad manners with which I have just treated you during our conversation. Secondly I would like to make a confession to you today, and I hope that you will appreciate my outspokenness, and also that you will forgive me out of the kindness of your heart. I have always been wont to look on you as a very low-bred, tight-fisted, selfish, and knavish individual; now don't be annoyed, for 'man is prone to err'; but today you have proved your good breeding and friendly nature, and you have succeeded in impressing on me what a hateful, narrow-minded, and contemptible fellow I am. Please forgive me!"

My eyes filled with tears—I almost kissed the Mirza's hand, and to hide my tears I hid my head in his lap.

But the Mirza said, "Well I don't call it very generous of me. I've got a bicycle, what does it matter whether I ride it or you³?"

1. *Isdâr*. Literally: preferring; honouring; giving some one a gift one wants to keep for oneself.
2. *i. e.* The XIV century of the Muhammadan era, which is mentioned in prophecies as the century of evil, disloyalty, and sin.
3. Note the Urdu idiom.

"But I can't take it free", I protested, "that is impossible."

"Yes, that was just what I was afraid of," said the Mirza, "you are so touchy that you won't put yourself under an obligation to anyone: whereas, God be my witness, there is no obligation in this at all."

74 "Well, however that may be," I replied, "just tell me the exact price of it."

The Mirza said, "You distress me! when you talk about the price; and besides, I paid a very large price for it, which, in its present condition, it is no longer worth."

"How much did you pay for it?" I asked.

"I paid a hundred and seventy five rupees for it", he said, "but in those days bicycles were still quite rare, and that is why they were rather expensive."

"Is it dreadfully old?" I queried.

"Oh no" he replied, "it's not as old as all that. My son used to go backwards and forwards to College on it, and it is not quite two years yet since he left College.³ Still I tell you that it is not quite like a modern bicycle. Modern bicycles are made of tin, which the muddle-headed boys at the College look on as cheap and buy. The framework of old fashioned bicycles was always strong."

75 "But Mirza, I shall never be able to pay a hundred and seventy five rupees—where could I get so much money from? I can't pay even half that amount."
"Good Lord, I am not asking the full price for

1. *Khaton men ghastind*: to drag through thorns; to distress one with excessive attentions and compliments.

2. Note the Urdu expression.

3. Note the Urdu expression.

it!" said he, "Firstly, I don't wish to take the money, but....."

"No, Mirza," I objected, "you must take it, but do it like this; I will put some rupees in your pocket. Don't you count them till you get home. If you are satisfied with the amount, send the bicycle round tomorrow; otherwise return the money. Am I to sit here now and bargain with you?? It seems rather mercenary somehow."

"Just as you like, my boy," said the Mirza, "what I say is, do let the matter of the price and pice go, though I know you won't hear of it."

I got up, went indoors, and reflected that people usually sold second hand things for half price; but when I had told the Mirza that I could not even pay half the price for it, he had not objected. The poor fellow actually told me to take it for nothing.

76 But how could I take it for nothing? After all it was a bicycle, a conveyance—which is classified with phaetons, horses, motors, and tongas. I opened my box and found that all I had in the world³ was forty-six rupees, but forty-six rupees was not a suitable sum; it ought to be either forty-five or fifty—which looks well:⁴ in any case it could not be fifty and if I was going to pay fifty-five, well why not forty?

Besides figures with a nought at the end of them are more imposing. So, he hanged to it, I would pay forty, and Heaven grant the Mirza would accept it.

I came out, grasping the forty rupees tight in my fist, and putting them into the Mirza's pocket, said to him, "Now don't look on this as the price of

1. Note the Urdu expression.

2. *Saudá chakánda*: to settle the price.

3. *Hast-o-bhd*. Persian: is and was.

4. Note the Urdu expression.

the bicycle, and if you do not consider it beneath you to accept such an insignificant sum from a poor friend please have the bicycle sent round tomorrow."

The Mirza made as though to leave, and I repeated, "Mirza, be sure to have it sent early tomorrow morning."

