

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL

### INTRODUCTION

No one more thoroughly deserves to be called 'stupid' than a human being who does not sometimes ponder over the affairs of the world we live in. And although there are fit subjects for meditation in this world of a thousand different kinds, the most fundamental and important of all is human life itself.

Just consider—from the day that a man is born, until he dies—what a number of different things happen to him in the course of his life, and what wonderful changes he himself is constantly undergoing. The best time of all in a man's life is that of childhood. At that age he has no kind of anxiety. His father and mother cherish him with the utmost tenderness and affection, and, as far as their means go, provide him with every comfort.

Parents take a pleasure in their children being well fed and well clothed, and for the sake of their children's comfort are content to undergo all kinds of annoyance and trouble. Men who are fathers earn money—some by the roughest manual labour, some take up a profession, some go into trade, some into service; in short, by whatever means are available, they find the money required for their children's ease. Women who are mothers very often work hard themselves to make money if the father's earnings are not sufficient for the household expenses. This one takes in needlework, another knits lace, another makes men's caps—nay, there are some mothers, stricken by calamity, who are maintaining their children by grinding at the mill, or spinning at the wheel, or doing the work of a general drudge in a house.

The affection which parents have for their children is not pretended, or put on for show. On the contrary, it is genuine love which springs from the heart, and God (be He exalted!), who is

all-wise, has planted this fondness for their offspring in fathers and mothers in order that the offspring should obtain proper nourishment. At the commencement of their life the little things are extremely helpless—unable to speak, or to understand, to move or to get about. If their parents did not lovingly tend them, little children would die of hunger. Whence should they get bread? whither would they go for clothes? and how would they grow up to be big?

Is it the case only with human beings? Even among animals the love of their young is very strong. How carefully does a hen bring up her chickens! All day long she keeps sitting and hiding them under her wings; and if she finds a single grain of corn anywhere, *she* does not eat it; she calls the chickens, and lays it in front of them with her beak; and if a hawk or a cat wants to attack them, without a thought of her own safety, she is ready to fight and be killed for them. It is clear, then, that God has given this special affection to parents for no other reason than this—that the supply of such tiny little creatures' needs should never be checked; that they should get food when they are hungry, water when they are thirsty, warm clothing to shield them from the cold, and everything requisite for their comfort at the right time.

Experience teaches us that this special affection only lasts so long as the young are dependent upon it for their needs. When a hen's chickens grow big, she leaves off hiding them under her wings, and as soon as they run about, and are able to fill their own crops for themselves, the hen does not give them any assistance. Indeed, when they get very big, she begins to peck at them in such a fashion you might suppose she was not their mother.

The same is the case with human parents. So long as the child is very small the mother nurses it, and carries it about with her wherever she goes. She gives up her whole night's rest, while she is patting the baby to sleep. But when the child is old enough to begin eating 'khichri,' the mother leaves off nursing it altogether, and that milk which she has gone on giving to it so fondly for many years she now withholds from it persistently and sternly. She applies bitter-tasting things (to keep the child away), and if the child is pertinacious she slaps and scolds it. After a time the

children come to a stage in which her taking them up into her lap even is an annoyance to her.

Have you never seen your little brothers and sisters getting slapped because they would not leave their mother's lap? Mother gets angry, and says: 'What a troublesome child it is! Not out of my lap for a moment!' Do not suppose from this that her love no longer remains. The fact is, that there are different *kinds* of affection during different stages of existence. The state of children does not always remain the same. To-day they are drinking milk; to-morrow they have begun to eat food; by-and-by they learn to walk. As a child goes on getting bigger, so the tone of the parents' love for it goes on changing. How many a beating do boys and girls get over their reading and writing! Although little children in their folly may not think so, even the pain which comes to you from your father's or mother's hands is really conducive to your own advantage.

You will have many days to live in the world after you are separated from your parents; no one yet has ever preserved his father and mother alive for the whole of his own term of life. Happy indeed may those boys and girls be called, who during their parents' lifetime acquired the common-sense and good habits which have enabled them to pass their whole lives in joy and peace; and very evil is the fate of those children who never valued their parents' existence, and made no use of the advantages which their parents' efforts secured to them, but wasted the precious time of unruffled leisure in playing and idling, and have since spent their lives in trouble and misfortune. They have lived in torment, and they made their parents also live in torment on their account.

