

LONDON TO PERSEPOLIS.

A JOURNEY

FROM

LONDON TO PERSEPOLIS;

INCLUDING

**WANDERINGS IN DAGHESTAN, GEORGIA, ARMENIA,
KURDISTAN, MESOPOTAMIA, AND PERSIA.**

BY

JOHN USSHER, F.R.G.S.

WITH NUMEROUS COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages have been arranged from notes originally written without any view to publication. The journey of which they are the narrative was undertaken by the author and a friend solely for purposes of pleasure and amusement, and it was not until it was suggested that a description of the route passed over by them might be useful to future travellers in such comparatively untrodden countries, that he ventured to lay them before the public.

The chief object of his journey was to penetrate into the mountains of Daghestan, so long the scene of the unequal conflict between Schamyl and the Russian Power. His success in accomplishing his wishes is due to the kindness and hospitality which he everywhere met with from the Russian officers, who, far from throwing obstacles in his way, as he was told would be the case, facilitated his progress by every means in their power.

Not possessing any scientific acquirements, he has confined himself to recording what he heard and saw, referring, in

those places where such allusions were necessary, to the discoveries made by, and the conclusions drawn from, the researches of the many eminent men who have laboured to unfold the long-hidden mysteries of the vast ruins of Mesopotamia and Southern Persia.

LONDON, 1865.

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CHAPTER I.

ON a rainy morning in the early part of summer, having found our way to the St. Katherine's Docks, we embarked on board the Antwerp steamer, in which we had taken our passage for that old Flemish city which was to be our first halting-place on our projected journey to the remote East. The usual touters had pursued us with their importunate proffers of service as we threaded our way through the narrow lanes by which the locality in the neighbourhood of the docks is intersected, and it was not until we found ourselves safely on board that we were delivered from the persecution inflicted on us by those tormentors of all who travel by land or water. In a short space of time, however, we were beyond their reach; and having directed our course through the ranges of shipping that lined both sides of the river, we found ourselves ere long in clear water.

We were not a numerous party in the cabin. There were only three ladies, and a sprinkling of gentlemen of all grades, including but a few German tourists, for whom the season was too early. On deck, however, a large party of recruits freshly levied in Ireland for the Papal service, and intended to form part of the army then in the field under Lamoricière, made themselves happy in the enjoyment of present idleness and the hope of future fighting, as they said, somebody for something; this, from repeated inquiries we made, being the only idea they seemed to possess of their ultimate destiny in the crusade on which they had embarked. They were

comfortably and warmly clad, and appeared to have money to spend, which they generally laid out in the purchase of potent drinks of various kinds. One warlike individual, less enthusiastic but more prudent than the rest, who had spent the early days of careless youth, and had received his education, at a village called Bansha, in the county of Tipperary—a “big place,” as he asserted—communicated to us in confidence the fact that he had hidden about him some money “to bring him back to his native land, if he didn’t like the treatment he got with them.” Who “they” were he did not vouchsafe to disclose, probably because his own conception of the persons thus summarily designated was rather hazy. The remainder of these embryo warriors seemed to revel in the unwonted luxury of eating meat and drinking a delectable mixture of beer and gin, which, apparently from its novelty, seemed to be much in request among them. If the important question with whom and for what they were going to fight had ever occurred to them, they had seemingly, in the wild enjoyment of the present hour, unanimously deferred its serious consideration to some future and more convenient occasion. They lay on deck during the night, huddled over each other, some drunk, some sick, and next morning, on landing at Antwerp, they seemed about as forlorn and woe-begone a lot of soldiers as ever excited the scorn of a drill-sergeant. The future of these heroes is well known. Surrendering without a blow, the Italian Government dismissed them contemptuously home, where perhaps their experience of foreign travel enabled them to appraise themselves at their true value.

Every one knows Antwerp, its fortifications, its docks, and its cathedral, its dirty narrow streets, and its clean and comfortable hotels. To one of these we betook ourselves; and, after a night’s rest, pushed on to Brussels, where we arrived early next day. We spent the afternoon gazing upon the exterior of St. Gudule, paying the usual visit to the

oldest burgher of the town, the venerated Manikin, and wading through the mud in the park. Dear indeed to the feet and nostrils of the Belgians must be that unctuous compound, for, as far as we could see, no profane hand was ever allowed to remove it, and the well-to-do citizens might be seen picking their way among the small puddles, sniffing their pungent odour with as much apparent satisfaction as if it were the fragrance of orange groves.

Another day brought us to Cologne, so changed from the Cologne of former days! Not only was there the splendid lattice iron-bridge over the river, but actually in some instances the streets appeared to be clean. The inhabitants of the venerable archiepiscopal town are no doubt duly sensible of the benefits conferred by the former improvement, and the latter can be gratefully appreciated by those travellers who remember the thousand perfumes—all abominable—of the Cologne of old. Much, too, had been done to the cathedral. That glorious mass of masonry, that vision of stone—any hint as to the possible completion of which would once have been received by the natives of the city with a smile of incredulity—showed by the neatness of its outlines, its many finished pinnacles, and the numerous patches visible upon its time-stained walls, that much had been done to strengthen and restore it; and since that time we are happy to learn that, with the exception of the tower and spire, the magnificent structure has been completed.

We “descended” at the hotel Disch, which enjoys the celebrity of possessing the best type, the beau ideal, of that peculiar race of men, the German waiter. Why it is that this sub-genus of the Indo-Teutonic race should possess so many strange attributes—such as being all alike in feature and hair, gregarious in their habits, yet without the cohesion of Arabs or nomads of any tribe, possessing a power of existing without sleep only equalled out of their own number by Talleyrand, and though apparently incapable of speaking

any language perfectly, yet comprehending all—let more learned ethnologists decide. The origin of this remarkable stunted race, who exist in such numbers in Germany, and nowhere out of the Fatherland, is a mystery of which, as travellers naturally anxious for an explanation of everything we behold, we should joyfully hail the solution.

If we had ever entertained any momentary doubt as to the locality in which we now found ourselves, our reminiscences of the Cologne of yore were soon unmistakably revived. A strong odour pervading the hotel Disch dispelled any uncertainty as to its being the identical hostelry so long known by that name. Powerful as of old, it speedily acted as a gentle incentive to our departure for Frankfort, whither we accordingly set off next morning, and from which we proceeded to Homburg by diligence the following day.

A few days, especially early in the year, are generally well spent at Homburg, either in losing one's own money in trying to win that of others, with a certain number of chances always against one, or in driving about the neighbourhood, which is pretty, and well worth seeing. As at every "water" or resort, frequented by visitors eager for excitement, the paternal care of the Sovereign has provided tables where the stranger may be fleeced to the infinite advantage of his subjects, and the replenishment, through the licences by which gambling is made a legitimate amusement, of his own grand-ducal pockets. Thus, in the excitement of gaming, time, the great enemy of the wayfarers of Homburg, may be pleasantly destroyed.

Not happening to have in view the usual object which brings visitors in shoals to this locality, the 22nd saw us again on our way. We tarried at Würtzburg to behold the huge palace of the mighty old prince-bishops (now regarded as a possible temporary residence for Pius IX. if his subjects should succeed in their desire for annexation to the rest of the kingdom), its walls here and there exhibiting reminis-

cences of the sieges which they had endured, in the shape of rents and cracks from cannon shot. This enormous building, which is unoccupied, together with the cathedral, is all that in this ancient town attracts a stranger's eye. Though appealing to another sense, we could not continue our journey without paying homage in the usual way to the celebrated Stein wine, which has been praised so much by travellers, not only from all European lands, but even from distant America. Only made at Würzburg, the vineyards, from the produce of which this nectar is manufactured, stretch but for a short distance round the town, and the wine having been celebrated throughout Germany for ages, the utmost care is taken in its fabrication. But for a due appreciation of its merits a long sultry drive, or a wearying walk in the parched streets, is first necessary. And then, reader, seated at a small table in the shade, with one of the round, pot-bellied little flasks, in which it is always kept, before you, and in your hand your glass full of the golden fluid, cold but not iced, with the taste of the last one still on your lips, if you do not feel a sense of calm, placid benevolence to which you have hitherto been a stranger, you must be more or less than mortal. Yet even this had to be left behind, as we had made arrangements to continue our journey and reach Nüremberg next day.

Passing by rail through a very pretty country, low hills covered with timber, trout streams running through green meadows, and fields of richly cultivated land on all sides, Nüremberg is reached in a few hours from Würzburg. The church of St. Lawrence is well worthy of a visit by all admirers of the purest Gothic, not defiled as it is but too often, particularly in Belgium, with side chapels of Greek, Italian, or mongrel styles, disfiguring the original design of the edifice. In this church there is no vile taste to complain of. The entire interior remains as at first designed—a statement which unfortunately can be made of but

few even of our most perfect ecclesiastical or municipal buildings. Its painted glass is also very good.

The city of Nüremberg forcibly strikes a stranger with the curious effect of its narrow and hilly streets, its numerous old houses, and the number of bridges, many of them covered with mills and shops, reminding him of the pictures of old London Bridge. The people seem also curiously old-fashioned for these days of steam and telegraph.

The next day brought us to Ratisbon, where from rail we were to change to river. After depositing us in a dungeon in a fortress called there an hotel, the laquais de place, who first took possession of us on our arrival, brought us to see the Valhalla, or temple, erected by the late King Louis of Bavaria, in which were to be placed the statues and busts of all the great men of Germany; and it certainly is a noble idea grandly carried out. On a hill towering over the Danube, here very winding in its course, this magnificent building, formed of white or cream-coloured stone, in the shape of a Greek temple, can be seen for miles in every direction. A massive flight of steps leads up to the platform on which it is built, and the busts of those distinguished Germans, who are judged worthy of so high an honour, are arranged on plinths round the walls of the interior. Not more than six miles from Ratisbon, it is a constant place of resort for all strangers who may stop there, as well as for Prussians, Hanoverians, &c., who, though the subjects of different governments in North Germany, yet as the children of one common Fatherland, look all with equal interest and pride on the great names which they read upon its walls. Inscriptions on the floor inform us of the dates when this magnificent structure was designed, begun, and finished. The side ceilings being of brass add much to the gorgeous appearance of this noble temple, erected in memory of the dead whom their country delights to honour.

The other lions of Ratisbon are the stables of the Prince

of Thurn and Taxis, or Towering Taxes, according to Sheridan. These are constructed on a very large scale, as becomes the magnate who monopolized the revenues of the post offices of the greater part of Germany. Large stalls and wide well-ventilated stables seemed to leave little to be desired; but, strange to say, box stalls have not yet been introduced among the many modern improvements sanctioned by this prince of postmasters. It is said, perhaps with much truth, that he was one of the fiercest opponents of evil ways in the Austrian empire. The Torture Chamber under the town hall of Ratisbon is still in the same serviceable condition as when it advanced the justice of the king. The ancient instruments, beams, &c., are in perfect preservation, and seem as if they still preferred their claim not to be passed over and forgotten in the general race for improvement.

Time still pressing, although there were many inducements to remain longer at Ratisbon, we left on the 29th for Linz, by one of the small Danube steamers. The scenery the whole way, a voyage of eight to ten hours, is superb. The numerous windings of the river give the appearance of lakes to its different reaches, and the craggy and precipitous banks, clothed in some places with mossy trees, in others with brushwood, and diversified with vineyards, form a landscape which for wildness and grandeur far surpasses anything to be seen along the tamer and more beaten shores of the far-famed Rhine. The eye oftentimes sought in vain for an outlet through the hills surrounding the glassy lake, on the surface of which our little steamer hissed merrily along; and it was only on approaching the apparently solid bank that a cleft was discovered through which we wound our way into a similar lake, to emerge in like manner into another equally beautiful.

The river running in a gentle current, and without any rapids, heightens the delusion, and, except in rare instances, the absence of the ruins so common on other rivers adds to

the lonely and charming character of the scene. On nearing Linz, the gorges seem to open; the country becomes flatter and more cultivated, small country houses make their appearance, and at last the town itself, consisting to the eye of a traveller chiefly of hotels, makes its appearance.

The town stretchés along the river's bank on both sides, backed by low, richly-cultivated hills, studded with forest and fruit trees, amongst which, at a short distance from Linz, some of the round towers that form the encinte of the fortifications by which it is defended, may be occasionally discerned. The country girls of Linz, in their little jackets, coloured petticoats, and gold caps—the Linzers Hauben—snub-nosed and flaxen-haired as they generally are—appeared quite lovely, after the bluff, coarse Bavarian Mädchen who inhabit that most German part of the Fatherland. The men also seemed darker and taller than the upper Germans.

Linz seems quite to have recovered the misfortunes it endured during the campaigns of 1800, 1805, and 1809, and is now a cheerful, thriving town. From Linz to near Vienna the river winds its way through scenery of the same character as that about the former town. Ebersberg, at the mouth of the Traun, the scene of one of Massena's bloodiest victories; Tilly's Burg, with its three hundred and sixty-five windows, built by the celebrated count of that name; Ens and Niederwallsee were successively passed; the dangers of the Strudel and the Wirbel, the Scylla and Charybdis of the Danube—where the stream, confined within narrow limits and studded with rocks, falls three feet in a hundred and fifty yards—were surmounted; Bosenburg, one of the late emperor's summer residences; Marbach, with its church of St. Maria Taferl, a place of pilgrimage much frequented by the Viennese, were left behind; and the magnificent convent of MÖlk, with its domes and towers, situated upon a granite rock, with a little town at the base, came in view.

This enormous monastery is in perfect repair, having

been built only in the early part of the last century, and is still inhabited by monks, who seem wealthy and thriving. The whole place and town has a well-to-do, comfortable look, contrasting strongly with the but too frequent aspect of such religious edifices. A short distance lower down, the valley narrows, the rocks rise higher and higher, and at last Dürrenstein appears perched upon its ragged crag. These splendid ruins, within whose walls Cœur de Lion was for a short time confined, are among the finest on the river. They stand upon an enormous ridge of rock, ribbed from top to bottom by deep indentations. Low walls, with towers at equal distances, rise from the water to the summit of the crag, upon which is the keep, square, with towers at its angles. The neighbourhood of Dürrenstein has the interest of having been the scene of a deadly contest in 1805, between the French under Mortier and the Russians under General Kutusoff. The banks become flatter from this point, the valley opens, and through an open country, the river dividing into three channels, Vienna is at last reached, the lofty spire of St. Stephen's having been long before in view.

Mine host of the Arch-Duke received us with his usual gracious courtesy, and we spent some days in Vienna in seeing the Ambras Gallery, perhaps the finest collection of ancient armour in the world, more extensive even than that at Madrid; in trying to sit out a German play in six acts; and in going over Lachsenburg, a palace which the emperor generally visits in the early summer. This palace is thought by the Viennese to be a second Versailles; but to our eyes it had more the appearance of badly-built stables than of the residence of an emperor. In the centre of a pond, in the grounds connected with it, is built a mock Gothic fortress, to which the admiring public are conveyed in a boat moved by machinery, solemnly and slowly worked by officials in the imperial livery. All the furniture, however, in

this baby-house castle is really antique, and some of it, which has been taken from monasteries and other ancient buildings, is very handsome.

On the road from Lachsenburg to Vienna some very curiously coloured rats made their appearance at the mouths of their holes. They seemed of a dingy-red tinge, and their heads had more of the appearance of those of rabbits.

We left Vienna on the 1st July by steamboat for Galatz. The railway, open to Basiasch, not many miles from Belgrade down the river, offers but few advantages over the route by water, only gaining in time ten or twelve hours. As it passes for the most part through a flat, uninteresting, dusty country, the boats, in summer especially, being fast and good, the kitchen tolerable, and the temperature much cooler than on land, are generally preferred for descending the stream. Of course in ascending, the time taken in working up against the current gives the railway a decided advantage. For the first twenty miles or so, the river in June being very shallow, we travelled in a small steamer like a London river-boat; but on reaching a point where the river again assumed its usual proportions, and flowed in one broad channel instead of several small ones between numerous islands, we changed into a large vessel, in appearance somewhat resembling the American boats on the Hudson. The dining and sitting rooms are on deck; their roof, protected by an awning, is used as a promenade, while underneath are the sleeping berths. The boat being flat-bottomed, and drawing only four feet of water, there is no room lost; and, with the exception of the berths, which at night are very hot and close, the whole management is creditable to those by whom it is conducted.

We had for companions, among others, the entire opera troupe for Odessa. One of the ladies, a Signora Giuditta Altieri, was rather pretty and fresh-looking, which naturally made her enemies *among the rest of her companions

who were not so gifted. Young and thoughtless, she took no pains to conceal her own superiority, and the impresario, who had evidently been smitten by her charms, snubbed her fellow-songstresses most unmercifully. When she claimed, and also obtained from him, a state-room on deck, instead of sharing with the other artistes the accommodations of the ladies' cabin below, the clouds began to gather ominously on the countenances of the neglected fair ones, and their wrath, which they were unable, like Juno, to conceal in their breasts, beginning to appear, it required all the talent for harmony of the enslaved impresario to restore quiet. He had picked up his band during a tour among the second-rate theatres of Italy, his tenor being, as is almost invariably the case with tenors, a little fat man, with a wife and large family. The Signorina Altieri was from Cork, and candidly disclaimed any connexion with the eminent cardinal of that name, which she had assumed because she thought it a pretty one. Some few German merchants, two or three Greeks from Galatz, and a dozen Wallachians returning to their country, completed our party in the cabins.

From Vienna to Presburg there is but little to be seen. The banks rising on both sides are partly cultivated and partly covered with shady forests. The Königsberg, the hill to which the kings of Hungary, in olden time, used to ride after their coronation, and there wave the sword of St. Stephen to the north, south, east, and west, defying all who should ever dare to attack them, is but a short distance from the city, and is seen before the latter comes into view.

Presburg is a very handsome town, containing some forty thousand inhabitants, and though no longer a capital, looks prosperous and wealthy.

About halfway between Presburg and Pesth stands the famed fortress of Komorn, renowned for having successfully resisted the utmost force of the Austrian empire. It is the

chief town of the country of that name, and contains two Protestant churches, and the only insurance office for the Danube vessels and their cargoes. According to current report, its enormous earthworks, enclose sufficient grazing ground for 800 head of cattle. Situated at the junction of the Waag with the Danube, its guns command the approach by both rivers; and as it is utterly impossible to besiege regularly a place where the water is close to the surface of the soil, and where the wet ditches preclude an assault, Komorn is as yet a maiden fortress.

The Hungarian general, Klapka, who commanded its garrison at the close of the war in 1849, made terms for himself and his men by surrendering; a fact which, considering the exasperated feeling of the Austrians at that time, showed the slight hope they had of reducing the stronghold. Built originally by Mathias Corvinus in the fifteenth century, and strengthened considerably since 1805, the massive mounds of clay and enormous ditches, capable of being flooded in a moment, afford but slight hopes of success to an attacking army, who would also have to contend with the deadly fevers of the marshes.

Passing by Waitzen, the scene of a bloody encounter in 1849 between the Hungarians and Austrians, and seemingly a place of but little importance, we made Pesth our halting-place for the night. Buda and Pesth, especially the latter, with its fortress, suspension bridge, clean streets, good shops and hotels, are very fine towns, and the view of both cities from each other, as well as from the Blocksberg, cannot fail to make an impression on the memory of even a careless wanderer. The fortress, seemingly impregnable, was stormed by the Hungarians during the war, but apparently to little purpose, as a bombardment of Pesth could hardly have been ventured on, and the latter city at an early period took part with the insurgents. There are some handsome theatres, and our operatic friends, even during our few hours' stay,

contrived to meet some old acquaintances, and enjoy themselves over a supper got up in honour of the occasion.

We left Pesth early next morning, and the day soon becoming oppressively hot, we more thoroughly appreciated the slight current of air created by the motion of the steamer, and the shade afforded by the awning on the promenade deck. These awnings are obliged to be carefully watched, as they often become ignited from the ashes flying off red hot from the funnel. Wood being the usual fuel used on these inland rivers, the quantity of burning sparks flying about is so great, that it is impossible sometimes, even with the greatest care, for those on board to preserve their clothes from injury; and very often, when the smell of burning cloth suggests an immediate examination of garments, the unfortunate passenger is enraged by the discovery of a large hole burnt in a favourite coat. The low state of the river, and the numerous sandbanks, rendered the greatest care and watchfulness necessary to prevent the boat from constantly running aground, yet we succeeded in feeling the bottom pretty often. However, a short time generally sufficed to get us off again, and after a while a grounding became a relief from the monotony and sleepiness engendered by the heaviness of the atmosphere and the intense heat.

With the exception of one or two small towns, and some insignificant villages, there is but little to break the sameness of the view from Pesth until Peterwardein is reached. About half way to the latter place, the island of Murgitta, on the opposite side to which is Mohacs, the scene of the famous battle of that name, in which the Hungarian army was annihilated by Solyman the Magnificent, is passed. It is apparently a marsh, spotted with herds of horses and flocks of sheep, attended by shepherds and drovers, clothed in sheepskins, mostly gaunt and fever-stricken. The lives of these men must be very hard. The spring being of course the best season for grass, they are obliged to endure the

deadly fevers peculiar to these parts at that time of the year ; and living for the most part either in mud huts, or in sheds elevated on posts above the damp soil, drag on what must be a dreary, and, in too many instances, a brief existence. With their fur caps, sheepskin cloaks, wild-looking dogs, and long, black, streaming locks of hair, they seem to have gained but little in civilization from the time when their Tartar ancestors won the land still occupied by their descendants. Yet from the drovers who herd the vast troops of horses that wander in a semi-wild state over these immense plains are chiefly recruited the renowned hussars of Hungary—the acknowledged type of the perfect light h^oman.

Peterwardein, near which, on the plain of Carlowitz, the star of Ali Coumourgi set before Prince Eugene in 1716, is a small town, but strongly fortified ; and on a rock above, isolated on three sides by the river, which here takes a sharp turn, stands the citadel, with its immense bastions and earthworks. From its position it has always been a place of the greatest importance to the possessors of Hungary : it now contains accommodation for ten thousand men. The frowning batteries seem piled up one over the other, and their fire completely commands the river, which is here about seven hundred feet wide and fifty deep.

Ploughing our way unceasingly through the muddy and seething water we reach Semlin on the right bank, where formerly existed on the grandest scale that most successful of all the institutions ever framed by stupidity to annoy, weary, exasperate, and rob unhappy travellers—the principal quarantine of Austria. Placed as an especial barrier against the entrance of the plague into the imperial dominions from the Turkish provinces, twenty-one days had to be passed here in an enclosure surrounded by a wall twelve feet high, containing within it sheds exposed to the blazing heat of the sun in summer and the bitter cold of winter. This system has been now for some time abandoned, but enough of

the buildings remains to show the difficulties under which locomotion was practised even lately in these unvisited parts of Europe.

As Semlin is still a main point of communication between the two empires, a garrison is kept up, the soldiers of which contrast very favourably, in their smart, clean uniforms, with the slouching, listless Turks in the fortress of Belgrade, on the opposite side of the Save.

At Belgrade the Turks are first beheld. The citadel, on a steep acclivity jutting out into the river, from a height of one hundred feet, commands with its guns not only the stream but also the town. The walls and bastions are on a very large scale, but defaced, worn, decayed, and everywhere out of repair. The palace of the pasha, an accumulation of sheds, placed sometimes over each other, sometimes side by side, with overhanging roofs and galleries, decrepit with age, is in the filthiest possible condition, and its traditions vie in their sinister character with those of the Tower of London. So late as the year 1815 thirty-six Servians, who had been induced to surrender on a solemn promise of their lives being saved, were here impaled, and some of the unhappy victims survived until the seventh day afterwards.

There is but a small garrison. The pasha, who receives the money to pay the troops, returns two or three times the number who are actually in the garrison, and divides the surplus with his favourites. Even the few who are really in existence are further robbed and cheated of their food and clothing.

The largest mosque is within the citadel. The bazaars are rows of tumble-down wooden stalls, infested with dirty Greeks, sulky Turks, merry Servians, and mangy dogs! Europe and Asia in reality, though not geographically, first meet here. And here also is first met the mud of the lower Danube, which, sticky, clammy, and retentive as paste, is to be equalled only by the far-famed compost of Balaclava.

The streets are filthy, the people literally seeming to pride themselves on their nearly impassable state. The country surrounding Belgrade is diversified with gentle hills, richly wooded. Many caravanserais and fountains erected in by-gone times by rich and benevolent Mussulmans are still to be met with, though now in a state of decay.

By the treaty of 1855 Belgrade is the only town in Servia in which the Turks can keep troops, all the rest of the country being perfectly independent of the Porte, though nominally under its suzerainty. The spirit shown by the Mussulmans in lately bombarding the town from the citadel, in disregard to the protest of the consuls, proves how fortunate it is for the Servians that such an arrangement exists. Large droves of pigs, fed on the acorns in the vast forests of the interior, are exported hence to the Austrian dominions every autumn.

At Belgrade our impresario, who seemed like the proprietor of a badly trained happy family—so urgent were his endeavours to keep together his discordant troupe, and in some manner to preserve their harmony—appeared in despair. Open war had broken out between the ladies of the party, and although he succeeded for the moment in quelling the disturbance and restoring at least outward tranquillity, yet for the remainder of the journey to Odessa no further intercourse seemed to take place between the prima donna and her companions.

CHAPTER II.

BASIASCH AND SEMENDRIA — REMINISCENCE OF THE ROMAN
INVASION UNDER TRAJAN — WIDDIN — GIURGEVO AND RUST-
CHUK — SPIRITED ACTION DURING THE DANUBIAN CAMPAIGN
— DEFENCES OF SILISTRIA — RAILWAY TO KUSTENDJE — THE
SULINA MOUTH OF THE DANUBE — ODESSA — LA PETITE FON-
TAINÉ — VISIT TO THE PRINCESS WORONZOFF — BOATS OF
THE RUSSIAN NEW BLACK SEA COMPANY — TÁTAR EMIGRA-
TION — VISIT TO SEBASTOPOL — COLONEL GOWAN'S OPERA-
TIONS — THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY — AN IRISH DESERTER.

CHAPTER II.

WE passed Basiasch, the terminus on the river bank of the railway to Vienna *viâ* Pesth. In ascending the stream passengers usually take the rail here, as, by doing so, much time is gained. Semendria, a collection of low, poverty-stricken-looking houses, with a tottering minaret or two, is next passed on the right bank, and after numerous windings and meanderings, Duhova is reached, where the bed of the river begins to contract, the ground on both sides becomes hilly, and the banks rocky and precipitous. The water chafing against numerous rocks begins to boil and eddy, and in a short time the steamer is tossed like a cockle-shell on the foaming torrent.

In the rock on the right bank of the stream, the holes, in which were inserted the beams that supported the road constructed by the Romans along the face of the cliff above the water, yet remain to show what their labours under Trajan were to secure a passage through this important defile. There exists also, on the face of the rock, an inscription in honour of the emperor, much obliterated by time and the smoke of the fires burnt by the watermen. The mountains rise high above the river; the crags become more lofty and broken as we near the descent, and in a few minutes, with the waters bubbling and seething on all sides, we shot the rapid, and quickly emerging into a more open country, stopped for an hour at Orsova, the frontier town of Austria, on the Wallachian side.

Here, in ascending, the steamer, unless the water be high, is changed for a smaller boat, and it is also the place where passports are examined.