Before wishing him good-bye, I added, "By eight or nine o'clock tomorrow morning—and don't be late with it good bye and look here Mirza, remember what seems a small sum to you is a large one to me good bye many many thanks, I am most awfully obliged to you do please forgive me for my rudeness to you and look here, every now and again, familiarity does breed by eight or nine o'clock tomorrow morning without fail good bye!" The Mirza replied, "Mind you keep it clean, and have it oiled. If my servant has the time, I will get him to do it, otherwise you must get it done yourself."

"Yes, rather", I cried, "that will be alright. Mind you send it tomorrow—and look here, by eight or half past seven for sure good bye!"

That night, as I lay on my bed, I kept making all sorts of programmes for trips on my bicycle. I made up my mind that during the next two or three days I would go and pay another visit to all the famous historical buildings and ruins in the neighbourhood; and after that, during the next hot weather, I would, if possible, ride it to Kashmir and such places. Every day, first thing in the morning, I would go for a ride to the canal; and, of an evening, when all the other people were sporting themselves on the Mall, I would roll smoothly, like an ivory

ball along its shiny surface. The rays of the setting sun would fall on the polished parts of the machine, which would glitter, and look just like a swan flying along close to the ground.

The smile which I have referred to above was still lurking round my lips. Time and again I wanted to run off and throw my arms round the Mirza's neck. I kept on praying Heaven in my dreams that the Mirza would agree to give it to me.

Next morning I rose from my bed, and as soon as I got up, the servant came in with the news that the bicycle had come.

"As early as this?" I ejaculated.

"Why, it came last night," said the servant, "you were asleep, and I didn't like to wake you, and the Mirza's servant gave me this tool along with it for tightening the nuts."

I could not make out why the Mirza had been in such a hurry to have the cycle sent round, and I came to the conclusion that he was very gentlemanly and honest—he had received the money for the bicycle, so he could not keep it.

I told the servant to leave the tool where it was, and to go and give the bicycle a good cleaning with a cloth, and then to go to the bicycle shop² at the corner and get some lubricating oil.

"And look here you rascal", I said, "where on earth are you off to?" What I am telling you is very important—yes, and get a tin of oil from the bicycle shop, and oil the machine in all the places that have to be oiled—yes, and tell the man

1. *Gumbad* is a misprint for *gend*.
2. *Bissikon wadd*: the vulgar term for a bicycle shopkeeper.
3. Note the Urdu expression.

at the bicycle shop not to give you coarse and common oil which will spoil all the machinery. The machinery of a bicycle is very delicate.

Yes, and put the bicycle outside: I'll dress and come along in a minute, and then I'll go for a short ride.

Now mind you clean it, and don't rub it too hard; the paint on a bicycle comes off."

I simply gulped down my tea. In my bath I let myself go and sang at the top of my voice, "Come along with me to the jasmine garden!" I then dressed, put the bicycle tool in my pocket, and went out.

When I got into the verandah, leaning against it, I saw a contraption which looked like nothing on earth. I could not make out what it was.

"Good Lord, what's that?" I asked, my servant.

80 "It's a bicycle Sir," he replied.

"A bicycle?" I asked, "whose bicycle?"

"The Mirza Sahib sent it round for you," he replied.

"And what happened to the one he sent last night?"

"This is it," he answered.

"Don't talk rot," I exclaimed, "This can't be the bicycle the Mirza Sahib sent last night."

"It is," he said.

"Oh really!", and then I had a look at it. I asked him why he had not cleaned it, and he told me that he had done so two or three times.

"Then why is it so dirty?" I asked.

He apparently did not consider it befitting to reply to this question.

"Have you brought the oil?" I asked.

"Yes Sir."

"Have you oiled it?"

"I can't find the holes into which one has to put the oil, Sir."

"Why not?"

"Well Sir, the hubs are so covered in dirt and rust that the holes are buried and covered up under it all."

81

Slowly I approached the thing which my servant called a bicycle, studied the various parts of the machine, and realised that it really was a bicycle. However, from its general appearance it was obvious that it had been made in times long before the era of such modern inventions as the plough, the Persian wheel well, and the spinning wheel.

I turned the wheel round and round, and looked for the hole into which, in days gone by, oil had been put, but which was now closed to traffic.

My servant went on to tell me that the oil went on all right, and ran all over the place, but it simply would not go down the hole.

"That doesn't matter," I said, "pour it over the top; that will be better than nothing."