It is not a question only of dying. During the lifetime of the parents, their children slip away from their control as soon as they are married. And by the time that children come to be of middle age their parents are old people, and themselves become dependent upon their children; so that sons and daughters, after they have reached that age, so far from being assisted by their parents, have to support and relieve them.

Boys and girls ought certainly to consider how their life will be

passed after they are separated from their parents. In this world } the heaviest burdens fall upon the males of a family. The food, } the clothes, and all the things which are required for daily consumption, are in this world procured by money. The chink of } *rupees* sets men's teeth on edge.

It is a happy thing for women that, as a rule, they are preserved } from the toil of earning a livelihood or making money. Look at } all the hard work of different kinds which is performed by men. One carries huge loads on his head; another brings in firewood. The goldsmith, the blacksmith, the tinker, the brazier, the gold and silver wire-maker, -beater, -flattener, -drawer, -gilder, the jeweller, the embroiderer, the silver-thread-twister, the metal-worker, the enameller, the tin-washer, the plain-worker, the burnisher, the mirror-maker, the gold-lace-maker, the lacware-man, the shoeing-smith, the seal-engraver, the shoe-embroiderer, the hone-cutter, the sand-sifter, the caster, the carpenter, the turner, the cocoanut-worker, the comb-maker, the bamboo-splitter, the paper-maker, the weaver, the tent-maker, the dyer, the calico-printer, the tailor, the turban-maker, the braid-maker, the tube-maker, the cobbler, the die-cutter, the stone-mason, the lapidary, the builder, the leather-worker, the potter, the sweetmeat-seller, the oilman, the pawn-seller, the colour-maker, the perfumer—it does not matter what trade a man is of; in *all* of them there is the same amount of irksome toil and labour, and all this labour is put up with and undergone by men for the sake of earning money.

But for all this you must not suppose that women have no share at all in the business of the world beyond eating and sleeping. On the contrary, it is the women who do the entire work of house-keeping. The man brings his earnings home, and lays them down before the women, and they, with their woman's wit, make the money go so far, by economy and good management, that not only the comfort, but the credit and respectability, of the family defy reproach. So that, if you look into the matter carefully, the world is like a cart which cannot move without two wheels—man on one side, and woman on the other. Men cannot spare the time from their breadwinning occupations to spend on the little details \* of household management.

You boys must learn those things which will be useful to you when you are men ; and you girls should acquire those gifts which will be a source of pleasure and profit to you when you are women. No doubt God has created women, in comparison with men, of a somewhat more delicate physique ; but He has given to women hands, feet, ears, eyes, intelligence, thought, memory, just the same as to men.

These are the things which boys make use of, and with their help become great scholars, reciters, doctors, artists, mechanics—supreme in every craft, adepts in every science. Girls who waste their time in playing with dolls or listening to stories are left in a state of ignorance. And yet there are women—those who have understood the value of time, and have spent it in useful pursuits—who have become famous and celebrated in the world in the same way as men. Such women were Núr Jehán begam, and Zebunnisa begam ; and in these days the nawáb Sikandar begam,<sup>1</sup> or the English Princess, Queen Victoria. They are women who have administered the affairs of nations—of the whole world, not of a little home and family.

Some ignorant women reason after this fashion. They say : ' However much we read, shall we become *maulavis* like men ? Well, then, what is the use of our bothering ourselves ? ' But even if a woman has learnt more than she requires, there is not the least doubt she will reap a proportionate advantage. I do not deny that too much learning is unnecessary for a woman, but how many women are there who acquire even so much as is absolutely necessary ? It is of the greatest importance to them, at the very least, to be able to read and write the vernacular. If they have not *this* amount of learning, they are certain to be put to inconvenience. Either they are compelled to disclose their own family matters to strangers, or they incur all the annoyances that may arise from keeping them secret. The subjects which occupy a woman's thoughts are usually of a delicate and private nature, but it is often necessary for her to communicate them to a mother or

<sup>1</sup> Núr Jehán, the celebrated wife of the Emperor Jahángir, died A.D. 1645. Zebunnisa, daughter of the Emperor Aurangzeb, died unmarried A.D. 1702. Sikandar begam, ruler of Bhopál, died A.D. 1868.

a sister ; and suppose that by any chance her mother or sister are not near her at the time ? In such a case she must either lay her modesty upon the shelf, or she must endure all the evils that result from her silence.