The Iron Gates—so called by the Turks—where the river, bubbling and boiling, falls fifteen feet in the space of an English mile, having been left behind, we continued our route, and near Szazoreny passed the ruins of the celebrated bridge erected by Trajan during his Dacian wars. Some of the piers, in a very shattered and fragmentary condition, are all that remain, although, if contemporary authors are to be credited, this must have been one of the most important and laborious works of ancient days. Nearly four thousand feet long, it consisted of stone piers with wooden arches; but of this immense work, which for many years was of such service to the Romans in keeping the Dacian barbarians in check, only the few fragments referred to are now extant.

Some distance further on we entered the immense plain of Wallachia, the river widened, the flat banks assumed the crumbling character they henceforth maintained, and the muddy stream rolled its sluggish volume of waters slowly along in minute circling eddies. We passed between Widdin on the right, and Kalefat on the left, whose lines of earth-works, held by the Turks during the commencement of the late war, were of such material service in threatening the right flank of the Russians, had they attempted to advance into Bulgaria.

Widdin is a small town, of the usual type seen in European Turkey. Built on a flat, we noticed houses one storey high, for the most part constructed of wattles daubed with clay, a favourite Bulgarian mode of architecture; only a few of the better order of houses being roofed with tiles. The same squalor and filth seemed to pervade this town as we had observed to be characteristic of the other places we had lately passed on the same bank.

Some hours more steaming brought us to Nicopoli, oppo-

site Turna, on the Wallachian side. On the lower Danube it seems to have been the constant custom to build towns and villages opposite to each other on both banks of the stream.

Our next halting places were Giurgevo and Rustchuk on either side, both being towns with some pretensions to importance, though as much unlike each other in every way as can be conceived. In Rustchuk everything is Turkish and Asiatic, while Giurgevo is a European town, not certainly a very favourable specimen of one, but still European, with streets of stone houses, well roofed, and windows looking towards the thoroughfare; shops, with their goods exposed in the windows, and a kind of vehicle, impossible to describe, plying for hire. In Rustchuk, on the contrary, the Eastern type prevails: narrow streets, bazaars which are on the point of falling, courtyards with narrow, small doors opening off them; veiled women, tumble-down houses, and mangy dogs. And these two large towns are only a thousand yards apart, a fact worthy of consideration by those who maintain the capacity of the Turkish mind for improvement.

Near Giurgevo, one of the most spirited actions of the Danube campaign of 1854 took place on the 7th of July. The Turks, accompanied by Cameron, Ogilvy, Ballard, and a few more European officers, crossed the Danube near Rustchuk a few weeks after the raising of the siege of Silistria, and attacking the Russians under Soimonoff, defeated them with heavy loss. Gortschakoff shortly after made his appearance on the scene with heavy reinforcements, but in the meantime a couple of gunboats having arrived, and a bridge of boats having been thrown across, he declined the offered engagement, and retreated northwards, the Austrians about this time having demanded the evacuation of the Principalities.

At Giurgevo, we took in many passengers and a large amount of cargo for Galatz. The former seemed chiefly corn

merchants, and appeared absorbed in making calculations together about the markets. They varied the monotony of the voyage by cards, of which each one carried a pack about with him. It is a strange fact, but nevertheless perfectly true, that the commercial gent of every civilized nation but our own is invariably got up in black cloth raiment; generally adorned with silk, wherever possible, and usually in a certain state of rust and shabbiness. In America, also, the universal seedy black coat has been often remarked. In our own isle only, the representatives of commerce are universally of opinion that superfine Saxony, however much the worse for wear, is a necessary and proper costume for gentlemen of their calling, no matter what the state of the weather.

The women who came down to look at the steamer wore some very curious costumes. A quantity of chains of beads and old coins hung down over a breastplate; sometimes in such numbers that the beholder was dazzled by their glitter. Some of them were rather pretty, and their costume is generally white. The dress of some of the men also, with their long white garments, is peculiar, and strikes a stranger's eye forcibly.

Shortly after we reached Silistria, with its rotten, tumbling ditches and miserable, ruinous defences. And yet it was here that these Turks in 1773, 1779, and 1828, defied the Russian armies, and only yielded the town to Diebitch in 1829. Not on this account, however, but for the gallant defence of May, 1854, under the directions of the brave Butler and Nasmyth, will Silistria always excite the interest of an Englishman.

A large straggling town, containing some twenty thousand inhabitants, it seems, to judge by its buildings and general appearance, in the last stage of decrepitude and decay. A citadel with double walls and ditches on higher ground than the rest of the town is on the west side, and appears to be

in the same state of dilapidation as the other parts of its fortifications. The works, such as they are, were planned by Colonel Grach, a Prussian officer in the service of the Porte, but who, I believe, took no part in their defence.

Ascending one of the low hills which overlook the town, we find ourselves surrounded by a straggling, low ditch, and are surprised at being told that we are standing in the centre of the Arab Tabia, the redoubt which for so long resisted the attacks of the Russians. Assaults were tried in vain, but all proved of no avail against the determination of the garrison, composed, as the name will tell, of Arabs. Moussu Pasha, the governor, was killed with many other Turkish officers, and Butler was also struck down. On the Russian side, Schilders was carried wounded to the rear. Cameron arrived soon after with a brigade of infantry, but did not remain long; Ballard also came up. After a defence almost unexampled, when the state of the fortifications is taken into consideration, the Turkish garrison, nearly worn out with watching and toil, had the satisfaction of seeing the Russians raise the siege on the 22nd of June.

At present Silistria shows but few traces of the deadly conflict. The Turks, with the placid conceit and stolid obstinacy which have always been among their chief characteristics, regard themselves as superior to their ancient enemies, and refer to Silistria as a proof of what they are capable of doing when unassisted by the infidel.

Soon after leaving Silistria we passed Tchernavoda on the right bank, from which place a railway has been since made to Kustendje, on the Black Sea, almost following the course of the wall built by the Romans across the neck of land formed by the bend which the Danube here takes northwards and the parallel shore of the Black Sea.

By unloading a cargo at Kustendje, and again shipping it on the Danube at Tchernavoda, the hideous round by any

of the mouths of the river is saved. I am not aware of the present condition of this railway company, but, at the time I speak of, the certainty of success was fully believed in by all who comprehended the object for which it was projected.

Mahilof on the right, Brahiloff on the left, were successively passed, and we arrived at Galatz, where, on the 5th of July, we were to change into the "Ocean" steamer for Odessa. A shower of rain, while it cooled the heated air, had the effect of turning the moving dust into sticky mud, through which we were obliged to trudge when we proceeded to pay a visit to Mr. Cunningham, our Consul there. He informed us that he had resided at Galatz for twenty-five years; and having learned, in reply to our inquiries, that, unless we were interested by the number of corn ships that yearly cleared for different ports, there was little besides to induce us to lengthen our stay in Galatz, we took our leave.

We left the next day for Odessa, and passing Tulcha entered the Black Sea by the Sulina, or centre of the three divisions into which the Danube separates near Tulcha. A short time after leaving Galatz, the grass and corn, which so far had covered the alluvial plain on either bank, gave place to a jungle of tall reeds, from six to eight feet in height, utterly impassable either by man or beast, but, to judge from their joyous notes, a perfect paradise to millions of frogs. As far as the eye could reach in every direction this wilderness of reeds extended, bowing their slender heads to the least breath of air. The whole Delta seemed covered with this rank vegetation, through which the narrow channel wound its tortuous course. With the exception of the harsh sounds alluded to, an unbroken silence prevailed, the only other sign of life being the occasional appearance of a heron slowly winging its lazy flight from one pool to another. Thus, on the margin of the thoroughfare of nations a complete desolation appeared to weigh. Latterly the St. George

or Southern Channel has become more used; dredging-boats have been sent out to deepen the bed of the stream; but a few years ago the Sulina was far the most frequented outlet to the sea.

Sulina itself is a mere collection of huts and sheds huddled together on what is really nothing better than a mud bank. The inhabitants are fever-and-poverty-stricken, and the heavy, hazy atmosphere is too sure an indication of the miasma continually prevailing.

On issuing into the Black Sea, the numerous timbers sticking up in the sands on the coast on both sides of the mouth of the river demonstrate clearly the frequency of wrecks upon this deceitful coast, and the water discoloured for miles out to sea by the alluvium brought down by the current, shows that the process of filling up is still going on at a rapid rate. Mud banks covered with reeds and thick brick-coloured water extend to the horizon on all sides. In short, a more forlorn prospect than the Sulina mouth of the Danube can scarcely be imagined. Until lately every vessel on leaving Galatz was obliged to drag a heavy rake after her on her downward course, to loosen the mud at the bottom, and allow it to be carried away by the current; but of late years this habit has been discontinued, and the rake has been superseded by dredges.

We arrived at Odessa after a smooth voyage of some sixteen hours, passing, shortly before entering the harbour, the cliffs on which the unfortunate "Tiger" ran aground. The town looked very imposing from the sea, situated as it is on overhanging rocks. The rows of white houses and terraces were very grateful to our eyes after the scenes we had just passed through, and the sight of numbers of people walking and driving struck us the more from the previous desolation.

We here bade adieu to our musical friends, hearing, with much regret, that the greater part of the luggage of the

pretty little prima donna had been allowed to fall into the water by the clumsy boatmen. Having landed in boats, we drove to our hotel amid a cloud of dust, which effectually prevented us from seeing more than a few yards' distance.

The houses of Odessa are very large, four or five stories high, built and stuccoed as in St. Petersburg, and generally painted yellow. The streets are wide and unpaved, running at right angles to each other. For a long time endeavours have been made to have them paved, but as yet without success; and the consequence has been the unenviable notoriety which Odessa has obtained of being the dustiest town in all dusty Russia. Unsheltered as it is from any wind which may blow, the clouds of sand sweep without obstruction as if driven by whirlwinds, and are only to be endured by those whom long habit has accustomed to the plague.

We drove out the day after our arrival to the villa of Langeron, where at that time General Luders, not being in very high favour at St. Petersburg, resided. The village did not present anything remarkable, except that it was surrounded by some trees, a rare sight on these bare and bleak downs. The road, as usual, was deep in dust, as it always is when dry; after a shower it is equally deep in mud.

Next day we walked for some miles along a road fringed with acacias, and lined with small villas belonging to the bourgeoisie of Odessa, to La Petite Fontaine, a café, where we dined, and tasted for the first time divers Russian dishes of great local celebrity—amongst the rest Batvinia, a soup composed as follows:—To a soup tureen full of very watery green liquid, looking like exceedingly thin green pea-soup, put some chopped vegetables, cabbage, turnips, &c., some junks of fish two or three inches square, and a quantity of ice; when half-frozen, eat—if you can. The gardens of La Petite Fontaine are prettily laid out, and the most is made of the scanty resources that nature has afforded.

On the succeeding day we called, in company with Mr.

Murray, the Consul-General, on the Dowager Princess Woronzoff, and were presented by her to the Princess Varvara Orbeliani, who was then staying with her, and whose sufferings, together with those of her sister, the Princess Chavchavadzey, during the time of their captivity in the hands of Schamyl, are described in the narrative of Madame Drancey, the French governess of the children of the latter, who was also a sharer of their imprisonment, and in that of M. Vardarebsky, the editor of the "Kavkas," at Tiflis.

This event, which occurred in 1854, created a great sensation at the time throughout Russia, not only on account of the high rank and connexions of the ladies, but also for the opportunity which their capture afforded Schamyl of compelling the restoration of Jemal Eddin, his eldest son, who, having fallen into the hands of the Russians in his infancy, had been brought up and educated at St. Petersburg. The Princess Orbeliani, who was a widow, having lost her husband and her eldest boy only six months previously, had gone with her niece, the Princess Nina Baratoff, to spend the summer with her sister at the latter's residence of Tsenondahl, a country-house only five miles' distance from Telaw, a considerable town not far from the mountains at the southern side of the Caucasus.

Although so near the country in the possession of the independent mountaineers, yet Tsenondahl had always until then been exempted from their forays, the river Alezan separating it from the mountain districts inhabited by the Lesghians; and though flames were often seen to arise from the houses burnt by them on the opposite side during their numerous incursions, yet they had not as yet ventured to pass the river.

Hearing that a large body of Lesghians had descended from their mountains, and were attacking Shildi, a village in the neighbourhood, Prince Chavchavadzey at once hastened

to its assistance at the head of some Georgian militia, and, after a stubborn conflict, the band were defeated and obliged to withdraw. On being repelled from before Shildi, they adopted the sudden resolution of sweeping round by Tsenondahl on their retreat. Although some rumours of their approach reached the house during the night, yet the danger was not considered so pressing as to necessitate the flight of the inmates during the darkness, but everything was got ready for departure at early dawn. Before daylight, however, the mountaineers were upon them, having moved with great rapidity in order to take the place by surprise. After a vain attempt to conceal themselves in a belvidere or tower, the princesses were discovered, and after enduring much ill-usage, were ordered to follow the marauders to the mountains.

The captive party consisted of the three princesses, Madame Drancey the governess (newly arrived from Paris), three or four nurses, and the six children of Princess Chavchavadzey. The French governess, who was very brutally treated by the Lesghians, who were enraged in consequence of her refusal to surrender her jewelry and dress, was reduced to one solitary garment and a pair of boots. Nevertheless her unconquerable spirit found some consolation in pointing to the sun, and abusing that luminary in choice Parisian French for the edification of the savage mountaineer to whom she was strapped, and behind whom she was seated *en croupe*. At last, getting angry at her noise and gesticulations, the Lesghian laid his whip over her shoulders, which only enraged her the more, and, until obliged to cease from exhaustion, she continued to pour out a torrent of reproach against the orb of day, in the firm belief that it was the chief object of adoration and veneration to her savage captors; all the mountain tribes, as she was persuaded, being fire worshippers!

The Princess Chavchavadzey was at first compelled to walk, carrying her youngest child in her arms; but having

at last fallen in crossing the ford of the Alezan, she was then taken up behind a Murid, or chief. A short distance further on, the band fell into an ambuscade that had been hastily prepared for them by the Russians, and, at once scattering, fled in all directions, still, however, retaining their helpless prisoners. During their headlong flight, the child fell from the arms of her mother, and was trampled under the horses' feet. They at last reached Pohali, an aoul, or village, on the verge of the mountains, and were brought to Kazi Machmet, Schamyl's second son, by whose orders they were kindly treated.

The pursuit having ceased, they crossed through the snow to the northern side of the great range, to an aoul called Dido, where their party, augmented by other captures to the number of eighty, were detained for a fortnight, after which they were removed to Videgne, Schamyl's own residence. A short time after their arrival, this renowned chief came to the gallery outside the door of the room in which they were confined, and told them that if they attempted to communicate secretly with their friends, he would put them to death, as some time previously he had ordered the execution of ten Russian officers detected in a correspondence by means of letters concealed in loaves of bread. By his directions the captive ladies wrote various letters demanding a ransom of five million roubles, a sum which was afterwards gradually reduced in amount. At first they were harshly treated, the princesses, with their servants, being all confined together in one room; but after some time, the latter being sent into the village, their lot was somewhat ameliorated. Their chief enemy was Zaidette, a Tatar, the eldest of Schamyl's three wives, the other two being Shouanette, an Armenian, and Aminette, a Lesghian, the latter only seventeen years of age. Zaidette, who was the mistress, half starved, and otherwise ill-used the poor captives, who were forced to appeal to Schamyl. The chief, greatly enraged at

his wife's behaviour, gave orders that she should henceforth be more considerate in her treatment of the unfortunate ladies. The other wives treated them very kindly; with Aminette in particular, who was also Schamyl's favourite, they were great friends. The poor peasants captured with them were kept pell-mell in pits dug in the ground, which they were seldom permitted to leave.

At last, after an imprisonment of eight months, their ransom was agreed upon, and a sum of forty thousand roubles, or about 6000*l.*, was paid to Schamyl, Jemal Eddin, his eldest son, being at the same time restored to him. The captives were brought in arabas to the detachment of Russians sent with their ransom, and were given up to their friends, Schamyl at the same time receiving his son, who was accompanied by an aide-de-camp of General Nicolai, to whom the chief desired to return thanks for the care shown to the youth while a hostage and prisoner. Kazi Machmet, who on the part of the mountaineers delivered over the princesses, begged them at parting to excuse any ill-treatment they might have sustained, as such was involuntary on the part of his people, who had but few luxuries or comforts such as they had been accustomed to.

We also visited, in the cemetery not far from the town, the tomb of poor Giffard, the captain of the "Tiger." It is a plain marble slab with a simple inscription, and had been much disfigured and chipped, apparently by relic-hunters.

There is but little to detain a traveller at Odessa. A town depending wholly on its being the outlet by which the grain of the interior finds its way to more thickly peopled countries, its commerce is almost altogether in the hands of Jews and Greeks, who, lending the cultivator money in the spring to sow his corn, buy it from him in the autumn at a price far below the market value.

Having run the gauntlet of the police and passport-offices,

at which a personal attendance is required—sundry roubles deposited in the itching palms of the unblushing officials expediting matters wonderfully—on the evening of the 10th we found ourselves on our way to Sebastopol on board one of the finest boats of the new Black Sea Russian Company. Built suspiciously strong, and capable of carrying a few heavy guns, these vessels, being of great speed, would be very troublesome opponents in the event of another war. The whole equipment and all the arrangements on board left nothing to be desired.

We stopped at Eupatoria early next morning, and found about thirty ships at anchor in the roadstead, laden like slave-vessels with Tatars, emigrating from the hated rule of the Muscovite to the dominions of the Padishah. Believing that the hour of departure had arrived, when the Mussulman was doomed by Allah to surrender his dwelling in the Crimea to the Christian, upwards of ninety thousand of these poor creatures had already sold everything they possessed, often at nominal prices, and while some of them had formed colonies in the plains of Bulgaria, on the opposite coast, others had gone southwards to be absorbed amongst their co-religionists in Asia Minor.

Leaving Eupatoria after a few hours' stay, we arrived at Sebastopol at three o'clock the same afternoon, and established ourselves in a little inn lately set up by a Swiss who possessed the inestimable advantage of speaking both Russian and English. The entire town appeared the same mass of ruins that it was left by the Allies in 1856. A few miserable houses, chiefly of wood, had been erected, for which the materials of the English and French huts had been utilized. Some loitering soldiers prowled about the streets, and seemed to form the larger portion of the scanty population. On all the stone buildings which formed the town not a vestige of roof was to be seen, nor could a particle of wood the size of a walking-stick be anywhere discovered. It seemed difficult

to credit the fact that two short years had sufficed to change one of the handsomest and most solidly-built cities in Russia into such a mass of débris.

We lost no time in driving up to the Malakoff and Redan, which we found in exactly the same state in which they were left on the evacuation of the Crimea. The embrasures were still plainly to be traced, and the rifle pits outside appeared as if they had been only lately dug; but not a vestige of any kind of iron was to be seen, in spite of the thousands of shells and shot hurled upon these dreaded redoubts. Immediately after the conclusion of peace, the Jews of Odessa and Constantinople bought up from the Russian government all the broken iron which they might find on the ground, and as usual made a good thing of it.

We spent the next day in driving about the neighbourhood with Colonel Gowan, the American engineer employed by the Russians to raise the ships sunk in the harbour. We visited successively the grave-yard of the 4th Division, near the wind-mill, the picket-house cemetery, and Cathcart's Hill. The latter two were in good order, and had stone and mortar walls built round them, which excluded the wandering cattle of the Tatars. The other cemeteries had suffered much from the inroads of cows and sheep, which had thrown down the loose stone walls that formed but a very insufficient protection to the graves inside. The attention paid by Colonel Gowan to the cemeteries and tombs of our officers and soldiers buried in the Crimea must excite the gratitude of every Englishman. At his own expense he had rebuilt many walls, and restored many tombs injured by stragglers.

Some young cypresses had been planted at the corners of General Cathcart's grave, and the weeds and grass cleared away from many others, roses and other flowers having been planted in their room. The grave of Captain Hedley Vicars in particular seemed to have been carefully tended, but none were neglected by Colonel Gowan. It is satisfactory for the

relations of many whose remains lie there to know that there is now a resident official at Sebastopol, paid and appointed by our government, whose sole duty it is to look after the cemeteries, to guard the graves of our countrymen from wilful injury, and to preserve them from the consequences of neglect. All that seemed necessary at the time of our visit was to erect permanent walls, instead of the loose stone fences which then existed, and which were no barrier whatever to the efforts of a hungry cow, excited by the sight of the rich herbage within the enclosure. The ground was covered with the thin, dry, parched grass peculiar to a burnt-up soil; the rankest vegetation being in the cemeteries, which bore a dense crop of weeds.

In the evening, while sailing about the harbour, some very copper-coloured nymphs, bathing under the ruins of Fort Nicholas, reminded us of the contrast of Peace and War. We also witnessed the raising of a heavy gun from the sunken three-decker, the "Silistria." Colonel Gowan had up to that time raised no less than forty-six vessels, only two of which, steamers, were in a fit state to be again used, all the others, both steamers and sailing vessels, being, from the attacks of the "Teredo navalis," and other causes, utterly unseaworthy. It was wonderful to see how the timber of some of the raised ships was honeycombed by these little worms, about the thickness of a quill, who leave a thin film of lime round the path which they eat through the wood. I believe they are peculiar to the Black Sea. One large frigate of 60 guns had been raised entire, just as she had been sunk, and the cases of beans, peas, &c., lay about on the wharf. No attempt had been made to repair any of the fortifications. A heap of débris alone showed where the huge forts once stood; and higher up the harbour, the enormous blocks of stone rent from the bottom and sides of the dry docks by the gunpowder of the allies, still lay in heaps in what were then but yawning chasms. Yet enough remained to show the

original beauty of the work. The remaining forts on the north side of the harbour did not seem to have suffered in the slightest degree from the bombardment of the combined fleets.

We also visited the monastery of St. George, driving along the cliffs towards Balaclava. We found a number of women, some of them with pretensions to good looks, in and about the convent. The monastery itself is not large, and there is but little in or about it worth seeing; but the cliffs hanging over the sea on which it is built are bold and precipitous, and not unlike those in the neighbourhood of Torquay.

In company with Colonel Gowan we paid a second visit to Cathcart's Hill, and after passing it drove to the top of a hill overlooking the valley of Balaclava, from whence a full view of the scene of the engagement is to be obtained; and returning by the house in which Lord Raglan lived while in command of the British army, and in which were his headquarters, we saw the room in which he died, a plain tablet in the wall recording the fact.

We spent the remainder of our short stay in Sebastopol in walking about on the north side of the harbour, in visiting a little cottage of Colonel Gowan's about a mile and a half from the town, and in wandering among the ruins. Wishing to see the battle-fields of Alma and Inkerman, as well as the Tatar town of Bakchi Serai, we left next day in an equipage denominated a "tarantass," lent to us for the occasion by Colonel Gowan. This vehicle, which is the common carriage throughout Russia, is nothing more than the body of a britzka or barouche placed on two poles, some three inches in diameter, and twelve or thirteen feet long, and two feet apart, stretched from axle to axle; the roads being so bad that springs would be destroyed, the elasticity of these poles is the best substitute. The luggage is stowed away, some inside the carriage, some on a board behind, and with never

less than three horses abreast, sometimes with two or three more added on in front, it is not a bad way of travelling—when no better can be had.

Colonel Gowan lent us a servant of his, a Mr. Peter Baldwin, an Irish deserter from the 19th Regiment, and, as he assured us, a native of Loughrea, in the county of Galway, who having picked up some small amount of Russian, was to act as our guide and interpreter. Peter did not much like alluding to his antecedents, a cunning leer, when questioned about his former career, expressing his resolve not to say more than he liked.

CHAPTER III.

BAKCHI SERAI—PALACE AND TOMBS OF THE KHANS—JEWISH
BURIAL GROUND—CHÚFÚT KÁLEH—HEAD-QUARTERS OF
THE KARAITE JEWS—THE PARACLODNAIA—ALUPKA—THE
CHÂTEAU OF PRINCE WORONZOFF—SWISS LANDLORD AT
YALTA—EXCURSION TO A TÁTAR VILLAGE—THE THREE
ILLUMINATI—KERTCH—TUMULI—CURIOUS EXCAVATION—
ENGLISH SKIPPERS IN QUARANTINE—CHAIR OF MITHRI-
DATES—RUSSIAN FORTIFICATIONS—ENGAGEMENT OF AN
INTERPRETER.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER a broiling drive across the dusty plains of about three hours, we arrived at the little village by the stream across which the British troops marched to the attack of the Russian position, and having put up our horses in the post-house, wandered about for a couple of hours. Near the river is the grave of Captain Horace Cust, over which a large granite block, sent out from England by his friends, was placed by Colonel Gowan, and also the tomb of Lieutenant Cockerell, of the Artillery—both killed in the action near the bridge. A few trees and shrubs fringe the bank of the little stream, and appear green and pleasant amid the surrounding parched-up hills.

Leaving the village we crossed the plains towards Bakchi Serai, and arrived there in the evening, the latter part of the road being a gradual rise, followed by an abrupt descent through ravines and down hills of whitish clay, thinly covered with a short scrub. The sides of these gullies, bare of vegetation and washed periodically by the winter rains, reflected the intense heat of the sun, and made it almost insufferable. So we gladly hailed the grateful shelter of the courtyard of the old palace of the Khans, into which we at once drove, a room in it being appropriated to the reception of strangers. Bakchi Serai itself lies hidden in the bottom of one of these ravines much larger than the rest, and copiously supplied with water by a little river called the Juruk, which, after traversing the entire length of the valley,

falls into the Katcha a few miles further down. In some places the town is overhung by precipitous rocks five hundred feet high. It is everywhere dirty, and, owing to the Tatar emigration then at its height, more than half depopulated, many of the shops and stalls in the bazaars being closed.

We lost no time in seeing the palace, renowned in the days of the mighty khans of the Crim Tatars for its luxury and splendour. Built round three sides of a grass-grown courtyard, on which some of its latticed windows look out, while others open on the smaller and more secret gardens, it presents a most singular mixture of different kinds of architecture. On one side are seen the two minarets of a mosque, on the other a curious Chinese-looking tower. From the courtyard the greater part of the town is beheld as if in a picture. From one of the corridors in which is a dripping marble fountain, called "The Fountain of Tears," passages and staircases communicate with the private apartments, some of which are still decorated with the faded and tawdry remains of the furniture which once adorned them. The room of Maria Pototska, a Polish lady of rank who became wife to one of the khans, and who was permitted by him to retain her religion, still shows the remains of ancient magnificence, and the cross within the points of the crescent on the walls testifies to the tolerance or love of her Mussulman husband. Here she spent ten years of an eventful life. From the room in the tower a fine view of the town and palace is obtained, and underneath are the gardens of the harem, marble fountains playing in the centre, and walks among shady trees, with tiny streams of water trickling along the pathways, affording the most grateful coolness.

The palace is kept in a sort of repair by the Russian government, who have appointed a custode, whose duty it is to act as guide, and give accommodation to the few strangers who may claim his services. As he could only speak Russian, and, moreover, was a very uneducated man, it was with diffi-

culty that a conversation could be kept up even with the assistance of Mr. Baldwin, who seemed to hold his brother cicerone in much contempt, and generally accompanied his translations with slighting expressions. His wrath was much excited on entering a small court with a marble fountain of great beauty playing in the centre, and flower-beds round the walls, by the description of our guide, which he heard with seeming impatience, and after which he scoffingly remarked: "He says this be one of the gardens, but deuce a garden I sees but the pump"—the "pump" being the fountain.