Eventually I mounted the bicycle, and when I started to pedal it sounded as though some corpse were cracking its bones, and coming to life against its will.

82

On leaving the house there was a little bit of down hill, down which the bicycle went on its own, but at the same pace as pitch would flow, and then various noises arose from the different parts of the machine. These noises could be classified in groups.

From under the saddle and the back wheel came noises which sounded like cheen-chaan-choon, whereas

1. Note the use of the verb *drud* to facilitate narration.

the mud-guards made a sort of khat-khar-khar-kharar. The chain and pedals made a sort of char-charrakh-char-charrakh. The chain was rather loose, and when I put any pressure on the pedals, the chain seemed to stretch itself, which would make it tight; then it made a char-char noise, and became loose again.

The back wheel, as well as going round, wobbled a bit, that is to say, in the first place it went forwards, then besides that, it kept moving from right to left and left to right; and so the track made on the road might have been that of the reeling of a drunken snake. Mud-guards there were to be sure, but they were not exactly over the wheels, and the only use of them appeared to be, that if one were going north, and the sun were setting in the west, the tyres would be shaded from the sun by the mudguards.

There was a big patch on the front tyre, the result of which was that there was a momentary bump upwards in every revolution of the wheel, and my head was jerked back as though some unseen agency were continually punching me under the chin. The combined motion of the front and back wheels produced a noise which sounded like choon-choon-phat, choon-choon-phat, choon-choon-phat.

When going down hill, and the bicycle was moving faster, it produced something of the effect of an earthquake; and several parts of the machine, which had hitherto been asleep, awoke and added their voices to the rest.¹ The people all around started, and mothers pressed their children to their breasts. Through the kharar-kharar-kharar and quite distinct from it, sounded the clanking of the wheels.

1. *Goyd*. Persian: verbal noun of *guyftan*—speaking; talking.

As the bicycle was now going a bit faster, the choon-choon-phat, choon-choon-phat, noise changed into a sort of chachoon-phat, chachoon-phat, chachoon phat. Indeed the whole bicycle seemed to be repeating the conjugations and declensions of one of the more obstruse¹ languages of Africa.

The delicate nature of the bicycle found the increased pace difficult to cope with, and so, all of a sudden, two² changes took place.

To start off with the handle bars turned round to one side; the result of which was that although I was going straight forward³ my whole body was turned round to the right.

Besides this, the saddle suddenly sank down some six inches, so when my legs were going up and down working the pedals, my knees kept on knocking against my chin, whilst my back was bent double and arched out; and, from the antics of the back wheel my head kept on jerking up and down.

The saddle sinking down made it unbearable, and I thought that I had better put things right. So I stopped the machine and got off. As soon as the bicycle stopped it seemed as though a great calm had spread over the earth, and I felt as though I had just come out of a Railway Station. I took the tool out of my pocket and put the saddle up, straightened up the handle bars a bit, and then got on once more.

I had not gone ten yards when, all of a sudden, the handle bars sank down once again to such an extent that the saddle was quite a foot above them.

1. *Adagq*: more or most subtle; slender; abstruse

2. *Wuh* is a misprint for *do*.

3. Note the form of the verb in *Main ja to sarme ko rahid thd*.

My whole body was thrown forward, and its whole weight, was supported by my hands, which were placed on the handle bars, and were jerked up and down all the time.

Just try and picture me, and you will realise that from a distance I must have looked like a woman kneading flour.

I was acutely conscious of this resemblance, and in consequence beads of sweat broke out on my brow. I cast sidelong glances¹ at the people on both sides, although they all turned round to have a look at me from a mile off; and there was not one of them for whom my unhappy plight was not a cause of great hilarity.²

The handle bars had already³ sunk down, and in a few moments the saddle slipped down again, and my whole form subsided earthwards. A small boy cried out, "Just look at 'im! What's 'e a-doing of?", and apparently the young wretch thought that I was performing some sort of trick.

86 I got off, and again put up the handle bars and the saddle.

But after a little, one or the other was sure to slip down again; and moments when my hands and body were level and at the same altitude were few and far between; and even then I was wondering whether the seat or the handle bars would collapse first. So I could not sit down without the prehension⁴ and raised myself a little above the saddle, but this brought all my weight on the handle

1. *Kamkh:* the corner of the eyes.
2. *Zaydfat-i-taba'*: An entertainment for the nature or temperament.
3. Note the force of the particle *hi*.
4. *Ni-dar*: fearless.

bars and forced them down.

