

Recollections of a Patriarch.

BY METHUSELAH.

Shukur Allah! Praise be to God, who has blessed his servant with a good memory. This is the 1656th year of creation, and my 968th birthday; yet can I recall the early days of my childhood, yea, even as far back as my 60th birthday, for I remember that on that occasion I was invited unto a festival held in the tents of my revered relatives Adam and Eve, where I spent some happy hours in the company of youths of about my own age.

Adam was at that time 747 years old. Eve was but a few days younger, yet did she vow, in my hearing, by Allah sil Nebi, by Allah and his prophets, that there still lacked a month and three days to the completion of her fifth century! Wallah, may I die the death of a dog and my grave be defiled if she looked a day older than 600.

Not only was it esteemed a high honor to be invited to the tents of the Wahi, head of our house, but granny (I call Eve "granny", though there are five generations between us) made excellent doughnuts, and was a great kessehgon, story-teller. I remember, as though it were yesterday, when I was but 70 years old, how I was struck down by a big boy of about 90 and robbed of my bag of marbles. In my distress I ran to granny's tent, and she, bidding me "Kosh amedeid!" (you are welcome), listened to my woes, cursed my cowardly assailant as a "Shitan keh bacheh" son of a devil! and consoled me with a large slice of watermelon and a goodly supply of doughnuts.

Then, taking me on her lap, she wiped away my tears and related the following tale:

"Oh, it was just a lovely time we had in the dear old garden, Metty. Everything so peaceful and beautiful; no thistles nor nasty stinging-nettles, only gay flowers and sweet fruit. And all the animals were there, so tame and kindly disposed. Why, Metty, if I chanced to come across a lion or a tiger, a bear or a wolf asleep under some bush or shading tree, I would think nothing of lying down beside him to pillow my head on his soft body, and slumber peacefully till awakened in the cool of the evening by the voice of Adam calling me to go with him for a gallop (for we often had a race around the grounds mounted on a giraffe, or a zebra, or an elk, or some other swift-footed creature); and as for snakes, Wallah, I could coil the most poisonous of them round my neck as a necklace. Indeed, it was wearing these pretty ornaments that first suggested to me the idea of making an apron. For, of course, you are getting too big a boy now, Metty, to believe I picked up the idea of dressmaking through eating of the fruit of the

tree of knowledge. That foolish fib was the invention of our lying Yese-de fakir, devil-worshipping priest. Why, Metty dear, there is about as much knowledge to be obtained from an ephah (three pecks) of those apples as there is from the pastek (watermelon) you are now eating. And I ought to know, for barik Allah (praise be to God)! we had pretty well cleared the tree of its fruit before we were caught. Min Allah! God forbid that I should in any way disparage my Adam! May his grave be honored! But is he in any way the wiser for having partaken of the fruit, or are any of his descendants, now living, the wiser for his having done so? Bismillah! our knowledge exceedeth by a mere trifle the wisdom of the ape!"

And thus she rattled on, filling my brain with history and my stomach with doughnuts and watermelon, till my pain and my grief were assuaged. When she bade me go, with her usual loving farewell—"Murakhas! Mobarek!" (goodbye, good luck go with you) I had reason to feel grateful to her, and so have ye who, in generations to come, shall read these lines that tell of our first mother, for it was owing to her that I became a scribe. Yea, for did she not on my eightieth birthday provide me with a goodly roll of parchment and reeds to write with thereon, bidding me record the doings of our tribe and the events of my own life.

"Bashun ustun! on my head be it!" said I, "if I fail to do that same!" and I kept that oath and a diary ever since. Indeed, my records would fill 500 volumes, judging from the piles of parchment that fill the four corners of my tent. At one time I had thoughts of boiling them down to one volume, and having that same published by Mahalaleel & Co., but have been deterred from so doing, warned by the lamentable fate of my father Enoch's work, "The Prophecies of Enoch," published by the same firm in the year 613, and which fell flat on the market, only two copies, out of an edition of thirteen, having been sold, one to his father, Jared, and another to his grandfather, Cainan, who died at the ripe age of 910, when I was but 417 years old. Adam died in his 930th summer, and my beloved Yahi Ribbi, dear friend, Eve, a year later, aged 931; though, Staffir Allah! may God forgive her! with her last breath she bade me engrave her age on her tombstone as—592 years and 3 months!

Verily we sons of Adam are a long lived race! but then, Shukur Allah! praise be to God! we never had but the one hakim (doctor) in our tribe, and we avoided that Shitan keh bacheh (son of the evil one) as we would poison. He died suddenly in great agony—Allah karim! God is most merciful!—

about 600 years ago, having, so it was reported at the time, inadvertently swallowed one of his own nostrums; and so—Khoda shefa midehed! God gives relief!—we were rid of him, the silly ooloo keh-bil! brother of an owl! Enoch, my father, might have been living with us now, had he not contracted the foolish habit of walking with Allah, but while yet in his prime, in the 365th year of his life, he suddenly disappeared. He had been seen strolling in the wilderness with Allah that morning, and as he never returned to his tent, and we could find no trace of his body, we naturally concluded, Allah kebur! God is powerful—that he had been kidnapped or carried off by his friend

Allah. It was his talleh, his kismet, his destiny; yet did I miss him much, for truly we were more like unto brothers than father and son, there being but 65 years difference in our ages, father having taken unto himself a wife at the ridiculous age of 64. In contrast to my father's precocious marriage, my eldest grandson, Noah, remained a bachelor till he was 500; and, be chesm, on my eyes be it! though I am now entering my 969th year, my eldest great grandson, Shem, has not yet attained unto the completion of his first century.

(Signed) METHUSELAH.

Tent 247, by the Eastern gate (inquire of Cheubim on the wall).— [J. C. Hutton, in Secular Thought.

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