From the palace a private passage leads to what was the royal gallery in the mosque, on entering which at sunset a number of devout Moslems were to be seen at their devotions. A short distance from the mosque are a couple of domed buildings, in which are the tombs of the khans, placed in them without any regard to regularity. The usual turban is carved on the headstone of each, and an inscription in Turkish and Russian tells the name of the monarch whose body lies below. A small cemetery outside, thickly studded with turbaned tombstones, is covered with a matting of roses and wild flowers, whose delicious perfumes, brought out by the heavy dews of the evening, filled the air.

Leaving behind us the relics of departed might, we returned to our apartment through the moonlit courts, and were soon most unromantically engaged in the consumption of some roast mutton and potatoes, which had been procured on our arrival by the care of the provident Peter, who had also arranged with a baker to cook his purchases and bring them to the palace at sunset. Having had a long and wearying day, we were not sorry to lie down to rest upon the divans which surrounded our room, and which probably had often served for a like purpose to many a Tatar noble.

Next morning we started very early, passing through an extensive Jewish burial ground up the ravine to the monastery of Uspenski, about a mile distant. This extraordinary place, built into the face of an overhanging cliff, its rooms excavated out of the solid rock,—advantage being taken of any natural fissures already existing in the precipice—an^d wooden galleries connecting the chambers where other access was difficult, vividly recalled, though on a much smaller scale, the excavated monasteries in the Holy Land. Built, according to tradition, in the early times of the persecution of the Christian by the Moslem, it consists of eight or ten very small rooms, with a church some twenty feet long and seven feet high, hewn out of the solid rock. It is a place much resorted to by pilgrims in August, when many thousands sometimes assemble.

We descended into the valley from Uspenski, and ascending it for another mile, found that it branched off into two ravines. A cleft, with rocky, perpendicular sides, crossing from one ravine to the other a short distance above where the separation takes place, occasions a curious formation, leaving isolated an enormous mass of rock, with a flat, craggy plateau on the summit.

Up the side of the precipice we wound by a zigzag path, and on arriving at the top passed through an archway whose gates of wood, covered with iron, were still hanging on their hinges. This was the rocky fortress of Chufut Káleh, the former stronghold of the Khans of the Crimea before they descended to Bakchi Serai three hundred years ago, when it became again the exclusive residence of the Karaite Jews who had been its original inhabitants. These Karaites seem to be a kind of Protestant Jews, rejecting the traditions of the Talmud, and teaching only the books of Moses in their schools, though, of course, admitting the remainder of the Old Testament. Although Karaites are found not only in the Crimea, but in Poland and Egypt, they all consider this inaccessible rock as their head-quarters, and acknowledge the

spiritual authority of the Rabbis of Cháfút Káleh. They are also universally esteemed for their honesty wherever they are known, and their truth is relied upon unhesitatingly.

On entering, the whole place seemed a mass of ruins, and quite deserted, but after some little time our guide brought us to a house whence emerged a venerable-looking old Rabbi, who conducted us to the synagogue. He informed us that there were then only seven families living in the village, who seemed to remain more on religious grounds than from any attachment to the place.

Stumbling over some heaps of fallen stones and prostrate walls, we arrived at a low door in a wall, and passing through this, entered the synagogue, which, though small, was clean. It seemed in no way to differ from the usual synagogues seen in other countries. Some silver vessels, sent as a present by a late empress, were exhibited with much pride. We were then taken to see the tomb of a Jewess, who, some five hundred years ago, having eloped with a Tatar noble, was driven to despair by his death at the hand of her relations, and, in her misery, flung herself down from the summit of the adjoining precipice. A long inscription which covers the tombstone relates this melancholy history. The old Rabbi was very courteous, though seemingly but little acquainted with the current of events in the outer world. The view from the summit of Cháfút Káleh down the valley is very grand and striking.

Returning to Bakchi Serai by the way we came, we spent a couple of hours in wandering about the bazaars, and after a hearty meal of mulberries and bread, returned to Sebastopol, re-entering the town by the valley of Inkerman, by a vile road across the burning plains.

We bade a final adieu to Sebastopol next day, and started for Alupka, the château of Prince Woronzoff on the southern coast, in a machine called a Paracloednaia, which being translated, means a "tumbling together." Suppose about six feet

of the centre part of a Thames wherry to be cut out, and, the ends being boarded up, placed upon four wheels without any manner of springs, and you will be able to form some idea of this delectable conveyance. Having thrown in your luggage, you jump in yourself after it and seat yourself on it as comfortably as you can. The *yamstchik*, or driver, sits in front on anything large enough to afford him a seat, and with three horses abreast, the centre one in shafts, and over his back the curious arch of timber which seems a necessity to this mode of harnessing, he drives fast or slow, as the roads permit, or according to the amount of drink-money you have promised him. The Russian *Jehu*, most probably from the tremendous concussions the body undergoes in consequence of the rude shocks so often experienced, which kill off many at an early age, is almost always, unlike the usual English post-boy, a young man.

Our first stage was Balaclava, which now presents a very different scene from that which it exhibited during the war. On the waters once covered with the largest ships crowded together in hundreds, one solitary row-boat lay a few yards from the shore; and a few huts huddled together near the post-house were the remains of the once flourishing colony planted by Catherine II.

We continued our route, after some delay in getting horses, through a wooded country, into the valley of Baidar. The uncertainty of finding horses forms one of the chief inconveniences of travelling in Russia. There are three kinds of "*padaroshna*," or order, to provide the traveller with horses. The first, for which a small sum of money has to be paid to the police of the town from which one starts, is given to the general traveller, and entitles him to horses when they are not demanded by the happier possessors of either of the other two. Even should the horses be already harnessed, he may be deprived of them by the pro-

prietor of one of the other orders. The second, or special order, is given to officers, government officials, and foreigners who may be fortunate enough to procure one through interest. The third is only given to government couriers, who are entitled to preference over both the others. The number of horses kept in the post-houses being usually much too small, it is of the utmost importance to procure a government order.

We often had during our journey to remain many hours, and sometimes whole days, in a post-house, waiting for means to continue our journey. On the other hand, travelling post in this way is remarkably cheap. Three copeks, or about one penny per verst, two-thirds of a mile, is the highest charge for one horse, which makes the cost per English mile about fivepence for three. The usual drink-money to the *yamstchiks* for each stage is twenty-five copeks, or about tenpence. We drove up the valley of Baidar through beech woods, opening out occasionally into well-cultivated farms.

We changed again at the village of Baidar, and still ascending came at last to an archway which spanned the road, on passing through which, the sea, some thousand feet below us, burst at once upon our view. Nothing can be grander than this magnificent prospect, coming as it does so suddenly upon the sight. The south coast of the Crimea, a long, narrow strip of land seldom more than three or four miles in breadth, shut in between the sea and the mountains, forming a wall of rock some four thousand feet high, and composed in the upper part of *débris*, lay stretched out before us, sloping to the water's edge. The soil is rich, the water plentiful, a number of villages and detached houses are scattered about, and are surrounded by numerous fruit trees of large size.

We descended by a zigzag road, and drove through most beautiful scenery, parallel to the coast at a level of about a

thousand feet above the sea. We reached Alupka in the afternoon of the day succeeding that on which we left Sebastopol, and put up in a small hotel established by Prince Woronzoff in the grounds of his château.

The castle, some two hundred feet above the level of the water, down to which the gardens extend, is very large and beautiful, built in the Gothic-Moorish style. The gardens are large, and have been laid out in the English fashion. They contain a large number of rare and beautiful trees and shrubs, walnut, cypress, and mulberry trees, figs, oleanders, and magnolias, all flourishing equally well, and with the greatest luxuriance. Vines creeping up the stems and branches of the larger trees hang down in festoons from their branches, and abundance of water gushing out everywhere cools the heated air. The château itself is only two stories high, but very long, fronting the sea, and the rooms in the interior are good and lofty.

We were shown a table-cover worked for the late Princess Woronzoff by Circassian women, a mass of gold and embroidery; and an embroidered likeness of the late Shah of Persia, presented by him to the prince. There is also a portrait of the celebrated Lady Hamilton, taken when she was in the full zenith of her beauty and fascination. The late Prince Woronzoff, being connected with England, employed a number of English gardeners and servants in different capacities, some of whom still continue in the service of the present prince.

A pretty church and small mosque for the surrounding Tatars have also been erected. We tasted here for the first time the white wine of the Crimea, made in the vineyards surrounding us, from vines imported from France and Germany. It was very good and of excellent flavour, something between Sauterne and Hermitage. It keeps well, and is much prized even in the country where it is manufactured.

Leaving Alupka the next day, we passed Orianda, the beautiful palace erected for the late Empress, and driving for ten or twelve miles along a road on both sides of which were a number of prettily laid-out villas and gardens, descended gradually to Yalta, a charmingly situated little watering-place on the sea-shore. The wooded hills receding on all sides of the bay form a gigantic amphitheatre, backed by the rock-wall which runs round the southern coast. Yalta is built in the centre of what would be the stage.

Vineyards and fruit orchards occupy the lowest slope of the hills, changing into ashes, oaks, and pines as the land rises and approaches the barriers of rock towering overhead. Numerous villas studded the hill sides. The vineyards seemed to be well tended, and the farms carefully cultivated. A number of winding and zigzag roads, leading in different directions, showed the amount of money and skill spent upon the improvement of the neighbourhood by rich Russians following the example of the late Prince Woronzoff.

The little hotel, a low, two-storied building, running round three sides of a courtyard facing the sea, was kept by a Swiss, and the rooms, though small, were really clean and comfortable, being furnished with iron beds. The landlord, who worked as hard as he could himself, complained bitterly of the difficulty of inducing his Tatar and Russian servants to make any kind of exertion. Nevertheless he contrived to feed his guests tolerably well, and civility made up for any shortcomings. The bathing-place consists of a couple of large wooden sheds, with platforms projecting a short distance into the water. Sheets hung from a line separate the lady from the gentleman part of the bathers. The strand is very bad, and the stones often cut one's feet severely.

During the week we were obliged to wait at Yalta to catch the next steamer to Kertch and the Circassian coast, the Russian company plying their boats only once a fortnight; we therefore made numerous excursions in the neighbourhood,

one to Ourzúf—a distance of about seven miles, a Tátar village on the sea-shore, where there is a very prettily laid-out and nicely-kept villa belonging to a wealthy Russian, who generally lives in Paris. The cypresses and magnolias in the gardens were very luxuriant. Ourzúf itself is a mere collection of Tátar houses on the water's edge. A short distance from the villa and overhanging it is a mass of rock jutting out into the sea, on which are the still well-preserved ruins of a fortress or stronghold built by the Emperor Justinian in the year 550.

It was difficult to believe that, within such a short distance of a fashionable so-called European watering-place, a purely Eastern village could be found. The small flat-roofed houses piled one behind the other, as the inequalities of the ground exacted, the heaps of dirt collected in every vacant space, the half-naked children playing on the house-tops, and women with attempts at veils, all of which were dirty, spinning in twos and threes at their doors, presented a scene in no way different from that which might be seen at any aoul in the Daghestan mountains. The professors of the Moslem creed are everywhere the same, their contempt for improvement being such that their habits are unchangeable. A muezzin, or caller to prayers, summoned the faithful to their devotions from the roof of one of the highest houses; but his exhortations seemed to be but little heeded by the population below.

We also rode some three miles to visit a cascade in a valley in the woods west of Yalta. Though the volume of water was not very great, still there was so much of the wild beauty of nature about it as merited the reputation it possessed.

In the neighbourhood of Yalta once resided three ladies, whose names were well known and much spoken of in the beginning of this century in connexion with a court mystery at St. Petersburg. The celebrated Madame de Krüdener, with her companions, the Princess Gallitzin and Countess

Guacher, was exiled by the Emperor Alexander to the Crimea, and took up her residence near Yalta. At first, toiling about the neighbourhood in their monastic dress, they endeavoured to propagate the mystic creed they had imagined; but immediately after the death of Madame de Krüdener, which soon followed her exile, the other two separated, and resided in different houses. The Princess Gallitzin surrounded herself with a crowd of visitors and strangers, and gave full vent to many eccentricities, among which was the adoption of a semi kind of male costume. She died in 1839, having erected a gigantic gilded cross on a hill in the vicinity of Koreis, a villa which she inhabited for some years previous to her death. The Countess Guacher died in 1823, the same year as Madame de Krüdener, and, according to de Hell, disclosures were soon after made, and a curious correspondence discovered, which at last revealed the real name of this most mysterious and eccentric of the three "illuminati;" and the remains of Madame de la Mothe Valois—she who had been whipped and branded in the Place de Grève for her share in the affair of the diamond necklace—rest without a stone to mark the spot, in a corner of the garden belonging to her house.

Having well explored the beauties of Yalta and its environs, our eyes were greeted at the expiration of our week's detention by the sight of the steamer which, having left Odessa a fortnight after our departure, had successively touched at Eupatoria and Sebastopol, and was now on its way to Theodosia, Kertch, and the Circassian coast. Leaving Yalta on the 26th of June, we steamed through calm water a short distance from the shore, enjoying ample opportunity to admire the magnificent scenery spread out before us like a panorama, and the foreground of which, wooded and richly cultivated, was bounded in the distance by gigantic and bare rock barriers.

We arrived next morning at Kertch, and owing to the

shallowness of the water, were obliged to anchor some three miles from the shore, in a bay in which there were a number of other vessels. The land was bleak, dust-coloured, and hilly—not a tree to be seen; and the straggling, ill-built town seemed parched and burnt up by the fierce rays of the sun. The water, adjoining the sea of Azov, was muddy and discoloured. Having landed, we walked through some wide streets lined with the usual Russian brick buildings, plastered over and painted yellow, to the house of Mr. Eldridge, the English Consul, with whom we breakfasted. The whole town seemed some inches deep in white dust. The flat plain to the south of Kertch is studded over with an immense number of tumuli of various sizes, some of which we visited in company with our host in the afternoon. Most of them were open and rifled of their contents, the greater part of which have been deposited in the Museum of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Some very beautiful Greek sarcophagi had been discovered in the interiors, but owing to the roughness of the means used in extracting them, and the carelessness of those employed in the task, most of them had been sadly injured. A number of gold ornaments, fillets, diadems, bracelets, and rings, were found among the bones in these sarcophagi. All were of the purest Greek art; some of them most beautiful productions, the designs of which have been copied by modern goldsmiths. In one mound lately opened we were told, with what truth we could not ascertain, that no less than one hundred pounds weight of gold ornaments had been found.

We entered one of the freshly-excavated mounds through a passage, some thirty-five feet in length and about ten high, curiously constructed in the form of a **A**, by each of the stones forming the side walls from the base, which was about four and-a-half feet wide, overlapping the one underneath it a few inches. The chamber in the centre of the mound to which this gallery led was square, with circular arched roof,

the arch composed by the stones overlapping each other as in the outer passage. It was about eighteen feet square, and twenty-five high. The stone was the common white sandstone of the surrounding hills, and the height of the mound might have been sixty or seventy feet by one hundred and thirty in diameter.

On the hills in the neighbourhood, too, are some tumuli, but by no means in such numbers as in the plains. A quantity of glass vessels, pottery, inscriptions, &c., have also been found, which were mostly sent to St. Petersburg from the Kertch Museum at the outbreak of the late war. These mounds were erected by the Greek inhabitants of Panticapæum, the name of the ancient city which occupied the site on which Kertch is now built.

On emerging from the tomb we crossed the arid plain to the quarantine, an immense half ruinous building close to the sea, about a mile and a half from the town. In it we found detained two English skippers of vessels just arrived from Kustendje, who were consequently in a state of furious exasperation, as they expected "pratique" immediately on coming into port. The fat old quarantine officer, not able to understand a word of their energetic language, continued to smoke his papyros, or cigarette, with an imperturbable air of indifference, which did not tend to improve their equanimity. This worthy, however, showed some alacrity on the entry of Mr. Eldridge, and in a short time our greasy nautical countrymen rejoined the still greasier crews of their squat little boats in a happy and contented mood. The buildings of the quarantine are in a very tumble-down condition, and in a short time no doubt will be demolished.

On returning to the town in our droschkies we went to the museum, which, it will be recollected, suffered so much at the hands of the allied soldiers and sailors in 1855. We were shown over it by a retired colonel of Engineers, the head of the establishment, who seemed wholly absorbed by the duties

of his office. There are still a few ornaments, coins, jars, &c., in the museum, but the transmission of the more valuable articles to St. Petersburg commenced during the war is still continued. A number of statues, much defaced, and a quantity of broken sarcophagi, are lying about outside the museum, which is a handsome building, in the Greek style, erected on an eminence.

Having stayed at Mr. Eldridge's for the night, we ascended next day one of the ranges of rocky hills above the town to the chair of Mithridates, a rock on which tradition relates the proud monarch of Pontus seated himself to survey the town and ship-covered strait stretching out below him. An extensive view is obtained from this point far up the channel towards the Sea of Azov and over the arid hills of the Crimea on the opposite shore. There were some very extensive fortifications in course of construction by the Russians commanding the straits, which are very shallow on the western or opposite side, compelling all vessels to hug the eastern bank, and thus pass close under the ranges of batteries. The earthworks were very broad. Some casemates were also building, and the guns, 60-pounders, for their armaments were lying about in numbers. We are informed that no less than two regiments were engaged in the erection of these important works, which, when completed, were to mount a hundred and fifty guns. A large entrenched camp, sufficient to contain thirty thousand men, was intended to surround the fortifications on the land side; and in addition, on a shoal in the centre of the strait, a fort, mounting some eighty guns, after the model of those at Sebastopol, was to be erected for the more perfect security of the channel.

At Kertch we engaged a servant and interpreter for our projected journey through Daghestan. He was a Greek boy about sixteen years of age, from Sinope, having left that town after the destruction of the squadron of Turkish frigates by the

Russian fleet. At Kertch he acted as interpreter to the foreign crews who needed one during the summer months, and thus gained sufficient to maintain himself through the winter, and also send a portion of his earnings to his family at Sinope. This youth, who spoke Greek, Italian, Russian, and English, was short and stout, and had a good-humoured, rollicking look, which he had probably gained from the English sailors, who seemed to be his constant companions. He seemed delighted at the prospect of "the lark," and expressed his readiness to start at once. When the steamer was leaving the following afternoon at 4 P.M., he did not make his appearance until the screw actually began to revolve; and then, with a grin of delight, wholly unconscious of the annoyance that his unaccountable delay had caused, he came alongside, bringing with him a huge sea-chest in the boat. On its being suggested to him that this, however well suited to a sea voyage, was by no means the best form for carrying luggage on mule-back, which would be the probable mode in which he would have to travel for some weeks, he at once volunteered to leave it behind at the next station, where he expressed a certainty of finding some one he knew who would take care of it until his return.

CHAPTER IV.

CIRCASSIAN EMIGRATION—SUJÚK KALÉH—SUKÚM KALÉH—
SALE OF CIRCASSIAN WOMEN—SCENES IN MINGRELIA—LOW
AND SWAMPY COAST—POTI—CAPTAIN KUTAIEFF—THE
CONSUL'S HOUSE—A PAINFUL RIDE ON COSSACK SADDLES—
WILD VINES—GURIEL PEASANTS—BARCLAY AND PERKINS'
LONDON STOUT—MARAN—COSTUME OF THE PEASANTRY—
INTRODUCTION OF RUSSIAN LAWS AND GOVERNMENT—
CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE IN GURIEL AND MINGRELIA—
EUNUCHS—FAITH AND CUSTOMS OF THE SKOPTZI.

CHAPTER IV.

LEAVING behind the muddy waters of the Sea of Azov, we soon were steaming rapidly along the coast at a short distance from the shore. The low whitey-brown coloured hills gradually increased in height as we advanced, and in a short time some brushwood appeared to clothe their arid sides, the shore assuming the richly wooded appearance which it maintains, with but few intervals, for the remainder of the way to the neighbourhood of Constantinople. The mountains, broken and diversified by numerous glens, run down into the sea with an abrupt descent, and immense and unbroken forests seem to clothe their sides with large timber to the summits.

We had experienced a considerable increase to our fellow-passengers at Kertch, in the shape of no less than two hundred and fifty Circassian emigrants, most of them from the tribes who, after a desperate resistance, had been subdued by the Russians. Strange that they should be thus taking their departure for ever from their houses in a vessel belonging to their hated conquerors. Two-thirds of their number were women and children, in a sad state of dirt and wretchedness; but among them were also the followers or train of a native prince, who was making the pilgrimage to Mecca, with one of his wives and a large retinue. The lady, who was closely veiled from the impudent gaze of the infidel, took up her position, with her family and maids, on the quarter-deck, in a space railed off from the rest for their accommodation.

Although she was veiled, her female servants were not so, and a set of more haggard, toil-worn, miserable, skinny, wrinkled-looking objects could not be beheld. A few wore some silver ornaments and belts, all the finery they possessed. The entire household, mistress and maids, ate and slept together all in a heap, never once moving from their lair to take the slightest exercise during the time we were on board. Destitute of all means of employment, they kept up an incessant chatter all day, their notes often rising high and shrill, very little respect being apparently shown by the handmaidens to their mistress.

The Circassian men on board, of all classes, were, on the contrary, remarkably fine, handsome-looking fellows, with such an independent, free air and gait, as to make one wonder how they could be of the same race with the women. They were all very well dressed, wearing the tall Astrakhan muff-like caps, with the top of red cloth, embroidered with gold, the long coat, reaching a couple of inches below the knee, bound round the waist with belts studded with silver knobs or buttons, and six or seven silver cartridge cases on either side of the chest. A slashka, or broad straight sabre, in a leathern sheath tipped and otherwise ornamented with silver, completed their costume and arms, the latter serving them for many more useful purposes than that of war. They seemed very attentive to their prayers and the outward duties enjoined by their religion, far more so than their co-religionists in the other parts of the Turkish empire that we visited.

Many of them had been quite lately in arms against the Russians, and one of them, though now acknowledging the Russian rule, and holding the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the service of the emperor, told us that he had within a few months been engaged in the attack on a fort built on the borders of his district. They all possessed remarkably fine, noble-looking features, which would be envied by many a

European patrician ; some of them resembling much, in the character of their countenances, the late Emperor Nicholas.

The poorer part of the emigrants appeared to be in the most abject misery, and the captain, who seemed quite accustomed to that kind of cargo, told us that he had constantly to provide food for many of them, who were either too poor or too improvident to lay in a sufficient stock of provisions for their support during the voyage to Constantinople. What they did when they arrived there, and what provision was made for their future lot, the Sultan's government can best tell.

Immediately on the first bargeful of them coming alongside at Kertch, the captain, holding in his hands a large bagful of Persian powder, plentifully besprinkled the decks both above and below with this infallible insect-destroyer, but for which he assured us it would be impossible for him to continue taking on board any cabin passengers, such was the amount of vermin which accompanied each consignment of these voluntary exiles. And yet, perhaps, the more on account of their poverty, it was impossible not to feel pity and respect for the motives which, however bigoted and intolerant, were earnest and sincere, that impelled them thus to leave their homesteads and comparative comfort, rather than remain under the rule of the Christians, whom they both despised and hated, and wander forth to seek new homes among those professing the same faith, who would receive them as sufferers in the cause of their religion.

Passing by the ruins of Anapa, once an important military post, the scene of many bloody contests between the Russians and Turks, but which was dismantled and abandoned by the former during the late war, we arrived early next morning at Novorossisk, or Sujúk Kaléh, one of the chain of forts built on the sea-shore, to hold the mountaineers in check, and prevent the smuggling of salt, gunpowder, &c., from Constantinople and Trebizond, which still

prevails in spite of the utmost efforts of the Russians to prevent it. The tribes surrounding Novorossisk are called Natochuadsch. The fort was a mere collection of small huts, with a church in the centre, surrounded by a crenellated wall, with angles some twenty feet high, reminding one of the French forts built in Kabylia, to hold the Kabyles in subjection. It was situated close to the shore, so near the mountains, that if the Tcherkess possessed any knowledge how siege operations ought to be conducted, it would be untenable. Many of the same description of forts built by the Russians during the last thirty years were abandoned by them during the war, and are now in ruins. In the evening we spoke a transport, so called by the Russians on board, but looking very much like a corvette, which told us that a merchant vessel had been lately driven ashore near where we were by stress of weather, and that it had been plundered, and the crew taken prisoners by the Circassians, to whom such an event is a godsend. All this part of the coast, as far as Sukúm Kaléh was still perfectly independent, and from the density of its forests, and its mountainous character, may long remain so. At this very time an expedition against it was being fitted out at Kertch, which afterwards met with the invariable fate of its predecessors, and returned with the loss of half its numbers.

We passed also by the ruins of Pitzunda, another abandoned fort, formerly a prosperous Genoese colony; we were told that it yet contained a church of great beauty, in good preservation, and that a small convent also exists still in the neighbouring mountains. The Tcherkess tribe inhabiting this part of Circassia are called Abkhasians, and extend down to and around Sukúm Kaléh. *

We touched at Sukúm Kaléh the next day, having a short time previously passed a smuggling vessel close in to and running for the land. A number of fires, to judge by the smoke, seemed to have been lighted on the shore, and

every preparation made for receiving and rapidly landing her cargo.

These smugglers, who usually sail with their cargoes of salt, gunpowder, cottons, &c., from Sinope or Trebizond, bring back generally as a return freight a number of Circassian girls for the Constantinople market. These poor creatures suffer often great hardships on the journey, obliged as they are to sail by night, and to select the worst weather, for the purpose of avoiding the Russian cruizers. Nevertheless, far from lamenting their fate in thus leaving their homes at such an early age—for they are generally disposed of by their fathers and brothers at twelve and fourteen years old—they look forward to their sale at Stamboul as their grand settlement in life; thus escaping the hardships inseparable from their lot had they remained at home. For among the Circassians, as among every other uncivilized people, the hardest work falls to the lot of the women, who, in consequence, become soon wrinkled and aged, assuming the appearance of veritable hags at a very early period. One of our fellow-passengers, an officer of Engineers, told us of a Circassian chief, who, while at Constantinople with his two daughters, had sold the elder one; but, although entreated by the younger sister, a girl of twelve years old, to sell her also, had been deaf to her request, and refused to part with her. Being captured on his return, on board a smuggler trying to run a cargo of salt, he was vehemently reproached by the young lady, who in bitter tones reminded him that, having refused to sell her for a large sum of money, which would have been useful to him, he had now lost both herself and the money.

Yet, perhaps, when we consider that even at home the Circassian women are sold to their husbands, it is not difficult to believe that they would prefer becoming the wives of rich Turks, in whose harem they hope to spend a life of indolence and luxury, to being the hard-working slaves of a

household in which comfort, not to speak of luxury, is unknown. Accordingly, the prettiest girls of a family are invariably selected for the Turkish market, and indulged, as far as the means of the family will permit, in idleness, being excused from the household drudgery, which might take away from their beauty. On arriving at a suitable age, the damsel leaves her home amid the tears of her mother and sisters, while her father and brothers, using all precautions to secure her escape from the clutches of the Muscovite and the dangers of the sea, launch her upon the market with anxious speculations as to the amount which a commodity so valuable, though to them useless, may bring. For, although in some instances a slave merchant may himself purchase direct from the parent, yet in most cases one of the male members of the family accompanies the precious merchandise to the place of sale, and receives the money himself from his future brother- or son-in-law, generally investing on his return a part of the proceeds of the sale in the purchase of some contraband article—such as gunpowder or salt, or whatever may happen at the moment to be most in request among his countrymen.