By the time I had gone two miles, and the saw¹ motion had become more or less regular, I decided that I ought to go and have the screws tightened by a smith, and so took the machine off to a shop. All the men working in the shop looked up at me when they heard the bicycle rattle up. I pulled myself together and asked them if they would kindly mend it.

One of them, who had an iron bar in his hand, came up, and unsympathetically banged the various parts of the machine and examined it. It appeared that he soon made up his mind what was wrong with it, but still he asked me which parts of the machine I wished to have repaired.

"How rude you are", I replied, "Can't you see that all that is necessary is to raise the handle bars and saddle a little and tighten them up. Now please get a move on, put them right, and let me know how many coppers I owe you."

"But how about the mudguards?" the workman replied, "Hadn't I better repair them?"

I agreed that he should.

"If you want to make a good job of it," he added, "you had better have the rest of it put right."

"Very well!" I assented.

"I can't do it in a moment," he said, "It is about a fortnight's work. Please leave it here."

"And how much will it all come to?"

"Oh, only about thirty or forty rupees!"

"Thank you very much," I replied, "just do what I have asked you to, and, for the rest, don't poke your nose into my affairs." The handle bars

1. *Uyd tale*: Up and down; switchback; see-saw.
2. Note the Urdu expression.

and saddle were soon raised and screwed up. I was about to leave the shop, when the man told me that he had tightened the screws up, but that they had worn smooth, and that they would soon work loose again.

"Damn you, you scoundrel!" I exclaimed, "so you have taken two annas for nothing!"

"Well Sir, and you must have got the bicycle for nothing too; it belongs to your friend the Mirza Sahib, doesn't it?" "Lalloo!" he called to one of the assistants, "Isn't this the bicycle which the Mirza Sahib brought here last year for us to sell? You know it, don't you? Centuries have passed but this bicycle's sins have not yet obtained absolution."

"Rot," I exclaimed, "the Mirza's son¹ used to ride it to and from College every day, and he has only just left the College, not two years ago at any rate."

"Just so," said the workman, "but the Mirza Sahib had this self same bicycle when he himself was studying at the College."

I felt rather dashed on hearing this. I took the bicycle with me and walked off slowly: but walking was rather a difficult job.

Riding this bicycle had brought muscles into play which would never be used on an ordinary machine; hence I had aches and pains in my legs, shoulders, back and arms. I could not help suspecting⁴ the Mirza, though I strove to put this idea out of my head or I should have gone mad, and in my

1. Note the Urdu expression.
2. This means the bicycle is still being used and has not been allowed to die in peace.
3. Note the use of the plural for respect.
4. Note the Urdu expression.

madness my first act would have been to hold a meeting in front of the Mirza's house in the bazaar at which I would have made a long speech about the Mirza's fraud, dishonesty, and deception.

And I would have let all mankind and future generations know all about the Mirza's evil nature. Following the speech I would have lit a funeral pyre¹ and burnt myself alive.

However, I thought it would be better for me to sell the bicycle for anything it would fetch² and make the best of a bad job³ and be hanged to the loss of ten or fifteen rupees.....at any rate I shouldn't lose the whole forty I had spent on it.

There was another bicycle shop on the road, to which I went.

The shopkeeper came up to me; but I felt as if there were a lock on my tongue. Never before had I had to sell anything.

I did not even know what sort of remarks people made on such occasions. At long last, and after much thought and deep cogitation, I managed to blurt out,

"This is a bicycle!"

"Is that so? Well?" asked the shopkeeper.

"Like to take it?"

"What are you getting at?"

"Selling⁴ it, I am."

The shopkeeper looked at me in such a way that I felt sure he thought I had stolen it. He looked at the bicycle, then at me, and again at the bicycle; it appeared that he could not make up his mind which

1. *Chidd*—A funeral pyre, a pile of wood on which a Hindu corpse is burnt.
2. Note the Urdu expression.
3. Note the Urdu expression.
4. *Pechte* is a misprint for *bechte*.

was I and which the bicycle. At last he exclaimed "What will you do when you have sold it?"