Writing is certainly a little difficult in comparison with reading, but any person who will make a practice of copying out four lines a day from a book, and of writing that amount over again from memory—getting the exercises corrected—in a few months, at the outside, will have learnt to write. There is no call for elegant penmanship ;<sup>1</sup> mere writing is an art which is of the greatest use on emergencies. If there are mistakes, or if the letters are ill-formed or incorrect, don't give up your practice in despair. Whatever it be, no work is done well at the beginning. You might give some great scholar one of these skull-caps to cut out and sew together, but if such a thing had never happened to him before, it is certain he would make a mess of it.

This moving about on your legs, which is now so easy to you that you run here and there at your pleasure—very likely you don't remember with what difficulty it was learnt ; but it is well within the recollection of your parents and elders that first of all you could not even sit without support. When they took you out of anyone's lap, and put you on the ground, someone kept hold of you, or they placed a cushion to prop you up. After that, by tumbling about, you learnt to crawl on your knees, and then to stand up, but holding on to the bedstead ; then, when your legs became stronger, you gradually learnt to walk ; but every day one heard of your falling, and hundreds of times you hurt yourselves. And now here you are, by the grace of God, running about in the most astonishing way.

One of these days writing will come to you just as easily. But suppose that you never are able to write quite so well as boys ; without a doubt you will at least be able to write sufficiently well to meet your own requirements, and you will no longer be put to the inconvenience of having to get up and draw lines on the wall,

<sup>1</sup> Among the Musalmans calligraphy is one of the fine arts. Single specimens of a few lines written by eminent calligraphists fetch prices analogous to those given in England for etchings by celebrated artists.

or make little heaps of gravel or pebbles, in order to check the clothes sent to wash, or the reckonings of the woman who grinds your corn. To keep all the accounts of the house—what there is to receive, and what there is to pay—entirely by rote is a very difficult matter, and it is a way with some husbands to ask for an account every now and then of the different sums they have paid towards the household expenses. If the wife cannot remember the items paid, the husband gets suspicious and says to himself: 'Where has all that money gone?' Then the one gets annoyed with the other, all about nothing, and a quarrel is the result. If women would only learn so much writing as would enable them to be accurate in their own accounts, what a good thing it would be!

Besides reading and writing, two other arts are very necessary for girls to learn—namely, needlework and cooking. None of us know what contingencies may meet our paths in the future. The greatest nobles, the richest men are reduced to poverty and beggary at a moment's notice. If they happen to be masters of any kind of skill, it stands them in good service during their time of need. It is a matter of history that the kings of former ages, notwithstanding all their wealth and magnificence, invariably trained themselves to learn some handicraft, which might prove useful to them in the time of misfortune. Remember that no position in this world is secure. If at the present moment you are in the enjoyment of perfect ease and security, give thanks to God that of His great goodness He has blessed your home with such prosperity and affluence. But this does not mean that you should underrate the value of your present good fortune, or that you should take it for granted, in looking to the future, that the same amount of comfort will be your lot for ever.

In the time of prosperity it is most important to keep your conduct and daily habits up to the mark. Although God may have given you servants to wait upon you, it is your business to see that *you* don't get spoilt. If (which God forbid!) your present opulence should not last, *that* would cause you much annoyance: Not to get up even to drink a glass of water—to give trouble to the servants, or to your younger brothers and sisters, for every little thing you want, while you are lolling at ease like some old

State pensioner, is conduct unsuited to your age, and is evidence of a spoilt disposition. You ought to do all your own things for yourselves; indeed, if you are active and on the alert, you can do many things for the house, and if you are willing to take a little trouble, you can give a great deal of help and assistance to your mother.