Sukúm Kaléh is at the bottom of a deep bay, surrounded by low fields thickly wooded with beech and elm, gradually rising into the interior. A fortress originally built by the Turks is in ruins, and a number of wooden sheds, used for different purposes by the Russians, now surround the dilapidated walls. The town itself, which contains a garrison of three battalions, is situated upon a flat, marshy piece of land, about a mile in width, between the sea and the foot of the hills. It is clean and neat, the houses small, but snugly built; and a small garden around each, with creepers climbing up the walls, and hollyhocks, roses, &c., in profusion, gives a very pleasing aspect to the streets, which are laid out wide and straight, crossing each other at right angles. A road from Sukúm Kaléh to Kutais, about one hundred

miles to the south-east, was in process of construction by the soldiers, but some time was expected to elapse before it was completed.

In company with Mr. Dickson, the British Consul, we availed ourselves of the five or six hours that the steamer remained at anchor in the bay, and took a walk in the environs for some distance. We remarked particularly the profusion of the roses, and the general luxuriance of all kinds of vegetation. The ground was covered in some places with a dense growth of ferns, and all kinds of forest trees, but more especially beech and elm, which clothed the hill-sides to their summits.

The road to Kutais had been made for a short distance from the town. It is broad, and seemed solidly finished. We met a number of soldiers returning from their day's work with pickaxe and shovel, who appeared strong and healthy, in spite of the fever and ague which, in common with the other newly-settled parts of the Black Sea coast, is the great scourge of this district. Up to, and for some distance beyond Sukúm Kaléh, the coast presented the same wild, uncultivated, and densely-wooded appearance, the only sign of its being inhabited being an occasional thin cloud of smoke seen rising above the trees. On leaving the frontier of the Mohammedan country, however, and steaming along the shores of the Christian province of Mingrelia, the woods became a little less dense, and the signs of population more frequent.

Passing by Anaklia and Redút Kaléh in Mingrelia, both military posts of little importance, we arrived at Poti, at the mouth of the River Rion, or ancient Phasis, which is the port of Tiflis on the Black Sea, and is intended to become, in spite of the deadly climate, some day or other, a large city. At the first glance at this forlorn and most miserable settlement, Dickens' inimitable description of Eden in "Martin Chuzzlewit" was recalled most forcibly to the

imagination. On nearing the shore, which is here flat and swampy for some distance into the interior, the water becomes muddy, and assumes the sickly, pea-soup looking tinge that is also to be seen in perfection at the Sulina mouth of the Danube. The morning being perfectly calm, and the heat of the sun very great, a thick, heavy-looking steam arose from the still water, which wrapped all around in a dense fog, to all appearance the very chosen home of malaria, fever, and ague. All around us was shrouded in mist, and we came to an anchorage, at some distance from the land, in a mixture of mud and water. The sluggish, dirty river runs for some way before reaching the sea through a fat, black swamp, covered with alders, in a clearing in the midst of which, at about half a mile from the mouth of the Rion, is situated Poti.

In about an hour after our arrival, a small steamer came alongside, and in half an hour brought us up the river to the town, passing by on the right hand the dilapidated walls of an old Turkish fort, of a square form, the interior of which was then cultivated as a cabbage-garden. The river seemed about eighty yards wide, and had very little current. Captain Kutaieff, who was the governor of the town, and who had been a fellow-traveller with us on board the steamer from Odessa to Kertch, came out in the little vessel to welcome us, and during the short time we stayed at Poti did his best to amuse us, and, what was better by far, facilitate our departure from it.

In this miserable spot there is not a single stone house. Strong posts, driven deep into the black, stinking soil, support the houses, constructed of logs of squared timber, at about three feet from the ground. They are usually about sixteen or eighteen feet square by ten high, and from whatever cause have generally underneath a fetid pool of water, in which swarms of frogs discourse merrily all day and night. A long narrow street of these wretched dwellings composes the entire seaport. Nowhere is the water more than two feet from the

surface—in many places the standing pools of filthy liquid show that it is on a level with or above it. The forest of alders, thick and perfectly impenetrable from the rankness and luxuriance of the underwood, comes down to within a hundred yards of the end of the solitary street, which terminates abruptly at the edge, there being then no road by which a wheeled vehicle could enter from the interior. Some sixty or seventy of these log-huts constitute the town, and are inhabited by a few shopkeepers, who earn a scanty subsistence from supplying the few government employés. They one and all seemed like spectres, from the effect of the constant attacks of fever to which they are subjected. In some instances, on calling at shops, a voice from the neighbouring hut would acquaint us with the fact that the owner was at that moment suffering from the malady, and consequently unable to attend to us.

Captain Kutaieff, who spoke a little Italian, and who had many years previously been at Plymouth in a Russian ship of war, gave up to our use the hut of Mr. Cameron, the English consul, who, then absent on a visit to the interior, had left his house in his charge till he returned. Kutaieff, like the sailors of all countries, was very jolly and good-humoured, and seemingly entertained a very vivid and pleasing remembrance of the delights which he had enjoyed years previously at Devonport.

We found the consul's house a mere empty hut of two rooms, one containing a bench, the other a table, which served us for beds also. In this desirable residence we deposited our baggage, and then proceeded to the "hotel," another log-hut, kept by a little Frenchwoman, Madame Jacquot, whose pretty eyes the fever had as yet only partially dimmed. She welcomed us gladly, as it was but seldom that European strangers passed that way, told us that she was a Parisian, and had come with her husband direct from Paris to Tiflis in search of fortune. Not prospering as she desired at Tiflis,

and hearing that a new port was to be opened at Poti, roads made, and buildings erected, she thought that at a new place she would have a greater chance of success, and therefore, selling her property at Tiflis, returned to Poti with her husband to set up the first hotel in the new city that was to be. Alas! poor little woman, her husband was soon rendered useless by fever; she herself had had three attacks of it, during part of which she had been obliged to attend to some guests, Russian engineer officers passing through, and was now in despair of ever making anything or doing anything in the place. Yet in the midst of her anxieties and distresses she preserved the gaiety and cheerfulness inherent apparently in Frenchwomen, skipped about gaily to supply the few wants of her fewer customers, shrugged her shoulders, gave and received compliments as if she were in her lamented France, and made the most of her long, thick, black hair.

She contrived, out of the very unpromising materials which we saw hanging up in the shops, to produce a very fair breakfast and dinner, which she enlivened by her own presence, and by anecdotes of her experiences of the country into which we were going, for leaving which she expressed anything but regret. She hoped as soon as her husband got better to return to Europe, any part of which she declared she would look upon as a paradise after Poti.

Our first business at Poti being to arrange matters for our departure from it, we applied to Koutaieff for a "pada-roshna," or order for post-horses along the route as far as Tiflis, and having paid certain roubles, received it, and also a promise of Cossack horses to be in readiness early next morning. The remainder of the evening we spent in wandering as far from the town, through the swamp, as the mud would permit us, which was but a very short distance.

Having arranged everything for an early start and taken farewell of Madame Jacquot, with many wishes for her speedy departure to happier climes, we returned to the consular resi-

dence, and lay down for the night on our respective bench and table. In spite of the frogs and an occasional rat, we fell asleep towards morning, and, after an hour or two's rest, were ready to start as soon as the horses should arrive. But after having waited for some hours, we were informed that they would not come before the evening, and that we could not start till next day. We thus, for the first time, became acquainted with the elasticity of the Russian word "sichass," which, translated in the dictionaries "immediately," may mean "now," or "ten days hence," according to the interpretation put upon it by the speaker, and not the person spoken to. However, there was no remedy but patience, and accordingly we spent another day at Poti, killing the time as best we could. The only subject which broke the utter monotony of this dreary place during the time of our detention, was the slaughter of a calf, which a number of the inhabitants seemed to witness with the greatest interest.

Another dinner and supper at Madame Jacquot's, another chat with our little hostess, still cheerful among all her calamities, another night spent on the table and chair, and at last, at seven the next morning, the horses really did arrive, and we started, a cavalcade of six, including a Cossack, whose duty was to lead the two baggage horses, the head of the hindmost firmly tied to the tail of the foremost, which he conducted by a cord. Ourselves and Giorgi, the Greek boy, rode the other three, and endured in a short time the most exquisite torture from the Cossack saddles, which, made of boards put together in the shape of an inverted V over an iron tree, are always ridden on by the Cossacks themselves with a very thick pad stuffed with horsehair, which belongs to the rider himself and not to the government, like the rest of the furniture and equipments. Accordingly, no pads being brought to us with the horses, we were obliged to shift as best we could with rugs and coats, lamenting sorely the mistaken notions with which we had entered

The river Rion, along whose banks we had been riding, divides Mingrelia from Guriel. The former principality was until quite lately ruled by its native princess, Dadian, who resided at Sugdide, a small town on the hills to the north-east of Poti. Latterly the Russians have assumed the government, and the Princess Dadian lives at St. Petersburg. By slow and cautious degrees the Russians are introducing their system of government and laws into the native principalities, attention, however, being paid to the local customs and habits. In one respect a great change takes place for the better in the condition of the peasant, who, though not formerly in the position of a serf, paid his rent to his lord and taxes to his prince in personal service and in kind, both often levied without rule, and sometimes with great injustice. Wherever the Russian rule is established this payment of taxes in kind is commuted for a certain fixed sum of money, a mode of payment which, in those instances wherein the land does not belong to the occupier, is becoming gradually adopted.

The people generally plough with oxen. Their live stock consists chiefly of pigs, of which there are enormous droves, and a few sheep. They make some coarse wine, and live chiefly upon pork, bread, cheese, herbs, and sour milk. Wages, as in most scantily peopled countries, are high. We were told in Poti that an ordinary labourer earned from forty to fifty kopecks, or from 1*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* English, per day, and skilled labour commands a high price. On the other hand, as every Georgian handles an axe, and as almost all the dwellings are built of wood, the cost of erecting a house is not very great.

The country is generally governed according to the communal system, each town or district electing a council, who administer in most cases their own internal affairs, apportion the taxes, and decide minor disputes. Criminal cases, according to their gravity, are decided by the local autho-

rities, or referred to the governors of the different provinces into which the country is divided.

Enjoying at present an immunity from the ravages which the former constant incursions of their Mohammedan neighbours both to the north and south incessantly occasioned, and feeling a sense of security to which they were formerly strangers, the inhabitants, in other days chiefly residing, for the purpose of self-defence, in towns and fortified villages, are now beginning to spread over the country. Until a very recent period, the Laz, a Moslem race inhabiting the mountainous district in the Turkish territory to the south-east of the Black Sea, were in the constant habit of making incursions into Gurjel and Mingrelia for the purpose of plunder, and obtaining girls for the Stamboul slave-market. Strange to say, this danger was one of the reasons which originated the early marriages at present so common, as a woman once married loses all value in the eyes of the Moslem purchaser; and is consequently regarded as not worth carrying off. The conscription has not as yet been introduced into the Trans-Caucasian provinces, and, except in a few instances, as volunteers, the Georgians are not met with in the ranks of the Russian army.

The village of Maran consists of a row of neatly-built cottages, on the right bank of the river, each surrounded by a small garden, a few residences of a better description for the Russian officials, and a church. Almost the whole population consists of eunuchs; a number of members of a peculiar sect, in White Russia, who insist on a literal interpretation of all the Scriptures, having become so in obedience to their religious belief.

According to Baron Haxthausen they are called "Skoptzi," and entertain very peculiar ideas concerning the Bible, believing the true Gospel, once in their exclusive possession, to have been hidden in the wall of the church of St. Andrew, at St. Petersburg, by Peter the Third, whom they claim as

their head, and whom they believe to have been an actual emanation of Christ. They believe that the Son is inferior to the Father, but was consecrated and sanctified by Him ; that he was never crucified, as related in the Gospels of the Christian Churches, but yet wanders on earth, without sex, in one form or another ; the last assumed by him being that of Peter the Third, who, at the time when he was supposed to have been put to death, fled to Irkutsk, in Siberia, from whence he will shortly return, and ringing the great bell of the church of the Ascension, in the Kremlin at Moscow, summon all the Skoptzi on earth to come and reign with him for ever. Not keeping the seventh day as a day of rest, they practise a number of secret ceremonies on the night of Saturday, singing hymns, &c. They possess numerous portraits of Peter the Third, who is represented bareheaded, with black beard and blue kaftan. They are very zealous in obtaining disciples, and, strange to say, make numerous converts ; any one who persuades twelve to join them becoming thereby an apostle.

In Russia the members of this sect actually marry, becoming what they are, only after the birth of a son. A large portion of the jewellers and goldsmiths of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other large towns, are among their converts. At present there are two or three thousand known by the police to belong to the community, but their numbers had, some years since, assumed such a proportion, that the Emperor Nicholas, in order to check any further increase, issued a ukase, banishing all who professed their opinions to the Caucasian provinces, there to be enrolled in a penal company, and held at the disposal of the military authorities. A portion of them were sent to Maran, where, after having built themselves houses, and formed a settlement, they were employed in baking the black bread used as the principal food of the soldiers throughout the provinces ; an occupation in which they still continue. They also catch sturgeon in the

Rion, for which they obtain a ready sale. They are placed under the superintendence of a captain, with two or three other subordinate officers, and are very highly spoken of in the country round for their honesty, sobriety, and good behaviour. There were about two hundred and fifty of them, living two in each cottage, and cultivating their little gardens with the greatest diligence, many of them being filled with flowers and shrubs.

CHAPTER V.

GEORGIAN BEAUTY—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ROAD—THE CAPITAL OF IMMERITIA—THE GERMAN POLICE-MASTER—A SCOTO-MINGRELIAN—A TRANS-CAUCASIAN WATERING-PLACE—THE RIVER KUR—ROAD FROM SURAM TO BORDJOURN—THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF GEORGIA—SEPULCHRE OF THE KINGS—TIFLIS—PROSPECTS OF COMMERCIAL REVIVAL—A POLYGLOTT POPULATION—GERMAN IMMIGRANTS—MANUFACTURE OF SILVER ORNAMENTS—PERSIAN QUARTER—BRIDGES OVER THE KUR—WINE OF NATIVE MANUFACTURE—THE BAZAARS.



CHAPTER V.

THERE being a regular road from Maran, for the remainder of the route to Tiflis, we bade adieu here to our Cossack horses, remaining at the post house, which boasted of a room with a bench, till the next morning. Giorgi, whose surprise at what he saw at Maran was very great, and who insisted that the inhabitants all spoke "like one Scotchman," made a successful foray, which resulted in the production of mutton and potatoes.

In the evening we were gratified by our first sight of Georgian beauty, in the person of the daughter of one of the government officials belonging to the place. Tall and slight, her beauty appeared to great advantage in the exquisite Georgian costume which she wore, an embroidered jacket and waistcoat, with light-coloured petticoat, and on her head a velvet diadem or band, thickly covered with gold ornaments, from under which a long white veil of gauze, like that of a bride, fell over her shoulders. Thus tastefully dressed she looked "beautiful exceedingly," quite coming up to the generally entertained ideas of Georgian loveliness. We afterwards learnt at Tiflis that this young lady was with justice considered one of the prettiest girls in Georgia.

We started from Maran the next morning (4th July) in a troika, or telega, a small paraclodnaia, with the same number of horses, three harnessed in a similar manner abreast, Giorgi sitting in front on a board beside the driver, and we stowed away as best we could be among the luggage behind.

The road to Kutais not being quite completed up to the town of Maran, our yamstchik, who, as he told us after some time, had never gone the route before, and consequently was perfectly ignorant of it, drove us over the country in various directions, losing his way every few minutes, and finding it again apparently by instinct through fields and enclosures of all kinds. In one instance, our further progress being stopped by a stake and wattle fence surrounding a field of late Indian corn, he drove his three horses abreast at what seemed a weak place, and crashed through it and the maize at the other side with the greatest indifference as to the risk he ran of injuring his horses, and to the injury he was inflicting upon the unlucky owner of the field.

At last we got upon the road, and changing horses and carriage—the post vehicles are always changed at each post, involving the nuisance of re-arranging all one's luggage—we arrived at Kutais, some twenty miles from Maran, at noon. Not far from this town our horses ran away with us down a steep descent, and a tree happening to stand in the centre of the road, two of them passed on one side of it, while the third took the other. Going at the top of their speed, the ropes which attached the latter to the others, and to the *paraelodnaia*, were snapped at once, and when we succeeded in stopping the two that still remained in harness, we saw the third, apparently confused by the shock, standing quietly on the road behind. We spent the remainder of the day in wandering about Kutais and the immediate neighbourhood.

Kutais, the old capital of Immeritia, stands on the left bank of the Rion, and is now the chief town of the Russian province. Tradition points it out as the birthplace of Medea, and an important city in ancient Colchis. The city itself is divided into a new Russian and old Immeritian town. The streets in the former are wide and straight, the houses solidly and well built of stone, and generally roofed with sheet-iron painted green, while the bazaars are crazy wooden structures that

seemed in the last stage of decay. A great deal of building was going on, and the town appeared thriving and prosperous. It is very beautifully situated in a bend of the river, surrounded by hills, some clothed to their summits with vineyards, while others are yet covered with the primæval forest.

On the top of one of these, overhanging the town, are the ruins of a small Christian church, of an oblong form, with semicircular choir. Its length did not exceed twenty feet by about twelve in width; but the great size of the stones of which it was built showed it to be of very ancient construction. On another hill, but on the side of the river opposite the town, are the ruins of the fortified palace of the ancient princes of Immeritia, a vast mass of masonry. On the same hill is a church, a solid-looking edifice, resembling in its style of architecture, with its circular arched windows, gates, &c., the Roman more than any other. The ruins yet remain of two bridges over the river, the upper seemingly erected after the destruction of the lower, for it is built close to it, as if to replace it. Some broken arches are all that remain of both, to tell of the ravages of former wars.

Kutais is famed among all the Caucasian provinces for the beauty of its women, and it would seem to merit its reputation. Dressed in their becoming native costume, the women and girls sit out in the evenings before their doors, on the balconies, and on the flat roofs of their houses; and it really would be difficult to find a plain-looking one among them. Their features are regular; their eyes, eye-lashes, eyebrows, and hair are always of the same colour—a rich, deep, clear brown; and they are endowed with that grace in walking which in Europe is said to be the peculiar gift of the Spanish women.

Old Chardin, writing nearly two hundred years ago, seems never to tire of praising their loveliness, attributing to them, however, in addition, other qualities which it is to be hoped

they no longer possess. He says, "Mingrelia breeds very good blood, so that the men are very well shaped, and the women very handsome. Those that are of any quality carry always in their countenances some certain features and graces that are very charming. Besides, they have those obliging glances that win the affections of all that behold them, and seem as it were to command their love. They dress themselves with all the curiosity they can. They wear a veil that covers only the top and hinder part of the head. They are naturally very subtle, and of clear and quick apprehensions. Extremely civil, full of ceremonies and compliments, but otherwise the wickedest women in the world—haughty, furious, perfidious, deceitful, cruel, and impudent—so that there is no sort of wickedness they will not put in execution. The men are endued with all these mischievous qualities, with some addition. There is no wickedness to which their inclinations do not naturally carry them. But all are addicted to thievery. That they make their study; that they make their whole employment, their pastime, and their glory. Assassination, murder, and lying are among them esteemed to be noble and brave actions. And for all other vices, they are virtues in Mingrelia." The old traveller, who seems to have narrowly escaped with his life from the hands of some lawless chiefs, adds, as a climax to his disgust—"Almost all the Mingrelians, both men and women, even the most noble and wealthy, never have but one shirt and one pair of breeches at a time, which last them at least a year, in all which time they never wash them above three times."

The small boys possessing the same taste for melody that characterizes their confrères of Paris and London, delighted exceedingly in whistling airs from *Rigoletto*, which had been the opera at Tiflis the preceding winter.

On our return to the town from the ruins of the castle, we were met by an officer in uniform, mounted on a nice-looking Arab horse, who introduced himself in German as

the police-master of the town, and asked a multitude of questions—where we came from, whither we were going, what was our business, whether we had brought letters to any one, &c. &c.? When we informed him that we had brought letters to General Ivanoff, the Civil Governor of the province, he eagerly offered to send them to him, the general being at that moment absent at a little distance from the town. He also proffered his assistance in case he could be of any service to us, and took his departure, with his curiosity as to what could have impelled strangers to come into that part of the world without a better object than to see the country, evidently by no means satisfied.

We had put up at an hotel kept by a fat German, on arriving in the courtyard of which Giorgi was claimed as an acquaintance and affectionately embraced by a very seedy, dissipated-looking fellow in the usual Circassian dress worn by mountaineers. Giorgi by no means seemed to respond to the greeting with the same warmth with which it was proffered. This dirty-looking individual turned out to be a son of Mr. Marr, a Scotchman, who had many years previously established a tobacco manufactory not far from Maran, which he still carried on. Mr. Marr, junior, was utterly ignorant of English, but spoke French and Italian fluently, and was at that time employed as interpreter by some French engineers who were engaged in surveying a part of the projected line of railway between Poti and Tiflis, to be completed in another century probably. Giorgi's reason for receiving his friend so coolly, and showing such reluctance to the renewal of their acquaintance, was, as he informed us, that young Marr was in the habit of getting drunk at five in the morning—a very heinous crime in his eyes, though later in the day he considered it more excusable.

Bidding adieu to the Rion and to Kutais early next morning, we began, shortly after we had resumed our journey, to ascend some low hills, covered for the most part with low brushwood,

and after winding about for some distance among them, we struck upon a small river whose waters we followed to their source through a valley which, in some points of view, was not unlike a Scotch or Irish glen. The country was broken and wild; in every part of the woods the trees were festooned with vines, as on the bridle path near Poti, and the ruins of numerous small castles, built upon crags, and commanding eminences, overhung the valley. A number of smaller brooks issuing from thickly wooded glens, whose sides were covered with giant beeches, fell into the main stream, and seemed to extend for some distance towards the mountains on either side.

From the usual difficulty in obtaining horses at the post-houses, we could only proceed sixty versts, or forty miles, before night fell, and as we had resolved not to travel after dark, we stopped at a post-house, and were obliged to surrender our benches at midnight to the wife and sister of a Russian general officer, on their way to Tiflis, and lie down instead with the yamstehiks under an open shed. However, as our undressing for the night on these journeys always consisted of taking off our boots and putting on our greatcoats, the change from in to out of doors did not signify much, or cause us the slightest inconvenience.

In about two hours after leaving this station on the following morning we arrived at the summit of the pass, near which was a most luxuriant underwood, consisting of rhododendrons, a dwarf kind of laurel, and myrtle, all growing together in the greatest profusion, and forming a matted carpet underneath the forest trees, completely hiding the ground. Unfortunately this was not the season of the year for the rhododendrons to be in flower.

We descended rapidly a zigzag road, beautifully engineered, to Suram, a small post-station on the banks of the Kur, or ancient Cyrus, from whence a by-road leads up the valley of that river to Bordjoun, the fashionable watering-

place of the Trans-Caucasian provinces, and the favourite summer residence of the then viceroy, Prince Bariatinsky. The wealthy inhabitants of the country flock here in great numbers to escape the great heats, and for a couple of months this secluded little village, close to the Turkish frontier, is crowded by a number of pleasure and health-seekers.

At Suram are the remains of an ancient castle, with towers, at short distances from each other, flanking it as outer defences. The Kur, taking its rise not very far from Kars, flows as far as this spot in a north-easterly direction, changing here on entering the plains to a south-easterly one, at right angles to its former course. Its current, on emerging from the hills at Suram, becomes sluggish for the remainder of its long course to the Caspian Sea, but from Suram to its source it partakes, notwithstanding its great volume, of the character of a mountain torrent in flood, its muddy waters descending its precipitous and rocky channel with great impetuosity.

The road from Suram to Bordjoun runs for the whole distance some eighteen miles by the river's side, in some few places leaving it for a short distance to avoid some rocks or other obstacles. The river on either side is bounded by the steep sides of the valley, which, as well as that we had passed through the preceding day, partakes much of the character of a Highland glen on a large scale, the pines, which here begin to show themselves, heightening the resemblance.

We reached Bordjoun in a couple of hours from Suram, and found it quite a little village in the gorge of a small glen, down which flows a stream running into the Kur. The houses are mostly constructed of wood, with here and there one of stone: the hotel, built on speculation, being the only respectable-looking edifice, although it unfortunately has exactly the appearance of a row of English almshouses, with very bad roofs, an imperfection which we soon found out to our cost, the day we arrived being very wet, and the rain finding its way through the ceilings of the rooms.

Bordjoun is built on a small piece of level ground at the embouchure of the little stream which flows into the Kur, and the mineral spring to which it owes its celebrity issues from the ground a few hundred yards higher up. A few stone villas have been built above the village, and some more were nearly finished, while a number of very pretty walks and footpaths have been made along the sides of the main and tributary valleys. The viceroy, Prince Bariatinsky, who also enjoyed the dignity of being the only marshal in the Russian army, was a resident at the time of our visit, and used constantly to ride about the neighbourhood, guarded by his Circassian and Cossack escort. The pines in the valley of the Kur differ considerably from the spruce, which, however, of our firs they most resemble, the spines surrounding the branches being shorter, and of a deeper green.

Having remained for a couple of days at Bordjoun and seen as much of the environs as we could, we left it on the morning of the 10th of July, and driving rapidly down the valley, came upon the main road again at Suram. We continued our route by the Kur to Gori, where we slept, crossing the river a short distance before arriving, and again at the town, which lies on the left bank. The bridge consisted of a boat worked by a rudder along a rope which stretched across from bank to bank.

Gori is built round the foot of a lofty, steep hill rising up isolated from the centre of the plains on which are the extensive ruins of a fortress of great size, whose outer walls alone are yet in a fair state of preservation. At the foot of this hill runs a small stream, the banks of which are studded with numerous hamlets and villages. The land through which it flows appears to be very fertile. A zigzag path from the town leads up to the castle, permission to enter which, however, was refused by a Cossack. The hill for some distance from the foot of the walls is covered with the stones that have fallen from them, and these have been used as quarries whence the materials for many of the

houses in the town below have been procured. On descending from the ruins, we observed the peculiar white sheet worn over their dress by the Armenian women during their church service, which seemed strange to eyes unaccustomed to such a singular costume.

The Armenians form the larger portion of the population of Gori, apparently a prosperous and thriving place, from which a magnificent view of the Caucasian range, with the summits of Mounts Elbronz and Kasbek in the far distance, is to be obtained. On the summit of the former of these, Noah is said by local tradition to have rested in the ark for a short time before being floated across to Ararat; and on the peak of the latter, according to mythology, Prometheus lay bound to the rock, a prey to the beak and talons of the insatiate vulture.

Throughout the whole day's journey from Suram to Gori, the mountains on the left hand were parched, burnt up, and sterile; while those on the right, though wooded and green for some distance after leaving Suram, assumed by degrees a like character with those on the opposite side, as the heat became more intense. There was nothing to afford the slightest shade, and the jolting and leaping of the telega over the wretched road added to our sufferings. There is a kind of little inn at Gori, where cushions can be obtained to sleep on. Altogether the situation of the town is very striking, and it seems surprising, on seeing Tiflis, why the latter should have been selected as the capital, in preference to a place possessing many more of the attributes necessary for a centre of government.