Heaven only knows how such a question should be answered, but I asked him if he meant how I should spend the money I got for it. "Yes, I know all about that," he replied, "And what would anybody do with it who bought it?"

"Get on it," I said, "What else?"

"Oh, I see: and then?"

"What do you mean by 'and then'?" I asked, "He will ride it, of course."

"Oh, will he?" said the shopkeeper. "Here, Khuda Bux, come here—this bicycle has come here to be sold."

The gentleman who rejoiced in the name of Khuda Bux looked at the bicycle from a distance as if he were smelling it. Then they discussed the matter between themselves, and finally the one whose name was not Khuda Bux came and asked me if I really did intend selling it.

"Of course," I replied, "You don't imagine that I've made the whole yarn up, and have merely come here in order to be able to boast of having had a conversation with you, do you?"

"What will you take for it?" he asked.

"Well, you make a bid," said I.

"Shall I tell you what I really think?" he asked.

"Yes."

Again he asked, "What, the whole truth?"

"Now are you going to make a bid?" I asked, "Or are you merely tantalising me?"

"I'll give you three rupees for it," he said.

My blood boiled, and my hands, feet and lips trembled with rage. "Oh you ill bred artisans!" I cried. "Who fill your stomachs by manual labour; I

don't mind your having insulted me, but till the Day of Judgement I will never be able to forgive you the evil you have done this dumb thing by your stupid words."

I then mounted my bicycle and rode away headlong.

I couldn't have gone twenty paces when it seemed to me as if the ground suddenly got up and hit me; the sky came off my head and went over between my legs; and the buildings all round changed their positions.

When I came to, I found myself sitting on the ground in such a natural and unrehearsed manner that it appeared as if I had that day accomplished something I had been longing to do for ages. Some people had collected round, most of whom were laughing. In front of me was the shop where I had just cut short that fruitless conversation. I looked around me and saw that the front wheel of my bicycle had come off and had rolled away to the other side of the street. The rest of it was lying near me.

I quickly pulled myself together, caught hold of the errant wheel with one hand, and holding the remainder in the other, walked off.

This action was entirely involuntary, for God knows I had never been so attached to the thing that I should wish to walk about holding it in my arms. As I went off carrying the whole caboodle, I wondered what I was doing² where I was going, what I was going to do, and why I was carrying the two wheels. There was but one answer to all these questions,

1. *Hāshā wa kallā*: Arabic—*hāshā*, literally God forbid; let it not be etc. *Kallā*, literally, certainly not.

2. Note the use of the *oratio recta* to express the sequence of ideas which come into his head in his dazed condition.

which was "We will see, but the first thing is to get away from here. Everybody is looking at you, hold your head up and keep on the move. Let those who are laughing at you laugh.

Stupid people like these are to be found in every nation and country. After all, what has happened? Merely an accident, I mustn't look to right or left, but must keep on the move!" I heard the rude remarks people were making about me. One of them said, "Now Sir, just control your bad temper¹ and be done with it!"

Another gentleman called out, "You beastly bicyete, I'll give you what for when we get home!"

A father was leading his beloved offspring along by the fingers, and pointing towards me, exclaimed, "Did you see that, my boy? That is the sort of bicycle they use in a circus; both the wheels take off."

But on I went, and after a while left human habitation far behind me. Then at last some fixity of purpose² came into my gait. My mind, which for some hours past had been on the horns of a dilemma, now felt much quieter.

On and on I went, until I reached the river, and when on the bridge threw both wheels, one after the other into the river as unconcernedly as one would drop letters into a pillar-box; and then started back to the City.

I went straight to the Mirza's house, and knocked at the door. "Come in!" called the Mirza.

95 "Would you be so good as to come out yourself please," said I, "How can I enter the house of a Saint, and such a holy one as you are without first having performed ablutions?"

He came out, and I presented him with the tool which he had so graciously bestowed on me for nothing along with the bicycle, saying, "I hope, Mirza, that you will be keen on having this tool; for I have now no further need for it."

When I got home, I started reading the book on Chemistry again which I had read for my F.A. examination.

1. Note the Urdu expression.

2. *Azimat*: Literally undertaking; resolution; determination.