Think over this well, and don't leave any of your business so that your mother will have to do it with her own hands, or be distracted by calling others to do it, and so giving trouble to them.

Yes, my dear little girl! when you go to bed at night, spread out your bedding for yourself with your own hands, and in the morning get up betimes and fold it up, and put it carefully in its proper place. Keep your own bundle of clothes under your own charge, and whenever you wish to change any of your clothes, and put on something else, first mend whatever is torn or has come unstitched in it with your own hands. Be careful about the dirty clothes. Until the washerwoman comes for them, hang them up separately on pegs. If, when you change your clothes, you do not pick up the dirty ones, perhaps the rats will gnaw them to bits; or they may get more dirty by lying about, and the washerwoman will not be able to clean them properly; or perhaps, on account of damp in the ground,<sup>1</sup> or the moisture of perspiration, white ants will get at them. And always see your clothes yourself before giving them to the washerwoman; and when she brings them back from the wash, look them over before you take them; perhaps she may have brought less than the full number, or she may have torn them somewhere, or there may be some stains not taken out. If you look after your clothes in this way they will always be washed beautifully clean, and none of them will ever be lost.

The ornaments which you wear are things that cost a great deal. In the evening, before going to bed, and in the morning,

<sup>1</sup> The floors as well as the walls of many rooms even in the best houses are made of beaten earth, and are constantly kept clean, cool, and fragrant by the process of 'leeping'—i.e., washing them over with a solution of a particularly fine clay mixed with fresh cowdung.

when you get up,<sup>1</sup> you should notice whether they are all there or not. It often happens that heedless girls let some of their ornaments fall while they are playing about, and then perhaps days afterwards they find out that an earring has dropped off, or a ring is missing from its place. After the house has been through ever so many cleanings, how can anyone tell where a tiny little thing like that has gone to, or whereabouts in the ground it has got trampled under foot? Then the careless girls cry and bewail the loss of their ornaments, and throw the whole house into confusion in searching for them. Moreover, when the parents see that a girl does not take any trouble to look after her own jewellery, and is always losing it, they, too, begin to be somewhat chary of their benevolence.

You ought always to be on the watch for any little jobs in the work of the house which you can make it your business to do. When your little brothers and sisters cry, or are troublesome, you can surely undertake to keep them quiet, so that your mother may not be worried by them. The washing their faces, looking after their meals, putting on their clothes—all these things, if you have the will, you have the power to do. But if you want to have your own way, and fight with them, you lower yourselves in their estimation, and cause your mother extra trouble. Is she to look after the work of the house, or to be always adjudicating your disputes?

You ought not to watch the meals being cooked in the house with no other object than to find out how soon they will be done, and when you will get them. If the dog, or the cat, or any other animal that may be a family pet—if they lie waiting till dinner is ready, in the hope of filling their stomachs, it is no great matter. But you ought to be taking note of everything that is done—how the seasoning is prepared and fried, how much salt they put into the different dishes. If you watch the preparation of each meal carefully, I am sure that before very long you will learn how to cook yourselves, and then you will have acquired an art which of all arts in the world is most indispensable.

<sup>1</sup> It is by no means an uncommon occurrence, among the poorer classes at all events, for women to be robbed of their ornaments while they are asleep. In the hot nights they sleep on the flat roofs of the houses or in their courtyards under the sky.

Besides the ordinary articles of diet, you ought to learn how to prepare some dishes of ceremony. In entertaining chance guests it is always desirable to have a few extra delicacies. Kabábs, pulá-os, sweetened rice, zarda, matanjan, chutnies, preserves, firni, are all of them tasty dishes, and you ought to learn the receipt for every one of them. And there are some dishes which are not of a sumptuous character, and yet to cook them nicely is a thing to be proud of, such as fish and karelas.