We left Gori next morning, and recrossing the river again to the right bank, posted on along the valley, with undulating, bare, sunburnt hills on either side, to Mzketha, the last station before reaching Tiflis, at the confluence of the Kur and the Aragui, anciently the residence of the czars of Georgia, and the capital of the kingdom before they removed their court to Tiflis, but now a mean-looking village, a very handsome church alone remaining of its former splendour. This

church stands in the centre of a square piece of ground enclosed by a high wall, around which the village is built. It contains the sepulchres of many of the kings of Georgia, who were also crowned in it; and the Catholicos or Archbishop of Georgia is still consecrated here. The original church having been destroyed by Timúr, the present one was erected of greenish stone. An old priest in a purple velvet robe, and long locks falling from under a velvet cap, admitted us to view the interior and acted as cicerone. Facing the centre of the screen, with which, in common with the Greek Church, its sister communion in Georgia veils the altar, are the tombs of the last two Kings of Georgia; and around them, level with the pavement, are the gravestones of many Georgian nobles. Some family vaults also are in the interior of the building.

The last interment had taken place only a month previously. It was that of one of the Princes Orbeliani, who had been killed in an engagement with the Circassians, and whose body had been brought for burial to the tomb of his family. The church was founded in the eleventh century, and restored, after its destruction by Timúr, in the fifteenth. The tomb of the founder, one of the Vakhgangs, Kings of Georgia, which is on the right side of the aisle, is a curious dome-like structure, solidly built in the Byzantine style, and ornamented with Arabesque scrolls. The exterior of the church itself, built in the form of a Greek cross, is richly ornamented, and the borders of the windows are covered with the most elaborate and curious carvings. Over the southern door a hand and arm holding a mason's square, carved in stone in alto relievo, attracted our attention, and on inquiring from the old priest its signification, he informed us that it had been carved on the completion of the church by the architect, who had come from the West. It seemed to have the character of a masonic emblem.

An elaborately-carved cornice runs round the exterior,



just underneath the eave of the roof, and high up on the wall over the western windows is sculptured in a barbarous manner a figure more resembling a lion than any other animal. One side of the enclosure in which the church stands is occupied by some dilapidated buildings with wooden galleries and balconies, and with staircases on the exterior, which are inhabited by the priests belonging to the church. The high wall surrounding the whole structure is flanked by strong towers; thus forming an immense fortress, in which, even in recent times, the inhabitants of the adjoining village used to take refuge from the frequent incursions and attacks of marauders from the Turkish and Persian frontiers. At present the towers have fallen into decay, the village is all but destitute of inhabitants, and the church alone remains, injured and out of repair as it is in some places, to indicate by its size and beauty the former importance of Mzketha.

Crossing the Aragui by a stone bridge, which is said to be of the Roman period, we shortly after came in sight of Tiflis, stuffed in between the foot of a bare, rocky mountain, covered with ruined fortifications of the mediæval times, and the river, which here flows swiftly between precipitous banks, and on the opposite side of which the city has thrown a suburb, not being able to extend itself up the steep sides of the overhanging hill.

The first thing that strikes a traveller is the strange idea that prompted the selection of such a place for the site of a great city, wanting as it is in every requisite for such a purpose; and the next is the mean appearance of the town itself, considering its size and importance. We entered from the west or Russian side, through a straight street of large houses covered with yellow plaster, with a perfectly European look. There were numbers of shops, cafés, public buildings, and churches with cupolas on both sides of the street, which was nevertheless unpaved, and ankle-deep in dust, wherein

numerous pigs searched for offal or lay basking in the rays of the burning sun.

Through a number of such streets, gradually decreasing in width as we advanced, and crowded with people in different costumes—Circassian, Persian, Tatar, Armenian, and Georgian, interspersed occasionally with European black coats, wide-awake hats, and Russian uniforms—we drove to the “Hotel de Kafkas,” kept by a Monsieur Guillaume, a Frenchman, whose wife had been *femme de charge* to Prince Bariatinsky. Entering through an archway from the street, we drove into a courtyard, round which, at about twelve feet from the ground, ran a wooden gallery, serving as a means of communication to the bedrooms which opened on it, the hotel occupying only the first floor, as we should call it, of the building.

This being the period of the year when all those who could had left Tiflis to avoid the heat, we found no difficulty in obtaining rooms which were clean, comfortable, and free from the vermin almost inseparable from hot climates. We dined every day *à la carte*. The cook was French, the cookery very fair, and the charges not exorbitant, considering the high prices which everything European commands in this country, owing to the distances which have to be traversed over bad roads.

Tiflis has been for more than 1400 years the capital of the kingdom of Georgia, which claims an antiquity of more than 2200 years. According to the chroniclers, five dynasties of monarchs succeeded each other; the last of which, the Bagratides, descended, according to tradition, from Sarbao, a Jew of the family of David, who ascended the throne in the year 575 of our era, retained it till the beginning of this century, when the last sovereign bequeathed the kingdom to the Russian Czar. The Bagratides also ruled for a short time in Armenia, building there the famous city of Ani, destroyed subsequently by Timúr. Sometimes

professing allegiance to the Persian shahs, and at others throwing off their authority, the Georgian monarchy has always maintained its integrity in spite of numberless wars.

The inhabitants, embracing Christianity at a very early period, were constantly embroiled with the mountaineers to the north, and with the Turks and Persians to the south, whom religious animosity, as well as the desire of plunder, impelled to constant incursions. Nevertheless, Tiflis, being a central point of transit between Europe and Asia, always asserted its importance, though of late years the employment of other routes has diminished its former trade. The inhabitants, however, are in hopes that the recent development of the Russian navy on the Caspian and Volga, now numbering more than one hundred and fifty steamers, of various power and sizes, together with the railway which is projected between Poti, on the Black Sea, and Baku, on the shores of the Caspian, will restore it to its former relative position among the commercial cities of the world; and, undoubtedly, if such a railway were completed, and the Russians adopted a liberal policy in encouraging trade, this route, being by many degrees the shortest to Persia and Central Asia, would command the greater portion of the commerce of the west with these extensive regions. The cotton of Persia and Bokhara, and the wool from the enormous flocks roaming over the steppes of Tatar, would alike find an easy passage by this line to the European markets, and long trains of Eastern merchandise would be borne where now solitary arabas, with wheels made out of a solid piece of wood, and drawn by bullocks, creak with a melancholy sound along the execrable roads.

The population of Tiflis is very polyglott, consisting, besides the native Georgians, of Armenians, Persians, Tatars, Russians, and Germans. The latter have established a colony on the outskirts to the west, higher up the river, and their neat and well-built houses, their thriving gardens of fruit trees and vegetables, and their well-cultivated vine-

yards, show the inhabitants to be in a prosperous and thriving condition. Emigrating in the year 1818, for reasons connected with religion, chiefly from Würtemberg, they were gladly welcomed by the Russian government, who at first assigned them land near Odessa, but shortly after, at their own request, transferred them to the neighbourhood of Tiflis, where they now seem to flourish, many of them being reported very rich. They are mostly Protestants and are never disturbed or interfered with on account of their religious belief, electing and supporting their own clergymen. They have been of much use in introducing ploughs, carts, &c., of a better description than those previously used in the country. Before their arrival all agricultural implements were of a most primitive description. At present, partly on account of their propinquity to the town, and partly because of the better quality of the productions grown by them, the German settlers have the monopoly of the fruits and vegetables consumed in Tiflis. They still wear their German costume, and in their blue blouses, and flat, oil-skin caps, the long pipe with painted China bowl hanging from their lips, are at once distinguished from the surrounding population, wherever met with. Although the difference of their religion and habits tends naturally to keep them aloof from the other inhabitants, their inoffensive manners and scrupulous honesty have made them universally popular among their neighbours.

The heat for the first two or three days after our arrival in Tiflis was so intense, rising to 110° Fahrenheit, that we could only venture out from four to seven in the afternoon, which time we generally spent in wandering about the streets and bazaars. One half—the western—of the city is modern, and built upon the stereotyped Russian plan, long straight streets, houses two stories high, built of stone, plastered over, and painted with a yellow wash. The other part remains in precisely the same state in which it was under the

native sovereigns. The streets are narrow and crooked, paved, if it can be so called, with stones of all shapes and sizes. The open shops, in which the Armenian proprietor sits on his heels upon the carpeted floor, elevated some two feet above the street, into which it slightly projects, are of a perfectly Asiatic character.

The trades, as in all Eastern cities, generally congregating together, in one part are seen a row of hosiers—in another, of smiths; a third portion of the street consists of shoemakers, and a fourth, perhaps, of carpenters. The jewellers have a small street entirely to themselves, where, with crucible and anvil, shears and hammer, they manufacture the silver ornaments worn by both the men and women of the country, and inlay and otherwise mount the beautiful sabres, or “schaskas,” and daggers worn by all classes. The Russian officers in the Caucasus have adopted these schaskas in preference to the clumsy regulation sword. It is worn slung over the right shoulder by a slender leather belt, ornamented with silver buttons. We were quite surprised at the elaborate workmanship and exquisite taste of design displayed in some of the ornaments and weapons exhibited to us; and unless convinced by witnessing the process of manufacture going on before one’s eyes, it would be difficult to credit that such finished articles could be produced by the rough implements that we saw employed by the cross-legged artizans.

Opposite our hotel was an immense edifice built entirely of brick, containing within it a theatre, and a number of shops on both the ground and upper stories. The shops, which were chiefly filled with European goods, cottons, cloths, &c., were large and lofty, and seemed generally owned by Armenians. The prices usually asked were, according to our ideas, exorbitant, commonly one hundred per cent. more than the same articles would fetch in Europe, but perhaps not too much when the long land carriage is taken into consideration. In every case a far lower sum than

that first asked will be accepted, and the best and richest shopkeepers do not hesitate to demand a half or a third more than they will ultimately take. It is a common trick to allow the purchaser to leave the shop, and, when he has gone away some yards, to recall him, and after a last effort to induce him to make an advance, let it be ever so little, on the price he has offered, to accept his terms; in which case, however, he should make sure that no other article than that which he has selected is substituted in its place.

An Italian company happening to arrive during our stay in Tiflis, we went to the theatre, which, though small, is fitted up with great taste in white and gold in the Moresque style. The opera was *Crispino è la Gomara*, and was very creditably performed. The audience presented a strange variety of costumes. Polished Persians, with their elaborately oiled and perfumed beards, silken garments, and tall Astrakhan fur caps; Circassians, from the friendly tribes, in their lambskin caps, with embroidered scarlet tops, and straight schaskas with ornamented scabbards; Armenians in their flowing robes; Georgian ladies in their beautiful national dress, with white veils flowing over their shoulders; and Russian officers in uniform, with their wives, were all intermingled, and produced a strange effect. Two galleries instead of boxes run around the house, one nearly on a level with the pit, the other higher up. They were chiefly filled by ladies in the Georgian costume, whose beauty was enhanced by the brilliant colouring of their dresses, relieved by the snowy whiteness of their veils.

The Persian quarter is at the eastern or opposite end of the town to the Russian, the ancient Georgian and Armenian quarters intervening. It is small and dirty, the houses of mean appearance, the windows, as everywhere in the East, looking upon the court in the interior instead of into the street. In this part of the town yet remain some Persian baths, which are often used by all classes, and there are a

few even that the bigoted professors of the Sheeah creed allow to be polluted by Christians. Bridges, crossing the Kur, connect the city with its suburb on the other side. One, a very handsome structure, was built by the Russians quite recently; another, lower down, which dates from a prior epoch, is narrow, but still solidly built.

The banks of the river are here very precipitous, rising perpendicularly from the water's edge to a height of from eighty to a hundred feet. Both bridges cross the stream at a level with the bank on either side. The Kur near the lower bridge takes a sharp bend, and at the apex of the point, hanging over the boiling water, is erected a kind of barrack fort. A little above the fort is a rocky island, built over as thickly as they can stand with ruinous tumble-down houses, looking, in most instances, as if they were on the point of falling into the stream. Two quaint old bridges, nearly side by side, and partly built over, here span the river, which, contracted between its rocky banks, runs swiftly many feet below. At the opposite side, at a little distance from the bridge, there is a large ancient bazaar, roofed with wood and lined with shops, chiefly belonging to Persians and Armenians, in which the gold lace, for the manufacture of which Tiflis is so celebrated, is sold, together with groceries, spices, dyes, &c.

The wine-shops are very numerous, the wine sold being usually from Kakhetia, the district about Telaw, to the north-east of Tiflis. It is of a rich red colour, and full flavoured, the produce of the Burgundy grape, introduced into Georgia. It is generally very carelessly and coarsely made; but when pains are taken in the manufacture it keeps well, and when old possesses with great body a delicacy and richness which cause it to be very highly prized by those who are fortunate enough to possess any of this superior description. It is well known and much esteemed in those places where it has been introduced; but the difficulty of carriage, it being generally

kept in pig skins, prevents it from becoming so much known as no doubt it will ultimately be. In some cellars, when kept for a few years in bottle, it may be compared with the best French wines.

These bazaars, with their lofty roofs affording abundant shade, are very pleasant lounges in Eastern cities during the hot weather, and as the Eastern shopkeeper is the most loquacious of mortals, and the greatest gossip in existence, his shop is much frequented by those who are more desirous of hearing the news than of making purchases. There are also some open spaces in the town which are appropriated as market-places by the vendors of fruits and vegetables.

From the summit of the mountains overhanging Tiflis a magnificent view is obtained of the town beneath, and of the surrounding country, rising at the opposite side of the plain into rugged and broken hills, and bounded to the north by the snow-clad peaks of the Caucasian chain. The river is seen winding for a great distance through the Steppe, which is studded over with hamlets and villages of small size, and bearing on its waters large rafts of timber floated down from the forests through which it flows in the upper part of its course. Tiflis itself, and the country for a considerable distance eastwards, is thus furnished at a moderate rate with the necessary supply of wood. The raftsmen form a distinct body, and show much dexterity in guiding ponderous and unwieldy masses of timber through the dangerous rapids of the upper waters. The numerous ravines and clefts running into the mountain side are filled with flat-roofed houses, mostly Georgian and Armenian, whose inhabitants towards evening, when the heat of the day has passed away, come out on the housetops to enjoy the cool air.

The city itself extends for about two miles along the river, and ends at the Persian side, lowest down the stream, in a suburb and gardens of fruit trees, whose fresh, green look contrasts with the arid appearance of the surrounding plain.

The aspect of the town from this point is most striking, and one can hardly realize the fact that the great city at his feet, with its numerous churches, cupolas, spires, public buildings, and red-tiled houses, all looking so handsome in the distance, is the same as that which, when he first beheld it on his approach from the west through the plain, appeared to him so mean, squalid, and dirty-looking.

About half-way up the mountain a chain of towers, connected by a strong wall, formed in bygone times the fortifications of the city to the south, the ruins being its defence on the north; but to judge from its history both have been very insufficient, for few cities have undergone more vicissitudes from war than Tiflis. As late as 1795 the Persians, to punish the Georgians for having accepted the protectorate of Russia, captured it, and gave it up to plunder, burning and destroying the greater part of the town, and carrying away many of its inhabitants into slavery. The Empress Catherine in consequence declared war against Persia, and in a few years afterwards, under her son Paul, Georgia was united to Russia by an Imperial Ukase, the last king having bequeathed him the kingdom. Mingrelia also soon after was annexed to the Muscovite empire. Under the Russian rule Tiflis rapidly regained its former prosperity. The inhabitants, enjoying a sense of security to which they had long been strangers, now possess much wealth, and carry on a busy trade with their former oppressors and with the Turkish provinces.

Substituting an arid steppe for a verdant plain, and a parched, burnt, rocky mountain for a densely-wooded hill, the situation of Tiflis, except that the town is far larger, resembles much that of the celebrated fortress of Schumla, on the northern side of the Balkan range, in European Turkey. The vehicles in use for hire in the streets are droschkies, the same as those met with in Russia—one horse being in the shafts, with the arch of wood connecting them

passing over his back, and generally trotting, while the other, in a collar and traces, canters by his side, seemingly a source of discomfort rather than assistance to him.

From the variety of nationalities inhabiting Tiflis, a walk through the crowded streets presents some curious scenes. At one moment one meets a tall, lathy, slim Persian, generally dressed in a flowing robe of blue merino, or some such stuff, with a high conical cap made of the finest black Astrakan lamb-skin, the hair escaping under which, as well as the beard, is dyed a purple colour with henna. The next minute one is jostled by a black-coated European, in patent-leather boots and black hat, followed by a stately Circassian, with his high fur cap, long brown coat with cartridge cases fastened on the breast, tight-fitting brown trousers and leggings, armed to the teeth with pistols and rifle, sabre and dagger, the latter all richly ornamented with silver. He in his turn is pushed to the wall by an *istvostchik* or *droschky*-driver, with a low-crowned black hat of curious shape, and a long coat lined with sheep-skin, closely wrapped round his body, and kept in its place by a leather belt, who yells frantically to those on foot to make way for his crazy vehicle and shaggy-looking steeds. An Armenian is, perhaps, next seen, his long-sleeved robe, which resembles a dressing-gown, bound round the waist by a gold-lace belt, and on his head a cap similar to the conical one in use among the Georgians; while he is closely followed by a half-naked water-carrier bearing on his brawny shoulders a pole, from each end of which is suspended a small barrel of water. A number of grey-coated, white-capped Russian soldiers, Georgian women in their picturesque "tschadras," or white veils, and a few European ladies—the latter generally the wives of the officers and imperial employés—complete a scene which, for diversity of national manner and costume, cannot be often equalled elsewhere, but may any day be met with in the streets of Tiflis.

As if on purpose to counterbalance the intense summer heats, ice is everywhere to be had at an exceedingly low rate, almost every householder having an ice-cellar and laying in a supply during the winter, which is generally, owing to the neighbourhood of the lofty Caucasus, exceedingly cold. The lowest classes of the people can indulge in this luxury, and iced-water sherbets, &c., are sold in every street for copper coins of some infinitesimally small value.

CHAPTER VI.

DIFFICULTY OF OBTAINING RELIABLE INFORMATION AS TO THE
ROUTE—GEORGIAN DRAG—BARON NICOLAI AND COLONEL
TENGOBONSKI—GEORGIAN POSTMASTERS—TOWERS OF REFUGE
—POSTMASTER OF DUSHET—BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN
EUROPE AND ASIA—DEFILE AND FORT OF DARIEL—ROAD
OVER THE CAUCASUS—VLADIKAVKAS—RUSSIAN INNS—THE
STEPPE—TUMULI—FORTIFIED VILLAGES—CHAIN OF DE-
TACHED FORTS—COSSACKS OF THE LINE OF THE KUBAN—
COSSACKS OF THE LINE OF THE TEREK—LOCUSTS.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME days having been spent in seeing the town and wandering about the bazaars, we began to think of continuing our journey into the mountains of Daghestan, on the northern slope of the Caucasus, on the Caspian side.

Although to penetrate into Daghestan, and travel over the country so long the theatre of war between Schamyl and the Russians, was one of our chief objects, yet from everyone whom we met and conversed with on the subject we received the most discouraging reports as to its practicability. The Russian officers whom we questioned shook their heads, and even Mr. Rice, an English architect, who had been a resident at Tiflis for many years, smiled at our entertaining such an idea in the unsettled state of the country. On pressing them more closely, however, we discovered that, although they one and all spoke so decisively as to our certainty of failure, not one of them had ever travelled in the district we desired to visit, nor had even tried to do so. This habit of volunteering information about routes, which they only know by report, seems common to the Russians as well as to the French, who, in Algeria, often mislead a traveller by giving him false information about distances and roads, the very existence of the latter, though but at a few miles from the informant's residence, being in most cases totally unknown to him.

Throughout the Caucasus, we found the only data on which we could rely to be those furnished by people who

had been themselves at the places, and had actually travelled over the roads which they professed to describe. Even engineer officers often assured us that paths which we afterwards found to be much frequented did not exist, so that at last, abandoning all hope of obtaining beforehand any information as to the feasibility or otherwise of any route which we struck out for ourselves, we adopted the plan of going in the direction we had chosen, making the necessary inquiries as we advanced. In almost every case we found the inhabitants perfectly ignorant of what was passing twenty miles from their dwellings, and any future traveller would do well to be warned as to the danger he will incur of being misled by people who will volunteer to direct him, but whose knowledge of the country through which he is about to pass in many instances does not equal his own, derived from maps, of which those published at Vienna by the Austrian Government are generally the most reliable.

Even at Tiflis, we were told that our projected expedition into the lately conquered country of Schamyl was out of the question, the district being still in such an unsettled condition and bands of marauding Circassians wandering unsubdued through the mountains. However, undeterred by these representations, we determined, if we possibly could, to proceed, and accordingly the Princess Woronzoff having been kind enough, while at Odessa, to give us a letter of introduction to the Baron Nicolai, who was at that time staying at his villa near Kadjoura, a small village about two miles from Tiflis, we drove out to present it and to consult with him on the subject.

Our route lay over the mountain in rear of the town, and ascending its side by a zigzag road, we passed some bullock carts laden with hay, whose Georgian drivers made use of a drag which for primitive simplicity could not be excelled. It consisted simply of a bush of some size tied by a rope to the back of the cart, on which sat

stolidly smoking his pipe and bumping over the uneven road a man with his legs folded under him ! It seemed, however, to answer the purpose for which it was intended, as well as a more elaborate piece of mechanism. Having reached the summit of the mountain, we drove along a table-land for some miles, and passing the village of Kadjoura, descended into a deep valley, near the bottom of which the house of the baron is situated, surrounded by pleasure-grounds, laid out in the English style with flowers and shrubs. We were fortunate enough to find him at home, as well as his brother, General Nicolai, and were received by both most kindly.

A few moments' conversation with the baron served to dispel all doubts as to whether our wished-for journey through the Daghestan mountains could be made, and we were rejoiced at hearing that, in spite of all the sinister predictions which had greeted our ears since we had landed at Poti, there were no obstacles whatever in our way. In order to facilitate matters still more for us, the baron gave us a letter to Colonel Tengoborski, who, being then employed in a civil capacity, would best be able to direct us as to the proper course we should pursue, and would procure us the necessary letters of introduction to the officers commanding the different military posts. We spent the remainder of the day in walking with the baron about the environs of the villa, which are very pretty, and having dined with him, returned to our stifling rooms in Tiflis in the evening.

We drove early next day again to Kadjoura to see Colonel Tengoborski, with whom we breakfasted. We found him half a compatriot, for though a Pole by birth, his mother was English. Unfortunately, however, of her native language he did not speak a word. He had been much employed in the diplomatic service, having been for many years in different European embassies, and but lately returned from Persia, where he had acted as secretary of embassy at Teheran, having been previously consul at Reshd. He had

brought back with him some very handsome Persian and Turcoman horses, on which he mounted us for a ride. He also possessed one of the large, black, long-tailed so-called Orloff trotters, which, only taught that pace, and reaching high rate of speed, are as much prized in Russia as the similarly-gifted but much smaller and uglier animal is in America. We passed the day very pleasantly with him in riding about the neighbourhood, and were much amused at his stories of his Persian life, and his graphic descriptions of the peculiarities of the people.

Through his intervention we obtained from General Milliutine, chief of the staff to Prince Bariatinsky, letters to the generals commanding at Grosna, on the northern frontier of Daghestan, Derbend, and Baku, on the shores of the Caspian, requesting them to procure any assistance we might require, and to give us other letters to the officers commanding the forts in the interior.

Our next care was to provide ourselves with European saddles, our experience of Cossack equipment on the ride from Poti to Maran not being easily forgotten. We were fortunate enough to procure, at the shop of a German, two new English saddles, which, though significantly marked "for exportation," were, nevertheless, strongly made, and bore very well the rough usage which they afterwards had to endure. These cost only about twice the money they could have been got for in England, which was not much considering the distance they had been brought. There was not any necessity for laying in a supply of provisions, as we found that we could procure at the post houses excellent outlets, and stchee, a capital soup made of beef and cabbage together with the native wine, which is very good in most cases. Having got the necessary padaroshna, and left most of our luggage behind us in the hotel, we started on our expedition early in the morning of the 18th July, in the usual post telega. Having retraced our road from Poti as



far as Mzketha, we crossed the Kura, and ascended the valley of the Aragui. Our route for the first two stations lay through a plain, for the greater part barren and uncultivated. The post-houses were low, wretched, thatched huts, and the postmasters were Georgians, in sheepskin "tschubas," or cloaks, with the wool inside, whose long locks, escaping from under their fur caps, seemed as shaggy and unkempt as the manes of the miserable animals in their stables.

After some time we neared the mountains, and began to ascend some low hills, on which were scattered at long intervals small villages, beside each of which was erected a stone-and-mortar-built tower, with door-way many feet above the ground, and sometimes faced with iron. The situation for the village was generally selected near an eminence on which this tower of refuge stood, so that at the first approach of a marauding band of mountaineers, the inhabitants, who kept their more valuable property, money, &c. always in it, could at once take shelter within its walls, and save themselves from the fate which befell their flocks and herds. Although some of these strongholds are very ancient, yet many belong to more modern times, and have been very recently used by the inhabitants during the incursions of the neighbouring half-subdued Tcherkess tribes. Many of these towers resemble the round towers of Ireland. They are built and roofed in the same manner, and the door is placed at some elevation from the ground, but they are from a third to a half less in height than the Irish towers. We passed through Dushet, a stone-built tower of some size, where the postmaster also kept a café, but seemed his own best customer, as he was very drunk indeed, too much so to read our papers.

We could only get on about forty miles that day, and spent the night at a station called Ananour. We found, on rising next morning, that the rain, which had been threatening the whole of the preceding day, had at last come down,

and that the whole valley was shrouded over in a thick mist. The water fell in torrents, the road was inches deep in mud, and, in fact, a more unpromising day for crossing the great range, and seeing the magnificent scenery which we were told we should pass at Dariel, could not be found. But as it would have been foolish to wait for finer weather, rain sometimes, in these countries near the mountains, continuing for days together, there was nothing for it but to push on; and so, casing ourselves in waterproofs, we mounted into our telega, and drove on through the deluge. We could only see a short distance either before or above us, the fog preventing the one view, the low rain clouding the other; and all we knew was that we were ascending a wooded valley, with a boiling river running at the bottom.

The road, at first indifferent, soon began to be much worse, and, towards the end of the second station after leaving Ananour, became nearly impassable from mud and deep ruts, in which the wheels got imbedded in a thick slime. We soon began to ascend a nearly perpendicular mountain, which blockaded the valley, by a winding road cut in its face, at a slope of about one foot in three. The streams of water running down it had made it exactly resemble the bed of a mountain torrent, and our three horses were hardly able to pull up our light telega by starts of twenty yards at a time. The yamstchik, however, accustomed to the spot, seemed to think that we progressed very satisfactorily, and appeared quite contented when we made any ground whatsoever, making it his chief care to prevent us from losing what we had already gained.

Having thus ascended four or five hundred yards in an hour, the forest through which we had hitherto been driving suddenly ceased, and was succeeded by pastures of a short fine grass and clover, on which large flocks of fat-tailed sheep and silky-haired goats seemed to thrive admirably. The scene was also diversified by small hamlets, each with its

inseparable tower of refuge, which became visible from time to time. The day partially clearing, we were enabled to see, as we emerged from the forest, the commencement of the snow covering the mountain tops above us, the summits themselves being still hidden in mist.

On leaving the second post-house, which is very solidly built, and furnished with double glass windows, brick stoves, and every precaution against the intense cold of winter at these heights, we mounted the last ascent by a series of zigzags which had been lately made, and on reaching the edge of the snow, found that we had also reached the summit of the pass.

On the highest point of the road was erected a large wooden cross, which marks the boundary-line between Europe and Asia, and from which, in the German maps, this spot is denominated Kreuzberg. From this we began to descend slowly the opposite or northern side of the range. It was bitterly cold; the icy wind whistled on all sides, bearing with it small particles of snow, of which a freshly fallen layer covered the face of the surrounding country as far as it could be seen. We were at an elevation of nearly nine thousand feet, or about the height of Mont Brevant, on the side of the valley of Chamouni, opposite to Mont Blanc.

We descended rapidly into the valley of the Terek, which here takes its rise, and passing through some rocky gorges of most romantic wildness, reached the post-house of Kobi, where we were detained a short time. In the evening we drove on to the station of Kasbek, at the foot of the mountain* of that name, passing by the small fort of Dariel, which gives its name to the defile, but which is merely a barrack for a few soldiers, surrounded by a wall pierced for musketry, and situated on the bank of the stream, where the gorge of rock widens a little.

At the fort, a bar, exactly similar to a turnpike bar in

England, crosses the road, and a contribution of about a shilling is demanded, most probably to assist in keeping the road in repair.

Nothing could be wilder or more gloomily grand than the defile through which we now drove. The enormous granite mountains piled one over the other, and their summits capped for thousands of feet (the Kasbek being sixteen thousand feet in height) with perpetual snow, are as it were reft in twain by the river, which forms thus a passage for itself, boiling and foaming at the bottom of an abyss, the walls of which are sometimes two thousand feet in perpendicular height. The road, by the edge of the stream, sometimes not fifty feet in width, is in some places excavated out of the solid rock some six feet above it, whilst in others the defile opens to half a mile in width. It always shows the same chasm-like features, and presents the same appearance of utter desolation and chaos. In some degree the pass of Dariel resembles that of the St. Gothard about the vicinity of the Devil's Bridge, but the mountains being much higher, and the scenery on a very much larger scale, it is far more imposing, and is probably nowhere surpassed in gloomy magnificence. Numerous streams, some falling in cascades from great heights, others flowing through ravines and clefts in the rocky walls, discharge their waters into the Terek, which gradually assumes the dimensions of a river.

In this part of the Caucasus the mountains present very different features to those on the southern or opposite side, being quite devoid of timber, which seems to dislike the sterile soil. The road, which in some parts has been widened by the Russians, by whom it is kept in repair at great expense, is generally very narrow, in many places hardly wide enough for two telegas to pass each other. On the southern side a new and beautifully engineered route is nearly finished to the summit; but, as on the northern, the

rocky barrier confines the only practicable line. All that can be done is to widen the already existing road, which is being completed by slow degrees, the only available means of accomplishing this Herculean task being to blast the solid rock and carry a way through the granite. Yet this road is the only means of conveyance by land of heavy materials from Russia to Persia and Turkey in Europe, and already, though apparently in such bad condition, enormous sums have been spent upon it, the Emperor Nicholas once declaring, when asked to defray some additional expense, that it had already cost as much as if it had been paved with silver roubles. From the Kasbek we drove in three short stations to Vladikavkas, about twenty-six miles, the defile gradually becoming wider, the country more open, trees and scattered farms beginning to make their appearance, and the soil assuming a fertile look.

Vladikavkas is situated on the Terek, at the point where it debouches from the mountains. Built for military purposes chiefly, its importance consisting in commanding the pass, it seems a poor-looking town, with wide streets of one story high houses. The roadway is almost impassable, so deep and retentive is the mud. It was formerly surrounded by a rampart and ditch; the latter is now shallow and nearly filled up. We entered by a gate in which stood a sentry, and drove to an inn, which our *yamstchik* assured us was of the most splendid description. We found it a large stone building containing one long room, down the centre of which ran a table, and off which proceeded some dark-looking passages leading to two or three little closets which we were told were bedrooms, an assertion which it was difficult to credit, as they did not contain any beds. A bench about two feet wide, apparently the only furniture, was considered quite sufficient by the superannuated Russian soldier who acted as *factotum* in the establishment, and who informed us, on our asking to see the master of the house, that we could not do so for two

or three hours, as he was then drunk. On mentioning to him that it would be a great favour if we could get sheets to place over the cushions of the benches, as after three days in a telega it would be a luxury to undress, he calmly informed us that there never had been such a thing in the house, and it was not until after some time had elapsed that he was able to procure for us a japanned water basin looking like a shallow knife tray. As, however, in the country parts of Russia most people travel with their own beds and pillows, such a provision on the part of the innkeepers is not requisite. In fact, a Russian hotel, except at a very large town, resembles much an Eastern khan, or caravanserai, where the shelter from the weather afforded by bare walls alone is provided. A post-station often affords quite as good accommodation as is to be met with at an hotel, as there is always a wooden bench on which to sleep, and more than this is not often found at an inn, the Russians of the lower and middle classes almost invariably sleeping in their clothes.

We took advantage of the time necessary to restore the housemaster to consciousness to call on the commandant of the town, it being necessary to do so in order to arrange about changing our padaroshna, that which we had procured at Tiflis not being good for the by-road which we were about to take to Grosna across the steppe, and on which alone horses could be procured by an official order from the military posts, established on the line at the foot of the mountains, at a few versts distance from each other. We found him very obliging and anxious to facilitate our journey, and were at once presented with the necessary order. Having found it impossible to walk with any degree of pleasure through the lakes of mud which filled the streets, we returned to our hotel, and the host having in the meantime got sober, we dined on tschee and mutton. The night was passed in unavoidable but useless contention with the attacks of a numerous and fierce colony of fleas, and we left early next morning for the

military colony of Grosna, the residence of General Count Yevdachimoff, commanding the Daghestan district.

Shortly after leaving Vladikavkas we entered upon the steppe, the boundless plain stretching away to the north as far as the eye could reach, covered with a thin and, at that season of the year, dried grass. A few very low ridges of hills are to be seen occasionally. A number of sepulchral mounds of all sizes dot the surface of the steppe, and continue to do so the remainder of the way to Grosna. Sometimes these mounds are in groups of five or six, sometimes in lines, but more frequently isolated. When opened they have been invariably found to contain bones of human beings and animals, arms and utensils of different kinds, with charcoal ashes, &c. These tumuli are found all over the steppes, extending through the vast table-lands of Central Asia to the borders of China, and forming the burial-places of the various peoples that migrated westward towards Europe from the Storehouse of Nations. In appearance they are conical, resembling in size and shape the barrows found in England and Ireland. They are sometimes surmounted by stone figures, roughly hewn, to which Haxthausen and other savans assign a high antiquity. These statues are very rudely carved, presenting in many instances only a ludicrous resemblance to the human shape. Haxthausen quotes from the description of the Huns by Ammianus Marcellinus, who says, "They have singular forms, and might be mistaken for beasts walking on two legs, or for those roughly-hewn columns in human form which are seen on the shores of the Pontus Euxinus." In recent times some memorial pillars with inscriptions, usually in Arabic or Turkish, have also been erected on the spots where persons had been killed by Lesghian marauders, but these do not extend far from Vladikavkas.

Having driven about ten miles, we arrived at a village surrounded by a deep ditch and wall of clay, on the top of which was placed a quantity of thorny brushwood, laid horizon-

tally, with the branches on the outside, staked firmly down and interlaced with ropes, forming a barrier which, simple as its materials are, must be very difficult to surmount or cut through. These villages are always built in the square form, with projections at the angles, so as to sweep the faces with musquetry, and are erected at a few miles' distance from each other along the foot of the mountains, the entire way from the Black Sea to the Caspian. They are inhabited by colonies of Cossacks, who cultivate as much of the district surrounding as is sufficient for their maintenance, and who, in consideration of the military service they perform, are exempt from taxation. This chain of small detached forts forms the celebrated Line of the Caucasus, which, blockading the mountaineers within their fastnesses, not only serves as a means of annoyance to the tribes, but also affords protection from their attacks both to the colonists themselves and to the nomads of the steppe. Watch-towers or platforms, placed on high wooden posts, are erected on the side of the village next the hills, and are always occupied by a Cossack sentinel on the look-out to give notice of any sudden descent of a small body of plundering Lesghians. The cattle and sheep are regularly driven into the villages at night, where large enclosures are made for them, and sentries are posted as if in a camp.

The Cossacks of the Line of the Kuban are quite distinct from those of the Don, and are descended from the Zaporogues who, originally robber-bands formed of deserters, outlaws, &c., during the times when the Russians had to contend for existence with the Tatars and Poles, finally settled on the banks of the Dnieper, and established for themselves a republican form of government. Chiefly composed of the same race and professing the same religion as the Russians, they gradually renounced the formal allegiance they had professed to Poland, and, in the reign of Peter the Great, became united to Russia. For some time they retained their own form of government,

privileges, and institutions, being under the rule of a Hetman appointed by the Russian sovereign; but, gradually, advantage was taken of their internal disorders to divide them into smaller bodies, and after the death of their last Hetman, at the end of the eighteenth century, no other was appointed. A part of them were transferred in 1792 to the Caucasian frontier along the Kuban; but a much larger number went over to the Turks, who settled them on the southern bank of the Danube, near the sea-coast. After some time, however, they returned to their former masters, and are now established on the Sea of Azov, where they man a number of small gun-boats. These Cossacks of the Line of the Kuban (or Black Seaside) are said to be able to furnish 30,000 soldiers.

The Cossacks of the Line of the Terek, whose posts and colonies we were now passing, are of the Don, who, deriving their origin in much the same manner as the Zaporogues, from robbers, fugitive serfs, deserters, &c., during the confusion occasioned by the Tatar and Polish wars, settled on the banks of the Don, and for some time plundered the countries around impartially. At last they were subdued by the Russians and dispersed, some to Siberia, some to the frontiers of Tatory, while others were sent south, towards the end of the last century, to form this chain of military colonies to check the incursions of the Tcherkess tribes. They retain a good many of their old privileges, and differ in their creed in some minor points from the Greek religion. They furnish about 20,000 irregulars to the Russian army. No serfage having ever existed among them, they are all freemen, possess an equal share in the land, and are exempted from taxation, performing military service instead. Their horses are small, lean, and miserable-looking ponies, ewe-necked and shaggy, but possess a great amount of endurance, and are capable of suffering hardships under which better-looking animals would perish. The men are clad in the

grey Russian great-coat and flat cap, and are armed with a long lance, sword, and pistols.

To avoid the vexatious delays of changing our telega and horses at each post, we accepted an offer made by our yamschik to bring us the whole way to Grosna for a certain sum, a little above the regular tariff. He promised to do so the same day, and did his best; but nevertheless we were obliged to stop at a village eight miles from our journey's end. At every six miles' distance we passed a village fortified in the manner described—a Cossack sentinel perched upon his platform, thirty or forty feet above the ground. Our road lay along the bank of the Sandsha, a small sluggishly-flowing river which falls into the Terek below Grosna, and whose banks for some distance on either side were covered with weeds and green herbage. On our way we observed at some distance an immense cloud, apparently of dust, but stationary, covering the plain for a couple of miles in extent, and on approaching it found it to be a swarm of locusts, who were busily engaged in stripping the reeds of their foliage down to the stems.

We passed through the centre of the swarm, the horizon being completely hidden by what seemed at a little distance a dense cloud of sand, rising or falling as the myriads of insects sought fresh spots of verdure. We could easily realize what the ravages of such a swarm must be in a cultivated country, and could well believe the stories related of the destruction of green corn caused by such a visitation in a single day in the grain-producing lands of Bessarabia and the Principalities.

CHAPTER VII.

CURIOUS SCENE AT A POST IN THE CAUCASUS—GROSNA—
CAREER OF COUNT YEVDACHIMOFF—MEMORIALS OF THE
BRAVE—FORTS ARSINOE AND VIDEGNE—LESGHIAN OUTLOOK
—SCHAMYL'S ELDEST SON—RUSSIAN ARMY IN THE CAUCASUS
—SCHAMYL'S CAPTURE—A SOCIAL CUSTOM—REVOLT OF
THE MURID BASANGOUR—RUSSIAN AUTHORITY IN THE
CAUCASIAN PROVINCES—THE TSCHNETCHNIANS—CONVOY OF
SICK AND DISABLED SOLDIERS—MOUNTAIN AOULS—THE
KIBITKA—VIEW FROM FORT VORELNO.

CHAPTER VII.

WE were agreeably surprised, on arriving at the post where we were to spend the night, to find that a Polish Jew, who had been burnt out at Grosna by a great fire which had taken place about a month before, had taken refuge there, and had established a kind of café. We put up with him, and fared sumptuously, contrasting the treatment we received from him with that which we had experienced in places of more pretension. We arrived in the evening, just as the inhabitants were driving in their flocks and herds for the night; and the large troops of buffaloes and sheep filing through the narrow gateway in the clay walls and brushwood fortifications, with the shepherds armed to the teeth, and the Cossacks riding about, presented a curious mixture of the representatives of peace and war.

We arrived at Grosna early next day, and found it, although a large place and chief town of a district, surrounded by similar defences to those of the smaller posts we had passed. The fire which had occurred only about a fortnight previously had burnt down fully three-fourths of it, and while many of the inhabitants had taken refuge in the surrounding villages, a number more had pitched tents, and run up huts with any material that they had been able to rescue from the flames.

For some time we threaded our way through the charred timbers and other débris that encumbered the streets, seeking in vain for some place where we might put up, but to no

purpose; and, at last, in despair we drove to a handsome-looking stone building belonging to Government, where we were told the officers of the garrison used to give entertainments, and where strangers who were recommended to them were sometimes admitted. However, we had no better success here, for the sullen-looking individual who seemed to have the charge of the place, taking a contemptuous glance at our dusty and travel-stained appearance, refused positively to allow us to enter without an order from the governor, and shut the door in our faces. So in spite of the early hour, eight o'clock, there was nothing for it but to drive to the quarters of Count Yevdachimoff, and present to him the letter of recommendation we had received in Tiflis from General Milliutine. The Count received us at once, and immediately gave us an order of admittance to the place in question, which he called a club. Furnished with this Open sesame we had the pleasure of snubbing triumphantly the grim janitor who had so lately refused to have anything to do with us.

We found the house a very large one, the apartments being of good size, and furnished, some as billiard, and others as reception rooms for travellers. When we had established ourselves, and got rid of the travel-stains of the preceding days, we found an excellent breakfast prepared by the combined talents for forage and cookery of Giorgi and our Cerberus. In a short time the Count's aide-de-camp called to arrange with us about our journey through the mountains to Videgne and Gounib—the former the mountain fastness where Schamyl had so long lived, and the latter the stronghold in which he was at last captured. Count Yevdachimoff himself, although a Count and General of Division, could only speak Russian, so we were obliged to converse with him through his aide-de-camp, who acted as interpreter, speaking French very well.

Count Yevdachimoff's career has been a striking one,

almost without parallel in the Russian army, and resembling that of some of the marshals of the first Napoleon. The son of a private soldier, he was educated in a school established in the regiment to which his father belonged, and entering the ranks at an early age, his talents and undaunted courage procured him in some time a commission, from which period his advancement has been rapid. Constantly employed in the Caucasus, he was supposed to understand better than any other officer the peculiar tactics required to combat the mountaineers with success; and he concluded two long and laborious campaigns, during which half of his troops were employed in cutting down the forests, while the other half skirmished in front, by the capture of Videgne, which, being his chief residence, Schamyl defended with great obstinacy. For this feat he was made General of Division. Prosecuting the war with the utmost vigour, after some months he succeeded in compelling the Circassian chief to take refuge in the hill-fort of Gounib, where he soon after surrendered to Prince Bariatinsky, the Viceroy, who arrived from Tiflis to take command of the beleaguering army. In reward for this last service, the Emperor granted him the title of Count, accompanying it with the Cross of the order of St. George of the Second Class, the Emperor himself being at present the only possessor of that of the First, and the late Prince Paskievitch the only person to whom it was given by the Emperor Nicholas. Count Yevdachimoff was a tall man, seemingly about fifty-five years of age; but we were assured that he was younger, his constant service making him look older than he really was.

His aide-de-camp told us that the country being still disturbed by small bands of the mountaineers, he would give us an order which would provide us with an escort from each of the forts we passed. These fastnesses are established at a few miles distance from each other all over the country which the Russians have lately occupied, but not subdued. Each of

them is connected with its nearest neighbours by roads constructed entirely by the Russian soldiers, it being impossible of course to procure labourers in the newly-conquered districts. Having thanked the general, and paid him another visit in the evening, we returned to our luxurious quarters, and early next morning four led horses, and a score of Cossacks, made their appearance. Placing the very small amount of luggage we had brought with us on one of these, we left Grosna, and soon breaking into a smart trot had every reason to congratulate ourselves on our purchase of English saddles. The plains, as we neared the mountains, from which Grosna is situated about twenty miles, became covered with scattered bushes, and detached clumps of trees soon made their appearance.

We passed several freshly-made graves, those of the Lesghians who fell in battle against the Russians being distinguished by a spear or long lance stuck in the ground at the head. These memorials of bravery are always respected by the Russians, the last resting-places of many of whose soldiers are often side by side with those of their gallant enemies. The plain gradually became more wooded as we advanced. We changed our escort at two Cossack posts, where there was stabling for some fifty horses, with barracks for the men, the whole surrounded by a high wall, with loopholes for musquetry. Continuing our journey, we arrived at Arsinoe, a fort built at the foot of the mountains, which rise very abruptly from the plain, and at the entrance to the valley of the Huhndaia, at the head of which, at about twenty miles distance, is the village and fort of Videgne. The fort here consisted of barracks and stables for three hundred men and one hundred horses, and was defended by a ditch and clay walls, with brushwood on the top, like those of the military villages of the Line; but, in addition to these defences, there was a field-piece in the square projecting at each corner.

Here our escort was augmented by fifty Cossacks, and we entered the valley which we were to ascend to Videgne, and for the first time saw the actual manner in which the war had been conducted in these mountains, and the enormous difficulties which the invading force had to contend with, in the nature of the country, even more than in the determination of the inhabitants.

The valley, or rather very large glen, is wide and deep, and completely covered, as close as they could grow, with trees of the largest size, chiefly elm and beech, many being of great height, and from five to six feet in diameter. The underwood was in most places so thick that it seemed an impossibility to effect a passage without the use of an axe, a matted growth of hazel, briars, and rhododendrons covering the ground between the stems of the trees. Where a glimpse could be obtained of the mountain-tops on both sides of the valley, they were also clothed to their summits with the densest forest. This belt of timber, some twenty-five miles in width, commences near Vladikavkas, and encircles the base of Daghestan to the north, the interior being in general devoid of forest.

For about four hundred yards in width along the bottom of the valley, these gigantic trees had been cut down, and yet lay about in confusion where they had fallen, covered by a rank growth of weeds and vegetation, which almost hid the massive trunks from view, though the bare and crooked limbs stuck up in all directions. This difficult operation had to be accomplished under the fire of the enemy, and as one half of the disposable force was always engaged skirmishing with the mountaineers, who kept up an Indian warfare from behind the trees upon the advancing Russians, the loss of life was enormous. Nevertheless, Yevdachinoff persevered, constructing as he advanced a road practicable for heavy guns, and succeeded in nine months, by the most strenuous exertions, in placing some cannon in a position to

bear upon Videgne. After an obstinate defence, which showed more bravery than military skill upon Schamyl's part, when the Russian guns from a superior height completely commanded the fort at a few hundred yards' distance, he abandoned the place from whence he had so long defied the Muscovite power, and took refuge among the mountains to the south-east. Yevdachimoff commenced cutting this road through the forest with nine battalions, in the autumn of 1858, finishing it and capturing Videgne in the summer of 1859. He thus accomplished this tremendous task in about nine months. Immediately after the capture of Videgne, the fort and village were destroyed, and a new fort or redoubt, to mount twenty guns, was commenced not far from its site, in a better position.

We rode rapidly up the valley, seeing occasionally an isolated figure high above us among the rocks, who, the Cossacks assured us, was a Lesghian on the look out, the band to which he belonged being concealed from view. As we were so strong a body, however, we were not molested.

The forest maintains its dense character all the way to the source of the stream which runs down the valley, and then suddenly ceasing, we emerged upon a very fertile and well-cultivated plain, on an eminence in which, at a couple of miles distance, we saw the new Russian fort of Videgne. Cantering across the plain, most of which is carefully laid out in water meadows, intersected by small streams in all directions, we arrived at the fort at eight in the evening, and although Colonel Tchertkoff, commanding the regiment in garrison, to whom we had brought a letter from Count Yevdachimoff, was absent on an expedition against a still unsubdued tribe, we were received very hospitably by the officers of the garrison, some of whom spoke French.

We took up our abode in the colonel's quarters, which had been built of the materials of the house of Schamyl's second son, brought from the ruins of Videgne. The eldest, who had been captured in his childhood, and brought up and

educated at St. Petersburg, having been exchanged for the Princesses Chavchavadzey and Orbeliani, did not survive more than a few months the change from a civilized life among the Russians, to the barbarous existence which he had to lead on his return to his native land, and the ill-usage on account of his Russian tendencies which he endured at the hands of his father, who imprisoned and otherwise treated him very harshly.

Everywhere within the fort, barracks for the soldiers, houses for the officers, forges, store-houses, stables, and artillery-sheds were being built by the soldier-artizans, under the direction of the engineer officers, in a most solid and permanent manner. The outer wall was of stone, and some twenty pieces of cannon were mounted in various places, in such a manner that a flanking fire could be directed on all sides. A deep ditch and a wall with brushwood chevaux-de-frise also surrounded the fort, which was rapidly drawing towards completion.

One of the officers did the honours to us in the absence of the colonel, and we dined in a room on the walls of which hung the six colours of the six battalions composing the regiment, the Russians never taking their colours with them into the field. Not being in uniform, and having no apparent object in coming to such an out-of-the-way spot, our arrival evidently created the greatest curiosity on the part of the soldiers, who, we were told, had at last settled that we were foreign civil engineers, come down specially from St. Petersburg to report upon the manner in which the forts in the lately occupied districts were being built, an explanation which in their minds quite accounted for the civility with which they saw their officers treating us and accompanying us about.

The bricks used were made on the spot, the stone and sand were quarried at a short distance off, the lime was burnt in kilns built of stone and mud, the surrounding forest supplied

the timber, the roofing was of sheet-iron brought from Russia, and the skilled and unskilled labour was found among the ranks of the soldiers, almost every Russian serf being able to handle an axe, and many also being accustomed at their homes to use a trowel.

The fort of Videgne, being in a commanding position, was intended to become the permanent head-quarters of a regiment. The army in the Caucasus is organized in a different manner from the rest of the Russian troops. The entire force operating in that region consists of six divisions of regular infantry, of four regiments each, every regiment composed of six battalions of (nominally) one thousand men each. A battalion contains five companies, numbering two hundred men each, of whom fifty are furnished with rifles. There are also four light guns attached to each regiment. One of these battalions remains in Russia as a permanent depôt, receiving and drilling the recruits, who, when trained, are forwarded to the Caucasus, where they are received by a second battalion, also in permanent quarters, which is used as an acclimatizing depôt. They remain in this second depôt battalion for twelve months, by which time they are supposed to have become sufficiently accustomed to the climate to be able to take the field, and they are then drafted off as required to the four service battalions, which are generally under canvas or hutted in temporary camps, two being invariably with the colonel-commandant of the regiment. When three or four of these battalions are in the field together, a general of brigade takes the command. One regular cavalry division of four regiments, each of twelve hundred horse, is generally quartered in the larger towns. A regular force of 144,000 infantry and 4800 cavalry thus occupies, or rather is supposed to occupy, the Caucasian provinces; but the actual force of both arms seldom exceeds 90,000 men,—sickness, hard service, and bad food carrying the soldiers off by wholesale.

The period of service in the Russian army is now reduced

to fifteen years in the European or Siberian portions of the empire, and, on account of the hardships they undergo, being nearly always in the field, twelve in the Caucasian provinces. Their clothing is good and serviceable, the long greatcoat and high boots being peculiarly adapted to a climate alternating between great heat and cold, dryness and moisture. Their pay is nominally two roubles and a half, or about seven shillings and sixpence sterling, per annum; but they very seldom indeed get anything, even this small sum being kept from them on some pretext. The food they are provided with a Russian alone could exist on, and yet they seem to do a large amount of work on it.

At the Fort of Preobajinsky, through which we passed near Gounib, we saw the dinners provided for them at the moment when they were undergoing the process of cooking in large coppers. They consisted solely of a thin gruel made of black bread and water, with a little salt, and some roots which were found growing wild in the neighbourhood. And this mash of rye and water was their only food, and had been so for some time. They sometimes received a ration of vodka, but this strong coarse spirit probably does more harm than good to frames nourished upon such a diet. Looking at the treatment they receive, and the hard work they have to perform, exposed to the extremes of heat and cold, it is no wonder that the soldier seldom claims his discharge on the ground of having served the twelve years prescribed by military law. Yet here as elsewhere they show the same passive obedience to their officers and blind reliance on their authority, which have always been the well-known characteristics of the Russian soldier.

In addition to the regular troops, there is a division of irregular infantry, Georgian militia, for local service, some twenty thousand strong, and a force of irregular cavalry, including the far-famed Cossacks of the Line, of from forty to fifty thousand men. Altogether, in this part of their vast

empire the Russians have probably under arms from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty thousand men of all arms, who are inured to hardship, exposure, and campaigning in the roughest sense of the word.

On the morning after our arrival we rode out at an early hour with some of the officers and a Cossack escort to see the ruins of Videgne, about two miles distant. One of them, a Pole, spoke French perfectly, and acted as our cicerone during our ride. It seemed difficult to believe, on seeing the small size and insignificant fortifications of the village, that the Lesghian chief could have lived there in security, defying the utmost force of Russia for many years, the belt of forest through which we had passed the preceding day alone separating him from the head-quarters of a Russian division at Grosna. Yet here he had lived for a long time, sending out detached parties which scoured the country one hundred miles distant, and carried off the inhabitants when unfriendly to him, as in the case of the two princesses, prisoners to his mountain fastness, from whence they were only released on payment of a ransom fixed by himself. This fact alone serves to show how impracticable the nature of the country must be, where a partizan chief, who of late years, though formerly much more formidable, could never gather together under his orders more than a couple of thousand mountaineers, could with impunity set at nought the efforts of one of the great military powers of Europe.

We visited the spot where his house stood. Some few posts yet remained standing. It had been built apparently of timber-wattles and mud. It seemed to have been about sixty feet long and twenty broad, and, to judge from the height of the remaining posts, about seven or eight feet high. Yet in this and some other huts he and his three wives had lived, and the two unhappy princesses kept prisoners for eight months within a day's ride of their countrymen, who were nevertheless powerless to rescue them. Now the growth

of weeds that covered the spot was so rank that on looking at it one would have imagined that instead of the short space of one year a long time must have elapsed since the village had been destroyed and its inhabitants driven to seek other homes. Near Schamyl's own house stood that of his second son, Kasi Machmet, the materials of which had been transported to the new Russian fort.