Sewing is not so very hard to learn, but cutting out requires some ingenuity. Put your heart into it, and learn how it is done. You cannot get on without it, and especially the cutting out of women's clothes. I have seen many a woman, who ought to have known better, carrying her draperies about to other women, in the hope that they will cut them out for her; and for such a trifling matter as this she has to do a lot of coaxing and wheedling. Of men's clothes, the jacket is certainly rather difficult. You should try the plan of cutting out your brothers' jackets. After you have done three or four you will soon get into the way of it.

Although girls are too shy to speak of such things, they know well enough in their hearts that the days of their girlhood will not last much longer. Some time or other they will be married. And after being married, they will have to live an entirely new kind of life, such as you see your mother, and her mother living, as well as your aunt and all the ladies of the family. The time of maidenhood is short, and, indeed, the greater part of it is spent in your infancy. A new life, like a hill which you have to climb, is coming nearer and nearer, and it is full of all kinds of perplexities and trials.

Now, you must bear in mind that you are not girls of any abnormal creation, so that, after marriage, you should meet with exceptional good luck. What happens to all the married girls in the world will happen to you. Well, then, just consider what sort of life it is which women lead. What degree of honour is theirs after marriage? What kind of respect do men pay to them, and in what sort of ways do they try to please them? Do not look at the cases of special individuals. Sometimes it happens that there is an excess of affection, and the wife gains the mastery over the

husband ; and where there is an extraordinary want of affection the wife's authority is completely thrown aside. These are exceptions to the rule. But look at the general custom, and the common practice of the whole country. According to that standard, I for my part see *no* value set upon women. 'Wanting in intellect,' serves as their title. 'Woman's obstinacy,' 'woman's ways,' are phrases always on men's lips. There is a passage in the Qur-án condemning the wiles of women : ' *Verily, as to your deceit, it is appalling.*' Men take it for granted that the female sex is not trustworthy, as in the line :

'Horse, Lady, or Sword—fit to be trusted, who has seen ?'

One poet has even found an excuse for maligning them in the etymology of the word which means woman :

'If all of her actions were kind and discreet,  
Her name would be "Beat not"—it would not be "Beat."'

All these things are written in books. Look into the conduct of family life. Beyond the mere drudgery of housekeeping, is any help in matters of outside importance ever sought for from women, or are they consulted or referred to for advice in any really important business ? Why, even in houses where the greatest respect and consideration is shown to the women, when any *questions* are asked of them, this is the style : 'Eh, my dear ! what vegetables will be wanted for cooking to-day ?' 'Do you wish me to order the girl's new shoes with a figured pattern or a border ?' 'Will you have Manikchundi betel or jaházi ?' 'Do you prefer Bengal tobacco, or Amánat Khán's ?' 'Is the quilt to have a purple edging or of antimony colour ?' I ask any woman to tell me whether, beyond this, men have ever taken her advice in important deliberations, or have left any important business to her discretion.

{ If this be the case, women of India, does not a life led under such conditions ever strike you as being unsatisfactory ? Do you never lament over your insignificance and want of responsibility ?

<sup>1</sup> The Persian word for 'woman' is 'zan,' which word is *also* the imperative form of the verb 'zadan,' to beat. The prohibitive form is 'mazan,' 'beat not.'

Do not your souls long for a higher kind of esteem in the eyes of men ? It is you yourselves who have allowed your authority to slip out of your own hands. It is your fault that you are so fallen in the estimation of the world. If the capacity for business were in you, how long would it be before men recognised it ? If you were competent to give advice, where is the man who would not respect it ? Here lies the difficulty. You women consider it an adequate endowment for the duties of life if you are just able to cook chapatties and dal, and to mend torn or worn clothes. Well, your value in the world is on a par with your endowments. In the condition in which you now are—not only folly, not only deceit and insincerity—if all the charges in the world were hurled against you, it is not without reason ; and if every kind of evil be imputed to you, it is not without grounds. Oh women ! you are the joy of men's hearts, you are the source of all the happiness in their lives, you are the delight of their eyes, you are they who multiply men's pleasures and beguile their pains. If men could get help from you in great matters, if you had the faculty of common-sense for managing great matters, why, men would drink the very water in which they had washed your feet, and would make you the enduring crown of their existence. Have they any other consolers better than you, or advisers better than you, or friends better than you ?