The village itself stood upon a low hill jutting out from the surrounding hills for a little distance into the plain. On various commanding points at the head of the valley the Lesghians had erected batteries of light guns, some taken from the Russians in former engagements, and others, strange to say, cast by the mountaineers themselves in rude foundries built by Schamyl's orders. However, at last when General Yevdachimoff had silenced these guns by the fire of his heavier artillery, brought by the road which he had constructed with such labour up the valley of the Hulindaia, and had taken up a position commanding the village, the mountaineers did not wait for a final assault, but setting fire to their houses, fled to the adjacent forests and mountains. During the struggle, Schamyl himself remained on the hills in the rear of the Russians with a large cavalry force, of which, from the nature of the ground, he could make no use; and his infantry, although making the most desperate attacks, were unable to penetrate to the Russian guns, which soon drove them out of the village. After the capture of Videgne, he remained with a couple of hundred followers wandering among the mountains for three or four months, and at last took refuge in the extraordinary natural fortress of Gounib, where he was besieged and taken prisoner.

Having ridden to the various Russian and Lesghian positions, and seen the spots where the batteries on each side were placed, we returned to the Russian fort. One of the Cossacks forming the escort carried a piece of old rope, at one end of which smouldered a spark which served to light the

perpetual cigarettes smoked by the Russian officers, and indeed by people of every calling and nation throughout the Russian empire. Everywhere, on paying a visit, the inevitable glass of tea, usually very sweet, with a slice of lemon instead of cream or milk, has to be drunk, and a cigarette smoked, so that if four or five different people are called on in one afternoon, the visitor is shortly inflated to the condition of the Shepherd in the "Pickwick Papers."

Soon after our return, a messenger arrived from Colonel Tschertkoff, who sent word that he could not come back to Videgne for some days, the tribe which he was endeavouring to reduce not having yet made their submission. A Murid, or chief combining both spiritual and temporal authority, called Basangour, had lately taken up arms against the Russians, and possessing great influence over the mountaineers, soon attracted four or five hundred of the more discontented among them to his standard. He had latterly become very troublesome, all the tribes in the neighbourhood who had made their submission being subjected to the depredations of his followers; and at last Colonel Tschertkoff had taken the field against him with two battalions of his regiment, some twelve hundred men, to advance against and destroy the chief's mountain fastnesses. He was then the only chief in Daghestan in arms, but some time subsequently a rising again took place. In fact, at first the submission of the mountaineers is only nominal, and consists solely in allowing the Russians to construct forts at a few miles' distance from each other in the most commanding positions in the country, no taxes or contributions of any sort being demanded, and no interference with the patriarchal authority of the chiefs exercised. When their hold of the country, however, by means of these forts and roads becomes firmer, and the people more accustomed to their presence, the Russians slowly and gradually interfere with the power of the chiefs, cautiously lessening their influence with their followers; and by appointing an officer to

reside with the heads of the various tribes, whose assent is necessary to any punishments, and who assists in deciding disputes, they by degrees accustom the natives to regard them, and not their hereditary chiefs, as their real rulers. As yet the Russians have not ventured to impose taxes, and all the Caucasian provinces being exempt from conscription, that great incentive to revolt is avoided.

We were now in the country of the Tschetchnians, a tribe of the Lesghians, who, though once formidable from their position, with an impenetrable forest on the north, and the crags and precipices of the mountains on the south, which made it impossible to punish their ravages, were now being rapidly subdued. As there was no chance of Colonel Tschertkoff's return, we called on the officer commanding in his absence, who had paid us a visit the preceding evening, and were presented by him to his wife, an exceedingly pretty woman of Cossack birth, to whom, to our great surprise—as she did not appear more than nineteen or twenty—he told us he had been married for seven years. But as early marriages are the rule here as elsewhere in Russia, the fact that she had been married when only thirteen quite accounted for her youthful appearance. She was a pretty, nicely-dressed, and well-mannered woman, by no means answering to the idea of Cossacks generally entertained in the west of Europe.

The inexorable tea-drinking being got over, the commandant told us he would give us an escort next morning to an encampment on the banks of the lake called Eslam, which was on our way to Gounib, to which we now wished to wend our journey. A Russian officer, who had been waiting at Videgne for some time for an opportunity of going in the same direction, took the occasion of accompanying us; and having paid some more visits to other officers who had called upon us, we returned to our quarters, where we again found an excellent dinner provided for us. Early next morning, the 25th, we started from Videgne with an escort of twenty-

five infantry and twenty-five Cossacks, and passing by on the right hand the ruins of old Videgne, struck into a mountain gorge, up which a road practicable for artillery had only just been completed. At first tolerably open, the gorge after a few miles begins to contract, the rocks on both sides approaching each other become more precipitous, and at last nearly touch each other in many places, scarcely allowing room for the road, here only some eight feet in width, to pass between. In the narrowest part of the gorge we met a convoy of sick and disabled soldiers coming from the fort of Preobajinsky, about forty miles distant, many of them in the last stage of weakness and exhaustion from fever and dysentery. They lay together, two in each bullock-cart, which, without springs of any sort, bumped over the rough road, their woe-begone and emaciated features showing but too plainly the severity of their sufferings and the deadly nature of the climate in the place from whence they were coming. Passing with much difficulty in single file the long melancholy train of arabas, we continued to ride for some distance through the gorge, the road turning and winding every few yards to avoid some obstacle or round some corner. The rocks were covered with an immense green lichen, which often completely hid their surface.

Having passed these gorges, the glen again opened, and after a short halt, we commenced, by a road which mounted in zigzag, the ascent of some mountains covered with a short, thick grass. Unfortunately, as the officer who was our travelling companion could only speak Russian, our conversation was carried on through Giorgi, and was consequently very limited.

On gaining the summit, we saw beneath us a number of white tents, forming a large encampment on the shores of a lake of an irregular shape, surrounded by mountains with steep, grassy sides of the same description as that which we had ascended. While the deep shadow of the surrounding

hills left the lake far below in darkness, the rays of the evening sun, still falling brightly upon the white tents, gave a very beautiful effect to the scene.

The officer in command allotted us a tent at once on our arrival. We gladdened the hearts of our wearied escort by a distribution of vodka, and one of the soldiers having just returned from a successful day's fishing in the lake, we bought from him some splendid trout, of about a half-pound each, on which we made a hearty dinner, the more so that at first it seemed as if there was nothing to be had but black bread, the usual soldiers' fare. Afterwards we walked for some distance on the shores of the lake, which were very beautiful, although devoid of trees.

Far up in the mountains a few straggling villages, or aouls, were to be seen, built of stone and mud, and roofed with spars and bushes, over which is spread a layer of clay. Seen from a distance these aouls, from the number of loose, stone enclosures for sheep and cattle which surround them, have the appearance of ruins; and it is only on a nearer approach that the wreaths of smoke and barking*of curs show that they are inhabited. There was also an aoul on the banks of the lake lower down, but owing probably to the presence of the soldiers it was deserted, except by one or two families of old men and women, the latter supernaturally ugly. A few sheep grazed around, but to judge by the flocks in the pastures high above us the inhabitants did not like trusting their property, any more than themselves, in the neighbourhood of the soldiers of the hated Muscovite.

We left the encampment early next morning, and riding for some miles along the shore of the lake, which somewhat resembles in shape a T, we began to ascend the grassy mountains which we had seen from the height above it the preceding day. We passed a number of wretched-looking villages, each possessing a large grave-yard, attesting the antiquity of places now so miserable. In each

of these cemeteries large spears stuck in the ground at the head of recently-made graves, marked, as in the plain near Arsinoe, the last resting-places of warriors who had fallen in battle with the Russians, and whose bodies had been carried off by their companions, the Lesghians, as well as all the other Circassian tribes, invariably making it a point of honour to do so. Continually ascending, we at last reached the fort of Vorelno, a mere redoubt, with two guns and a garrison of one hundred men, the commandant of which lived in a kibitka, or felt tent, in which he gave us an excellent breakfast of mutton cutlets and mushrooms, to which he added a bottle of London porter.

These kibitkas are constantly used by the Russian soldiers, as well as the mountaineers, and are exactly the same as those used by the Tatars all over the steppes of Central Asia. The walls are made of felt, about a quarter of an inch in thickness, by fastening long pieces, some five feet in width, to poles, placed about a foot apart. These poles being driven into the ground until the bottom edge of the felt touches the soil, a conical roof of the same material is raised on a central pole, the edges being made fast to the tops of the surrounding stakes. This felt, being made of wool, and a non-conductor of heat, excludes the burning rays of a summer sun more effectually than cotton, its thickness and close texture making it also warm in spite of cold winds. While erecting their forts the Russian officers seemed invariably to make use of them in preference to the cotton tents.

From Vorelno, which is at a high elevation, some six thousand feet above sea level, a very extensive view is obtained of the surrounding country, which as far as the eye can reach consists of a mass of rugged and stony mountains, much about the same height, their sides mostly precipitous and rocky. In the far distance to the south, the snowy peaks of the great chain are visible, forming a gigantic panorama to the extent of one hundred miles.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FORT OF PREOBAJINSKY — ITS UNHEALTHY POSITION —
DESTRUCTION OF A RUSSIAN BATTALION BY DISEASE —
SCHAMYL'S WALL — NAIB ALI — A LESGHIAN HOUSE — HOSPI-
TALITY OF THE OWNER — TOMBS — ENTRANCE INTO THE TER-
RITORY OF THE AVARS — ORIGIN OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR
LANGUAGE — REMARKABLE MOUNTAIN — IBRAHIM KHAN —
MAGNIFICENT SITE OF KHUNSAKH — RUSSIAN MILITARY SONGS
— SONGS IN HONOUR OF SCHAMYL — NATIVE MUSIC AND
DANCING — REBUILDING OF KHUNSAKH.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING rested for a couple of hours at the fort, in the construction of which the soldiers were busily engaged, we continued our route, and descended the mountain by a series of zigzags; the road, which was only just completed, being in many places a mere groove scooped out of the face of the precipitous cliff, and in a few hours reached Preobajinsky, a fort in process of erection in a spot where some projected roads were to intersect each other. On seeing the locality selected by the Russians on which to build this fort—important solely on account of its central position—we could easily believe the stories of its unhealthiness which had been related to us. Situated in a marsh, and surrounded on all sides by high mountains, which completely shut it in, and prevent any fresh breezes from sweeping away the deadly malaria arising from the swamp, it seems difficult to assign a sufficient reason for the choice of such a spot for the residence of a large body of men. The hills around present numerous points on which the roads could have been made to meet, and the positions of which, being on higher ground, would have been comparatively healthy.

As we entered the fort the fever-stricken, emaciated forms of the soldiers who loitered about, showed the sufferings they had undergone from disease. Exhausted as they were, however, they were languidly working at the fortifications. Of a battalion upwards of five hundred strong, which seven

weeks previously had encamped on this ground and commenced the fort, ninety at present remained, the remainder having either died or been removed when stricken down by fever, the convoy we had passed on the road near Videgne consisting of fifty of them. The wretched, pale creatures who remained crawled about more like spectres than human beings, the only strong-looking man in the place being the captain in command, a Pole from Warsaw, who, having been for some time in the mountains, had become somewhat acclimatized, and could also provide for himself better food than the miserable diet on which the soldiers were fed.

The fort, as usual, was of a square form, and surrounded by a wall of masonry twenty feet high, loopholed for musketry, with towers at the angles, on each of which two light guns were mounted, which swept by their fire the sides of the square. The soldiers were encamped in kibitkas in the space within, and barracks, sheds, powder magazines, &c., were in a half-finished state all around. The officer in command brought us to his own kibitka, and we spent the remainder of the evening in strolling about the fort and the neighbourhood with him.

This place derives considerable interest from the fact that the importance of its position was perceived early by Schamyl, one of whose greatest attempts at engineering lay immediately above us in the shape of a wall of loose stones some eight feet in height, running along the side of the rocky mountain above us for a great distance—we were told ten miles. This wall was in some places strengthened by small redoubts in which a gun was placed, the whole being intended as a barrier to prevent the Russians, should they succeed in crossing the mountains thus far, from penetrating any further in a southerly direction towards the great chains.

A few of these guns lay on the ground in a broken condition, having been destroyed by the mountaineers when

driven from their line of defence. They were of brass, six-pounders, and had been cast by the Lesghians in foundries erected in the mountains under the superintendence of Polish deserters. The workmanship, as might have been expected, was very rough, but they seemed strongly made, and serviceable. The materials had been obtained from the guns taken from the Russians, which were usually burst and otherwise injured by them before abandoning them.

Far above Schamyl's wall, which in all probability will for ages to come remain as a memorial of the last struggle of the Lesghian chief with the invaders, a few aouls, which, but for the wreathing smoke, seemed like deserted heaps of ruins, were scattered on the mountain side near the summit, surrounded by some patches of cultivated soil, looking all the more verdant in the midst of the surrounding sterility. Although the marsh in which Preobajinsky is built is covered with alders and other trees growing in damp soils, yet the hills around are quite devoid of timber or brushwood of any kind.

In the fort a murid, or petty chief, a counsellor of Schamyl's, remained with the Russians, partly as interpreter between them and the mountaineers, and partly, perhaps, as a hostage. He seemed on very good terms with them, was very well treated, and joked and laughed with the officers as if they had been old friends.

We had brought a letter from the commandant at Vorelno to a certain Naib or chief residing near Preobajinsky, who, as there were no cavalry there, was to provide us with horses and an escort to continue our journey. This dignitary, when the country was occupied by the Russians, reasoning very prudently that he ought, for his own sake, to get the most from them that he could, had accepted a pension of one thousand roubles and the rank of captain in the army. We forwarded our letter to him by a messenger, requesting him to furnish us with the means of proceeding to

Khunsakh, in the country of the Avars, the residence of their Khan.

Having dined with the officer commanding, who produced a bottle of champagne in honour of the fresh arrival of travellers at Preobajinsky, we spent the night in a hut which he gave up to our use, the floor of which was excavated to a depth of two feet below the level of the damp soil around. In the morning, our Naib, Ali by name, made his appearance, accompanied by his head man, Ismail Beg, both remarkably fine-looking men, handsomely dressed, armed to the teeth, and well mounted on small but fiery-looking horses. He told us at first that he could not let us have any horses that day, making various excuses for his inability to do so; but after some talking, he agreed to furnish them if we paid him eight roubles in silver, as he entertained the gravest objections to having anything to do with paper money. This for the moment seemed an insuperable obstacle to any arrangement, as, the Russian currency being commonly in paper for sums over one rouble or three shillings, we had not brought a supply of silver coins with us into the mountains. However, our good genius the Polish commandant solved the difficulty. Giving us some silver in exchange for paper, we were enabled to arrive at a speedy conclusion to our bargain; and the horses shortly after making their appearance, we left Preobajinsky, its fever-stricken garrison, and hospitable commandant.

Even in this deadly climate no effort seemed to have been made to arrest the progress or diminish the malignancy of this fatal disease, by feeding the unhappy soldiers on a better and more nourishing diet than they are given elsewhere. Their rations consisted solely of gruel made of black rye, bread and water, with some roots dug up in the vicinity, and salt, and on such food the wonder is not that so many die, but that **any** survive the effects of the malaria to which they are continually exposed. Our Cossack escort no longer

accompanied us, the country in this part being more settled ; but we were attended by the Naib's head man, or adjoint, and two of his followers. This worthy, who, not having the fear of the Prophet before his eyes, had been indulging ever since his arrival in the morning at the fort in copious draughts of vodka with any of his ancient foes whom he could get to join him unperceived, very soon became dead drunk, and, rolling off his horse, lay down on his face by the side of the path, where we left him to recover, his horse grazing by his side. His companions, evidently accustomed to little excesses of the kind on his part, made nothing of this, but left him, saying he would overtake us in a few hours ; so we proceeded without him.

Our road for some miles lay down the valley, which soon became more fertile and open, and we passed a few aouls, the soil in the neighbourhood of which was well cultivated, many cherry and walnut trees growing around. After some time, however, the character of the country changed, and we rode along a broken path, through rocks and precipices, sometimes ascending to a great height above the stream of the Kara Sou, and then again abruptly descending to the water's edge. The scenery became very wild and grand, the perpendicular rocks and cliffs towering over us on all sides, and the muddy river running below in a boiling torrent.

After riding seventeen miles we arrived at a large aoul called Tloch, situated in a ravine in the rocks hanging over the Kara Sou, which is crossed below by a frail bridge, composed of a few pine-trees thrown across, with a layer of small spars and brushwood placed upon them. Before arriving at Tloch, we wound for some distance along the face of the cliff, at a great elevation above the water, and then crossing singly the bridge, which seemed to run right into the rock at right angles to the road, we entered the aoul, the houses composing which seemed built one above the other in the interstices and crevices of the rocks, or wherever a large stone jutting

out from the surface, or small bit of level soil, gave a few feet of space on which to place the masses of stones and mud forming the dwellings of the inhabitants.

The opposite side of the ravine running into the main valley was not so rugged, and seemed well cultivated with fruit trees and Indian corn. We found, after some inquiry, that there was one man in the aoul who spoke Russian. This individual soon made his appearance and conducted us to the house of the chief man of the village, which we found much larger and of a better description than the rest. This was the first real Lesghian house we had been in. It was built of stone, mud, and timber, two storeys high, with a court in the centre, round which ran two galleries composed of timber, one above the other, and both open, the lower projecting more than the upper over the court. The upper gallery was merely an open shed over the rooms below, and served as a corridor and means of communication to some very small apartments opening into it, which were filled with straw and hay for the winter consumption. The lower gallery served partly as a store-shed, partly as a means of communication, in wet and snowy weather, to the rooms surrounding the courtyard.

We were quickly installed on seats in the upper gallery, and in a short time all the male population of the village arrived to stare at us and form conjectures as to what our reason for visiting them could be, as they saw we did not wear the Russian uniform, and from the report of our escort had heard that we were Franks. Having answered a number of questions, our replies to which did not seem much to enlighten our puzzled visitors, the conversation, which, having to pass through two interpreters, Giorgi and our Lesghian-Russian friend, was not very fluent, began to flag. In a couple of hours some fowls and flat cakes of bread made their appearance. On these we dined, tearing them to pieces with our fingers, a task in which we were assisted by our hospitable

entertainer, who sat by us, evidently taking great interest in observing the manners and customs of the Franks at meals. Though a very strict Mohammedan, he produced some wine, which he himself tasted first, smacking his lips with great apparent gusto; but on handing it to us it was as much as we could do to get down a glass each without making wry faces, it being literally pure vinegar. The glass was next handed to Giorgi, who, making a fearful grimace, instantly spit out the mouthful he had taken, and then, with his features still contorted, looked towards us with amazement, marvelling that we had not, as he supposed, discovered the acidity of the liquid we had just swallowed. However, he soon regained his equanimity. Getting rid by degrees of another set of visitors, who seemed quite satisfied with sitting opposite to us, staring into our faces, we were installed by our worthy entertainer in his own private sleeping apartment, where we spent the night on small carpets.

Early next morning, having eaten a breakfast of bread, cheese, and coffee, which our host had provided for us, and having shaken hands with him, and given him our cards, which he had asked us for and carefully put by, we bade adieu to our hospitable entertainer and started for Khunsakh. We rode for some time up a bare and stony ravine, deserted and uninhabited, on reaching the head of which we emerged upon a grassy basin of great extent, reaching for miles in every direction, and bounded on the horizon by hills and mountains which, to judge by their colour, were clothed with verdure.

The plains and mountains were covered with aouls, and everywhere the country had a cultivated and inhabited appearance, quite different from the sterile and deserted look of that through which we had passed the preceding days. An isolated hill, rising to a great height from the centre of this basin, had a very striking effect, standing by itself at a distance from all the others. In the surrounding mountain sides, high among the rocks, were a number of the curious

niche-shaped tombs which are everywhere met with in the Caucasus, and some of which possess a very high antiquity, being supposed to be the memorials of the former inhabitants of the country. Sometimes single sepulchres and sometimes whole groups are seen, but they are always found in lofty situations and places difficult of access.

We had now entered the country of the Avars, and left behind that of the Tschetchenses, through which we had been travelling from the time we entered the mountains till we arrived at Tloch.

These Avars are an offshoot of the people of that name who accompanied the Huns in their migration westward, and a small body of whom, bending their course to the south, crossed the Terek, and effected a settlement in the mountains of Daghestan, where their descendants still form a distinct tribe. They many years ago entered into relations with the Russians, in consequence of which they suffered much at the hands of Schamyl and the independent Lesghians, who made constant plundering incursions into their territory, and at one time sacked and destroyed their principal village, Khunsakh. They all profess the Mohammedan religion, and are governed by their hereditary Khan, who is assisted, or controlled, by resident officials and a guard of Russian soldiers. He is himself thoroughly Russianized, having been educated and brought up at St. Petersburg, and holding the rank of colonel in the Imperial army. The Avars speak a dialect of the Lesghian language, which is quite a distinct tongue from that of the Tschetchenses, or Kisli, as they are sometimes called. Of these dialects there are no less than eight spoken by the races comprehended under the general denomination of Lesghians, viz., Avar, Dido, Kabutsch, Andi, Usmei, Kaitak, Kazi, Koumyek, and Kuraeli. In the Avar language there are found many Samoyede words, and its structure is said to be similar to that spoken by the once powerful nomad race who

now are reduced to a miserable existence on the shores of the icy Lena ; retaining of their former customs only their restless and wandering habits. If this assertion be correct, it would prove beyond a doubt that as the present haughty Magyar nobility are unquestionably derived from the Ostiaks, a tribe similar in their mode of living to the Samoyedes, so the Avars were a Samoyede horde, and that the present fine-looking mountaineers are descended from the stunted and dwarfish race now inhabiting a few wigwams on the verge of the Arctic Ocean. Constantly engaged in feuds with their neighbours, and in recent times in a lengthened struggle with the utmost strength of Schanyl, their numbers have long remained stationary ; but now their villages are being rebuilt, and the population, enjoying security, is augmenting. They did not, according to tradition, embrace Mohammedanism as early as the other tribes ; and if we may believe report, many curious forms and ceremonies, both of Christian and Pagan worship, yet exist among them. It is also said that on rocks in remote parts of the country there are inscriptions in characters which no one as yet has been able to decipher.

Having ridden across this vast grassy basin in three or four hours, we began to ascend a gentle rise, on coming to the end of which we found ourselves on a well-cultivated plain, sloping downwards in an easterly direction, the same as that on which we had been riding ; and after some miles we descended abruptly into a steep and rocky valley, some thousands of feet in depth, at the bottom of which ran a small river. On the opposite side of this valley, which was some miles in width, rose an isolated mountain of a very remarkable appearance. For the first couple of thousand feet it ascended from the surrounding valleys with a gradual incline, but at about a thousand feet from the summit its rocky sides became perfectly perpendicular, presenting a complete wall of limestone of that height on every side. Its top appeared flat,

forming a plain of some five or six miles in length, and was, we were told, at an elevation of six thousand feet above the sea, and three thousand five hundred above the river, the precipice surrounding it on all sides, and rendering it a natural fortress impregnable to any attack. A wide distance of many miles separating it from the adjacent mountains, it seemed to tower to an immense height above the valleys at its base.

This was our first view of Gounib, which, although a long distance removed from where we were, yet seemed, so clear was the air at this elevation, not more than a few miles off. It stood alone, isolated and severed from any connexion with the surrounding mountains, and in its solitary strength appeared as if it were the centre from which sprang all the surrounding ranges. Its iron-bound summit apparently offered a perfectly secure asylum to a small number of defenders, and its first appearance would seem, even to a stranger, at once to point it out as a spot destined for what it actually was, the scene of the last struggle of a few gallant and devoted men fighting, though hopelessly, with dauntless courage for their native soil and homes against a detested invader.

Cantering over the level soil, which seemed the more strange from the broken and rugged nature of the surrounding mountains, we reached Khunsakh, where we found the Khan inspecting the building of his new house. We at once rode up to him, and were received by him with great cordiality. Ibrahim Khan, a very tall, handsome man, of not more than twenty-five years of age, wore the uniform of a colonel of the Guard, spoke Russian fluently, and, in fact, in every way looked as if he were a Russian officer. He brought us at once into his house, which was a curious combination of Eastern and Western architecture.

It was not yet quite finished, the Avars not having returned to Khunsakh until after the capture of the dreaded Schamyl. It was built in the form of a square, a stone wall some twelve feet in height surrounding a court, one side of

which was occupied by the Khan's own rooms, the remainder being taken up with those of his wife and servants. A blank wall only was visible outside the rooms, which, in Eastern fashion, all looked into the courtyard. The house, which was only one story high, was built solidly of stone. The masons, carpenters, &c., were all Russian soldiers, who were assisted in their labours by the Khan's people. The principal apartment in the house, which did duty both as a drawing and dining-room, was handsomely furnished. A mahogany table was in the centre, half a dozen arm-chairs stood about, and numerous prints and photographs covered the walls. Hanging on one side of the room was a carpet, worked in gaudy colours, with the well-known picture of Rebecca being carried off by the Templar, very possibly a highly popular design among a race of professed marauders. Opposite was a board studded over with silver bosses, which being the insignia of an order or decoration established by Schamyl in imitation of European honours, and given by him as a reward for valour to his bravest warriors, were much prized by those who had slain the wearers of the proud distinction, whose insignia they had presented to the Khan. An Arabic motto or inscription was engraved on each of these bosses, which were worn on the left breast, and differed from each other slightly in form, some being perfectly round, with a button protruding in the centre, and others perforated with an opening in the shape of a star. Some of the mottoes were peculiarly characteristic of the impetuous spirit of the chosen warriors of the chief. One of them was—"He who reflects upon consequences will never be brave."

A short time after our arrival we dined with the Khan, one of the two officers resident with him, who spoke a little French, acting as interpreter for us. Like everything else around us, our dinner, which was served *à la Russe* by Avar henchmen armed to the teeth, was partly Eastern and partly European.

After dinner we took a walk with the Khan about the town, or rather ruins of what had been once so. After the repulse of General Grabbe from before Dargo, in 1842, Schamyl, becoming more confident of his power and audacious in his attacks, had summoned Achmet Mohammed Mirza, the present Khan's father, to join him with his people in a league against the Russians, and, on his refusal, had attacked the town and captured it, together with a small garrison of Russians whom it then contained, burning it to the ground, as an example to those of his neighbours who dared to disobey his orders. The inhabitants took refuge in Russian territory, and among the other tribes, and for some time Schamyl profited by the severity which he showed on this as well as on many other occasions.

The situation of the town is very striking. Placed on the edge of the precipice, where the plain over which we had ridden in the forenoon is abruptly terminated, it looks down into a ravine thousands of feet in depth, and upwards of a mile wide. Opposite in the distance is the dark mass of Gounib, and all around are piled in the wildest and most rugged confusion a number of mountains, savage, bare, and rocky, flung about in every direction, all apparently of nearly the same height, with the snowy peaks of the great range dimly appearing behind them.