But if you are to acquire the capacity for dealing with great matters, how is it to be done ? You are shut up within the four walls of the house ; you can see nobody, you can talk to nobody. Knowledge, whether it be theoretical or practical, is transmitted from one human being to another. Men do acquire both kinds of knowledge by a literary education, but even those who are illiterate mix with people of different conditions numbered by thousands. From every ten men they hear ten new ideas.

For you there is little hope of escape from your seclusion. Public opinion and the custom of the country have made a retired life behind the purdah obligatory and incumbent upon women, and in these days the observance of this institution is more rigid than ever.

Hence, except reading and writing, there is positively no method

by which you can develop your intellects. Indeed, if you compare them with men, the need of education for women is even greater: For, since men admittedly live an out-of-door life, they will pick up the experience they want by associating with other people. But you, who sit at home all day long, what will you do? Will you fish out a little packet of common-sense from your sewing-bag, or fetch a napkinful of experience out of the grain-closet? Learn to read, and while you are seated behind the purdah you may make a tour of the whole world. Get knowledge, and without going outside the house you may become acquainted with what has happened in all the ages.

X If for no other reason, for the sake of educating their children, it behoves women to get all the culture they can. Girls are brought up at home as a matter of course, until they are married, and so are most boys until they are ten years old. The influence of their mother's character and companionship leaves its mark upon them. The whole future life of your children, therefore, is in your power. You may either instil into their hearts from their earliest youth such good desires and noble ambitions that, when they grow up, they will gain the esteem of their fellow-men, and, spending their lives in tranquillity, will never cease to be grateful to you; or you may so pervert their natural instincts that the older they grow the more they will become demoralized, and such a commencement of their life they will bemoan until its close.

{ As soon as boys can speak they have the capacity for instruction. If the mothers are properly qualified, they can begin to educate them from that moment. While boys are waiting to be sent to school many years of their life are practically lost. At a very early age boys have no inclination to go to school, and even if they had, the maternal instincts of their mothers would rebel against the notion of little children, not yet able to control their own physical exigencies, being put under the iron rule of a school-master. But their mothers, if they are so disposed, can teach them a great deal during these years. And even after the boys have begun to attend school they learn their lessons for a long time in a half-hearted way, and days and days go by before any real

progress is made in their studies. During the whole of this time they can receive immense assistance from their mothers. To begin with, where is there anything like a mother's sweetness and sympathy? And then the mere fact of their being always together night and day—whenever they see that a boy's attention is roused, in a second they can get him to recognise the shape of some letter, or they can impress on his memory some arithmetical fact, or they can make him understand the difference between east and west. Mothers can teach in the course of conversation what a school-master cannot teach in years of tuition; and there is this inestimable advantage in a mother's teaching—that, while the boy gets every incentive to greater diligence, there is not the least chance of his being frightened.

So far I have dwelt only on the moral training of the children; but the arrangements for their physical well-being—even the preservation of their lives—depend also upon the mother's will. If (which God forbid!) there be anything lacking in their capacity for these duties, it is an evil case for the children's very existence. No one would be such a wretch<sup>1</sup> as to speak a word in disparagement of maternal fondness. Yet it is quite possible that this very fondness, if exercised without knowledge, may have the opposite effect of what was intended, and cause harm instead of good. I appeal to your candour whether there are not thousands of mothers who are so ignorant and silly that they attribute every illness of their children to an evil eye, or a malignant shadow, or to some seizure, or the influence of devils, and so, instead of giving them medicine, perform all kinds of magical charms and exorcisms. What is likely to be the result of such ill-suited remedies I leave it to you to imagine.

To sum up. The successful management of a household in every detail depends upon a sound judgment, and the cultivation and correction of the judgment depends upon the acquisition of knowledge. And now I am going to tell you an amusing story, which will show you what kind of troubles are brought about by a bad education.

<sup>1</sup> Lit., 'Who is such a man (bad luck to him!) who would have a word to say?' etc.