About a thousand feet below us, on the opposite side of the ravine, a solitary hut, perched against the rock, and surrounded by a few square yards of cultivated soil, presented by its warm look, and the greenness of the little fields about it, a curious contrast to the stony desolation on all sides. The mountains around Khunsakh rise some two thousand feet above it, it being itself at an elevation of six thousand feet above the sea level, and commanding a view which, for magnificence and extent, is not often equalled. The Khan told us that when destroyed by Schamyl it contained one thousand houses, and about five thousand inhabi-

tants; now, perhaps, a tenth of that number inhabit a few newly-built houses in the midst of the ruins. Timber has to be brought from a distance of one hundred miles, and consequently building is very costly. Yet the people were slowly returning, and resuming possession of their ancient homes.

There were about one hundred Russian soldiers at Khunsakh, partly as a guard for the Khan, and partly, perhaps, as a check over him. In the evening, at sunset, these soldiers sang some Russian military songs in the open air, standing on the edge of the precipice; and the scene they presented from a little distance, with the Avars in their national dress sitting in groups around, listening to their songs, was very picturesque. The songs were chiefly in honour of the defeat and capture of Schamyl; but in them, we were told, full justice was done to the bravery of the mountain chief.

The wildness and beauty of the scene seemed to strike every one, even the natives themselves. Giorgi alone, totally insensible to the magnificence of the surrounding view, looked on the whole with the greatest contempt. "What they live up here for?" he said; "why not go to Kertch? There fine place, plenty ships, plenty English captains. Here, nothing but rocks and mountains, no nice houses, no nothing!"

On returning to the house we passed by the Khan's wife, who was sitting, with two or three maids around her, in a gallery projecting into the court. She stood up as we passed, and the Khan condescended so far to defer to European customs as to say to us, "That is my wife," as we passed by, and saluted her. She was a daughter of "Daniel Sultan," a very influential chief, and formerly one of Schamyl's greatest supporters. The lady, who was unveiled, seemed about twenty, was light-haired and blue-eyed, with a very fair complexion. She was short and stout, with a bad figure, which a long veil falling from her head over her shoulders nearly wholly

concealed. She had a very pleasing countenance, and replied to our greeting by a merry smile of welcome, glancing at the same time somewhat timidly at her husband.

We had no time to improve our acquaintance, as we were at once brought by the Khan into the house. After having partaken of the supper which he had prepared for us, he sent for two of Schamyl's old followers, who had remained true to him through good and evil to the last. These warriors, leaning one against the other, with their backs to the wall of the apartment, howled together in chorus songs written by the Lesghians in praise of their old chief. A numerous audience, of women chiefly, had meantime gathered together outside the doorway, who, when these warlike strains were brought to an end, began to sing in their turn, remaining all the while outside. The chorus of their songs also was, "Schamyl, Scham—yl," but whether they were in honour of the great Lesghian chief or otherwise we did not ascertain.

Afterwards we all went into the courtyard, which we found crowded with the followers of the Khan and with villagers. A space in the centre being quickly cleared, and the wife of the Khan, who was in the same gallery in which we had seen her before, having ordered torches to be brought out and lighted, two of her maids came forward and began one of the native dances, moving with short quick steps, only an inch or two in length, from side to side, with eyes cast down on the ground, and their hands, which were concealed by the sleeves falling over them, held up before their faces. The music was very fast, the instruments being a tambourine and a kind of flute held in both hands, and played like a clarionet. It was very monotonous, the same tune, if it could be so called, being played over and over again without the slightest change or variation of any kind. The women having finished, the men came forward and went through the same steps at first,

changing afterwards, as the music got quicker, into a kind of hornpipe, in which they jumped about and performed all kinds of antics. Afterwards a man and woman danced together.

After they had concluded, the torches being nearly consumed, we separated, every one going his own way, ours leading to a small house a short distance off, in which the Khan had ordered divans to be prepared for us. To this we accordingly went, followed by two Avars, who, we afterwards found to our dismay, had been ordered by the Khan to accompany us as a kind of guard of honour, and who were to stand sentry over our door, and go with us wherever we went. However, there was no help for it. We rose early the next morning, and, closely dogged by our "gillies," who never for an instant left our heels, went out for a walk in a different direction from that which we had taken the preceding evening with the Khan. Our guides showed us the various points from which the Lesghians had attacked the town, and the spots where the fighting had been fiercest. They also conducted us over the ruins of the Khan's house, which had shared the common destruction, and on which the new one seemed a decided improvement; judging from the limited space on which it had stood, the former one must have been a building of very small size. The destruction and devastation all around, though on a smaller scale, resembled in completeness that of Sebastopol, not a roof or morsel of timber being anywhere to be seen. The houses which they were rebuilding were erected at pleasure among the ruins, no plan or arrangement being anywhere perceivable; they were all small, and of the same type as everywhere else in the mountain aouls.

CHAPTER IX.

MAGNIFICENT SCENERY—THE KOISOV—ENCAMPMENT OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS—COAL MINES IN THE CAUCASUS—SIEGE OF GOUNIB BY THE RUSSIANS—FANATICISM OF TWO MURIDS—CAPTURE OF SCHAMYL—MEMOIR OF THE LESGHIAN CHIEF—DEATH OF HAMSAD BEY, AND WONDERFUL ESCAPE OF SCHAMYL—SCHAMYL'S CONTESTS WITH THE AVARS—TAKES THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE EMPEROR—DEFENCE AND CAPTURE OF AKHULGO—EXPEDITION OF COUNT WORONZOFF—SCHAMYL'S EXPLOITS AND CAPTURE.

CHAPTER IX.

WE took our departure from Khunsakh in the afternoon, the Khan providing us with half a dozen of his men to accompany us as far as Gounib. We bade him farewell at the gate of the court, his wife coming out on her balcony to see the strangers depart—the first Franks, besides the Russians, whom she had probably ever beheld.

Waving her an adieu, to which she gaily responded, we shook hands, and, strange to say, exchanged cards with the Khan. We then rode for some versts up a gentle ascent, and crossing a table-land which formed the top of the mountain, began to descend into the valley of the Koisoov by a broken and rugged path, on which our horses, sure-footed and accustomed to the hills as they were, had enough to do to keep their footing. Our pace being necessarily very slow, we were a long time in reaching the bottom of the valley, and had ample time for gazing at the surrounding landscape, which for ruggedness of outline is probably unequalled. The craggy mountains and enormous rocks seemed to have been thrown into their present position by chance, being severed in every direction by valleys whose bare and stony sides were clothed at rare intervals by little patches of verdure, which only served to bring out more vividly the surrounding desolation. Gounib lay before us at the opposite side of the valley, the base of its gigantic rock wall covered with the débris which, in the lapse of ages, had been detached from its perpendicular face.

Far below ran the turbulent stream of the Koisov, sometimes leaping over rocks in foaming cataracts, and at others calmly winding its course through little plains covered with patches of corn and grass. Wending our way by numerous windings down the mountain side, we at last reached the bottom of the valley, the road being far longer than it seemed, owing to the numberless détours which it had to make to avoid the rocks round which it passed.

Continuing our course for a short distance along the side of the stream, we came upon a small encampment of Russian soldiers, whose officers as usual received us most cordially. They belonged to the 35th Regiment, and were engaged in the construction of the upper part of the road they were then making between Temikhanshura and Khunsakh, which was intended ultimately to cross from the latter place to Preobajinsky, and thence across the Caucasus by Telaw to Tiflis. As none of the officers, not even the major who was in command of the detachment, spoke any language but Russian, our conversation, carried on by means of Giorgi, was necessarily very limited. They had erected, as they expected to be at work during part of the winter, huts with walls of mud and roofs of brushwood, which were also half underground, being excavated some feet below the soil. In bad weather these huts form an excellent protection against the cold and wet, and, in one of them given up to our use by the major, we spent the night very comfortably.

Next morning (30th August), we started early for Gounib, which was to be our next halting-place; and leaving the valley of the Koisov behind us to the west, continued our easterly course up a small glen, the path along the bottom of which, consisting of the rocky bed of the dried-up torrent, was almost impassable for a long distance. Coming suddenly to a cleft in its side, we struck off from it, and rode for a short distance up a gorge in the rocks, out of which, as it ended in an apparent cul de sac surrounded by a precipice

many hundreds of feet in height, there seemed no visible exit. However, on reaching the further end, a split appeared in the face of the cliff, and turning off sharply to the right, we rode into the cleft thus formed through the mountain for some hundreds of yards. The passage through the solid rock nowhere exceeded ten feet in width, and in some places it was not more than six; the rocks sometimes even touched each other many hundred feet above our heads. At a great elevation were swaying to and fro some ropes which had been used by the Avars to reach the combs of wild honey which they found in the crevices of the cliff. The passage was nearly dark, and the footfalls of our horses were echoed by the rocks, as if we were passing through a tunnel. The path at the bottom was the bed of the torrent, which sometimes rushed over it—a stream many feet in depth.

On emerging from this gorge into an open valley, we were surprised at seeing a coal mine in full operation, worked by Russian soldiers, who seem capable of adapting themselves to every trade and any circumstances. The seam cropped out of the side of the valley at an elevation probably of a couple of hundred feet, and was worked by shafts, driven horizontally into the side. The coal we were told, for we did not ride up to the mine, was good and gave out much heat, being of all the greater value on account of the scarcity of timber in this part of the country. As in many other places the coal-seams are numerous and of easy access, the Russians hope before long to be able to procure from these mountains the coal for their Caspian fleet, which is now brought at great cost from England down the Volga.

We had now arrived in the valley of the Kara Koisov, which runs round the base of the mountain of Gounib on the north and east sides. We continued our course up it for three hours, our path sometimes lying by the edge of the stream, and sometimes ascending a short distance above it. We had

also passed round its northern base, and were on the opposite side to that facing Khunsakh. We then began to ascend by a mule-path, which wound its way through the masses of rock strewed about on the slope, and after some time came to a loopholed wall running across a chasm in the cliffs, through a doorway in which we passed. This was the first or lowest line of defence on this the only practicable access to the mountain, the musketry from which, in case of attack, would sweep the narrow path. On the other side was a small piece of level ground, on which were pitched a few kibitkas forming the head-quarters of General Lazareff, to whom the Khan of the Avars had given us a letter. The general himself happened at the time of our arrival to be absent on an inspection, but his aide-de-camp, who was in camp, promised us the horses we required for the ensuing day.

We then continued our route, and found, on ascending to its base, that the rock wall which surrounded the summit of the mountain was broken in one place on its eastern side by a rugged chasm, up which a mule-path wound a zigzag course. In several places, taking advantage of the rocks, walls had been built across the chasm by Schamyl, thus forming so many lines of defence flanked in every direction by the fire of the defenders.

In some places these walls were very lofty, in others low; but everywhere they were strongly built, and pierced for musketry along their whole extent. The path, the only means of ascent, passed through small archways strongly barricaded, and was commanded throughout by the fire of the besieged. Scrambling up the track which led backwards and forwards through these lines, we at last reached the flat summit of the mountain, intersected by a small valley not perceivable from below, through which a copious rivulet of water found its way to the ravine below, leaping over the precipice in a cloud of spray into the chasm by which we had ascended. We rode up its course for about a mile,

and then came to a small beech wood on the left hand, in a glade in which a pillar was erected marking the place where Schamyl was brought a prisoner to Marshal Bariatinsky, who had stood on that spot during the final assault on the aoul higher up. The small copse, standing on a slope facing the north, was not more than a few acres in extent. Having passed it to our left, at the end of another mile we reached the aoul of Gounib, situated at the head of the valley, containing about a hundred houses, and in no way differing in appearance from any other mountain village.

Riding through the stony street we halted at the house in which Schamyl had lived, now inhabited by the Russian captain commanding the detachment at the aoul. As usual this officer received us very well, and being a Pole and speaking French, he acted as our guide over this interesting locality, and related to us the circumstances attending its capture.

The summit of this extraordinary mountain, called by the Russians the Gibraltar of the Caucasus, is slightly hollowed out like a shell, the ground rising from the centre to the edges, where the precipice goes sheer down a depth of from 500 to 1000 feet. On the east side alone there is a descent terminating in the chasm through which we had ascended, and which was fortified in the manner described. The surface is covered with short succulent grass, affording good pasture for sheep and horses. About 6000 of the former and 200 of the latter, we were told, were found on the mountain by the Russians. The land round the aoul had been well cultivated, and, in fact, everything wanted for the maintenance of a garrison, such as clothing and provisions, was contained within this gigantic natural fortification. One or two seams of coal cropped out from the side of the little valley, and in fact, with the exception of the materials for making powder and a supply of lead, nothing was required from without.

The former inhabitants were Avars, who were industrious and hardworking, living on their lofty eyrie isolated from the surrounding world, acknowledging no master, and interfering with no one. The aoul was prettily situated at the head of the little valley, and the numerous walls and enclosures round what had been cultivated patches, but which now bore only a luxuriant crop of weeds, showed the amount of labour that had been expended by the late proprietors. They had been dispossessed by Schamyl, when, as a last refuge, he threw himself into Gounib at the head of 200 men, hoping to be able, by means of his emissaries, to raise a sufficient force of mountaineers to compel the Russians to retire should they besiege him in it, and, in the meantime, calculating that the cattle and corn of the villagers would be sufficient to maintain him and his small body of followers in their rock-bound position.

However, the moment it was reported to Prince Bariatinsky whither the chief had fled, he ordered an immediate blockade of the mountain by all the disposable forces under his command, and soon concentrated twenty-five battalions round the spot. As, owing to the resources possessed by the mountaineers, the siege, if merely a blockade, might have continued for a long period, and as apprehensions were also entertained of a rising of the tribes in the rear, who would never abandon all hope of success as long as their chief remained at liberty, it was determined by the prince,—who, arriving shortly after the investiture, took command of the whole force,—to capture the stronghold by assault, at whatever cost of life. Accordingly three or four storming columns, furnished with ladders, commenced the attack, crossing the chasm in different places, and were met by a most determined resistance on the part of the defenders, who swept away whole ranks by showers of grape from two small pieces of cannon which they had brought with them into their retreat.

But in the midst of the battle, when it seemed probable

that the issue of the contest would be in favour of the defenders, shouts and shots were heard in their rear on the mountain's top, and the besieged, feeling they could no longer hold the position which they had maintained with so much valour, at once abandoned their defences, and fled to the aoul at the head of the little valley, where they prepared to make a last and desperate resistance. The storming had commenced at daybreak, when a regiment crept under the precipice on the side opposite to that where the garrison had mustered to oppose the threatened attack. The cliff at this point being considered inaccessible, no precautions had been taken for its defence, not even a sentry being stationed on the summit. The Russians, however, had resolved to scale it. By means of bars driven by hammers into the crevices of the rock, to which ropes were fastened as the climbers ascended, the summit of the rock was at last gained, and one by one the regiment reached the top unopposed and unperceived.

One of the horses on the mountains being caught, the commanding officer at once led his men to attack the mountaineers in the rear, who then took refuge in the aoul, where the more fanatic among them prepared to sell their lives as dearly as they could, resolving never to submit to Christian rule. The Russians, rapidly advancing, at once attacked them in their position; and while the battle raged, and the defenders kept up a murderous fire from the roofs and windows of the fortress-like houses, Schamyl called his most devoted followers round him and asked them whether they would surrender or die fighting in this their last refuge. They all agreed on a surrender, with the exception of two murids, who saying, "It is forbidden by the Book for a true believer to bow his head to the Christian yoke," prepared to sally out on the Russians and die fighting in the midst of the enemy. Schamyl hesitated for a moment whether he should accompany them, and thus make a fitting end to his warlike career; but he was dissuaded by the others from

such an act of desperation. The two fanatics, therefore, bidding their chief a last farewell, rushed out sword in hand among the Russians, and soon fell covered with wounds. Schamyl then hoisted a white flag on the roof of his house, and, the fire ceasing, came out and surrendered himself to General Lazareff. He and the other prisoners were conducted to Prince Bariatinsky, who after the mountaineers had retreated from their first line of defence had ridden up to the beech wood and had directed the last attack from thence.

On being brought before the Marshal, Schamyl, who fully expected immediate death, asked for permission to take leave of his wives, and also for a little time to perform the evening prayers, the hour for which had then arrived; but both requests were at once refused. At the same time he was told, to his great astonishment, that he had nothing to apprehend from the Russians beyond an enforced residence in some town in the interior of the empire. He was at once sent off under a strong escort to Temikhanshura, whence he was transferred to Kalovga, where a residence was prepared for him, in which he still resides in the enjoyment of a pension of 12,000 roubles a year from the Russian government, his wives and family having soon after followed him from the Caucasus.

In the meantime, while this episode was taking place, his remaining followers had given themselves up as prisoners, but their chiefs having been captured, it was not considered necessary to retain them, and they were accordingly dismissed. Thus ended the active career of this famous chief, whose name, though stained in too many instances with acts of savage cruelty, instigated by stern fanaticism, must ever remain eminent among those of the patriots who have devoted themselves to the maintenance of the independence of their native land, and to the preservation of the freedom, however wild and extravagant, which they had inherited.



It may not be out of place here to give a short memoir of this famous leader. He was born in the year 1797, at Himri, an aoul on the river Koisov, in the north-west of Daghestan; his father was an Imam, or kind of Mohammedan priest, of no very great repute. Leaving his home, according to the custom among the mountaineers, when he attained his seventh year, he went to reside with his foster-father, Dschelal Eddin, by whom he was educated, and at whose house he remained until he was old enough to accompany the warriors of his tribe in their predatory expeditions.

He first distinguished himself at the siege of Himri, his native aoul, in 1832, by the Russians. Khasi Mollah (a murid, or disciple, and counsellor of Mohammed Mollah, who first preached a religious war against the Russians among the mountain tribes in Daghestan) had succeeded some time previously in uniting the greater number of the Lesghians against the invaders, and though repulsed in an expedition he had undertaken against Khunsakh in order to compel the Avars to join with the rest in opposing them, had captured Tarku in the teeth of the Russians, defeating General Emanuel. However, the latter having received large reinforcements, he was soon afterwards besieged in Himri, which was taken by storm in spite of a desperate resistance. The body of Khasi Mollah was subsequently found, with a calm smile upon the countenance, the right hand pointed to heaven, the left grasping his beard. Schamyl was also left for dead with two wounds.

After the death of Khasi Mollah, Hamsad Bey was elected by the confederated tribes to be their chief, and their forces under his leadership soon became very formidable, as he availed himself of the advice and assistance of numerous Polish and Russian deserters. In another attack upon Khunsakh, the Avars still remaining faithful to the Russian alliance, Pichu Bikè, the Khaness, and two of her sons, were taken prisoners and put to death, the town itself being utterly

destroyed. Bulutsch Khan, one of the sons of the Khaness, escaped the fate of his brothers by flight. Hadji Murad and Osman Bey, foster-brothers of the two murdered sons of the Khaness, soon after conspired against Hamsad Bey, and although the chief was informed of the existence of the plot, he refused to believe that two of his most trusted followers and murids—for they possessed that rank—could be guilty of such a crime, and took no precautions for his safety. The conspirators attacked him in a mosque while at prayers, and having murdered him, led on the populace at once to attack the remainder of his murids, who, on the death of their chief, had taken refuge in an adjoining tower. The tower was set on fire, and its defenders perished in the flames; one alone, Schamyl, escaping.

In a short time, by the exertions chiefly of his old foster-father, Dschelal Eddin, who possessed much influence, he was raised to the command of the confederates, and from henceforward became the soul of the resistance to Russian rule. Hadji Murad, the murderer of Hamsad Bey, inviting the Russians to take possession of Khunsakh, and promising them assistance from the Avars, they in consequence captured Himri, after a slight resistance, as a preparatory measure. However, their triumph was shortlived. Schamyl shortly after made a vigorous attack upon the fort, and drove General Lasskay and the garrison which had been left to occupy it in headlong rout beyond its walls; but reinforcements on a large scale arriving from Temikhanshura, under General Klugenav, Khunsakh, or rather its site, was occupied, and Achmet Mirza was installed by the Russian General as Khan.

In 1835, Schamyl again led an expedition against the Avars, and took Gotsatl, but was forced to retreat from Khunsakh. In 1837, General Teza, at the head of a large force, besieged him in Tilitli, and, after the siege had continued for some time, a formal reconciliation was effected between the tribes and the Russians, Schamyl taking an oath of allegiance

to the emperor, on condition of being left in free and undisturbed possession of the Lesghian mountains.

For a year or two Schamyl remained quiet, rebuilding villages and organizing his followers. He established himself at Akhulgo, an aoul on the Koisoï, a short distance from Himri, perched upon the top of an isolated rock, the flat summit of which, about a mile in circumference, is covered with houses. The rock is six hundred feet high. A narrow path winding up its face in zigzags is the only means of access to it. Three terraces of small extent, which the path crossed in its ascent, were fortified with much skill by Polish deserters. Schamyl here collected large supplies of ammunition, and kept the hostages which he had obtained as pledges of their fidelity from the tribes whose zeal he doubted.

At last, in 1839 Schamyl's power daily increasing and becoming more formidable, General Grabbe marched against Akhulgo at the head of nine battalions and seventeen guns. Although the fire of the latter was soon found ineffectual against the loose stones of which the barriers were composed, the place, repeatedly attacked by storming columns, was at last taken with tremendous loss. Three thousand Russians and twelve hundred mountainers fell; many prisoners were taken, but all women and children, the men having fought to the last.

But Schamyl himself was sought for in vain, and the Russians looked upon him as a prize of far greater value than a mountain aoul, however strong its position might be. At the last attack, when the Russians had already penetrated into the aoul, he had let himself down with a few of his murids into a cave in the face of the cliffs overhanging the river, and after some time, a raft being constructed of some wood which they found stored there, they had lowered it down the face of the rock, and by its means tried to cross the stream, here very rapid. But they were perceived and followed by the Russians, who were overjoyed at the thought

of at last getting their arch enemy into their power. All his followers were after some time killed or taken. But still Schamyl was not among them, and it was found that having remained behind the others in the cave, he had taken advantage of the flight of the rest attracting the attention of the besiegers; had lowered himself into the river, and had succeeded in escaping into the surrounding mountains.

He shortly after sued for peace, offering to give his two sons as hostages for his good behaviour; but his conditions were rejected, and he took up his abode in Dargo, an aoul among forests fifty miles north-west of Akhulgo. Here he remained for some years, continuing his incursions into the Russian territory, until, in 1842, his depredations becoming unbearable, General Grabbe, the same who had taken Akhulgo, marched against him with thirteen battalions.

This time Schamyl changed his tactics. Instead of remaining shut up in a fortress, he continually harassed the Russians along their line of march by repeated attacks night and day, giving them not a moment's repose, and fighting himself from under cover of the trees and rocks. In the end General Grabbe was obliged to retreat, with a loss of more than two thousand killed and wounded, and six guns captured by the mountaineers. In consequence of this defeat, both General Grabbe and the Governor-General of the Caucasus, General Galownin, were recalled, and General Neidhart was sent to replace the latter. For some years Schamyl continued to reside at Dargo, annoying the enemy perpetually by his incessant attacks.

In 1845 the Emperor Nicholas, with the view of finally terminating the protracted struggle, largely augmented the army of the Caucasus, and appointed Count Woronzoff governor-general, giving him at the same time fuller powers than had been enjoyed by any former viceroy. This officer, having completed his preparations for what was hoped in St. Petersburg would be the last campaign, entered the

same year into the mountains, with a force of ten thousand regular troops, artillery and infantry, accompanied by a large body of Cossacks.

From the moment the Russians penetrated into the woods, an incessant and deadly fire from an unseen enemy thinned their ranks, the officers especially being selected as victims by the concealed marksmen. After some days' continual fighting, during which the soldiers had to endure every kind of privation and hardship, including constant hand-to-hand encounters with bodies of the mountaineers, who repeatedly attacked their camp sword in hand, under cover of the darkness of the night, the troops came in sight of Dargo, the capture and occupation of which was to end their fatigues.

Inspired at the prospect of a speedy conclusion to their sufferings they rushed on, but on approaching the aoul a cloud of thick smoke arising from the village, betrayed the desperate resolve to which Schamyl had come, and their own fearfully perilous situation. Knowing that he could not hope to defend the village against the overwhelming force of the Russians, the chief had evacuated the aoul, setting fire first to every house; and Count Woronzoff found himself on arriving at what he hoped would be the recompense of his efforts—the lair of his active and dreaded enemy—in the same position as, on a larger scale, the Emperor Napoleon was placed in by the conflagration of Moscow.

Surrounded by the mountaineers, whose numbers were continually augmenting, on every side, deficient in supplies both of arms and ammunition, all that remained to be done was to entrench himself on the ground that he occupied, and send back a portion of his forces to bring up reinforcements to rescue his exhausted troops from their dangerous position. Accordingly, a strong force was despatched, to return by the same route by which the army had advanced, with orders to send up immediately to the scene of action all

the forces disposable, the count meanwhile remaining with the main body, as well to protect the wounded as to divert and divide the attention of the Lesghians, a large body of whom would be detained by the necessity of observing his movements.

But the detached party had not proceeded far when they were again subjected to the same incessant attacks of an invisible foe, and in the end were nearly entirely destroyed; 1300 of them, including Generals Wiktoroff and Passek, being killed. A few straggling allies, reaching Gersel Aoul, where General Freitag lay with 3000 men, informed him of the desperate situation of the viceroi; and he at once marched to his relief, and succeeded with severe loss in reaching his beleaguered countrymen, bringing with him the much-wanted supplies. The entire force then retraced its steps, skirmishing all the way, and the expedition re-entered Russian territory, having lost in the space of a few days one half its numbers. Yet making the most of the sole advantage gained—if the burning of Dargo by the enemy can be called such—the emperor published a brilliant description of what he called the successful campaign, and created Count Woronzoff a prince.

The year succeeding this fatal expedition Schamyl accomplished the most renowned feat of his eventful career. Collecting secretly a force of some thousand horsemen, he descended suddenly into the plains, sweeping everything before him, and plundering, burning, and destroying the Cossack colonies and villages established along the line; of which, after his foray, the blackened and charred timbers of no less than twenty, alone remained. Scouring the steppe before him he moved rapidly westward, and passing by Vladikavkas, fell with his whole force upon the Tcherkess tribes of the Kabarda, who were friendly to the Russians. He destroyed upwards of sixty of their aouls, and carried off a number of prisoners, and an immense quantity of plunder

and spoil of every description. Fearing to return by the way he had come, along the steppe, and to encounter the large force the Russians had hastily collected to intercept him, he re-entered the mountains, and passing through them rapidly by the by-paths, the inhabitants not daring to molest him, he crossed the military road, and returned to Videgne, where he had taken up his abode, laden with booty. By this feat he acquired a greater reputation for skill and daring than ever.

Here he continued to reside, the Russians limiting their efforts to endeavours to confine and circumscribe his power; and from hence as a centre, he still carried on his wearying and wasting attacks upon them and their allies among the surrounding tribes. From Videgne also issued the expedition which captured the Princesses Chavehavadzey and Orbeliani, in 1851; and here those unfortunate ladies endured a long and harsh—although unintentionally so—imprisonment for many months. The capture of the place, and his subsequent flight to Gounib, have been already described.

It is a difficult thing, among the many conflicting accounts of Schamy's character and motives, to form a true idea of this celebrated leader. It would appear, however, from various well-known events in his career, that to religious fanaticism, far more than to love of his native soil, is to be attributed his determined opposition to the Russians, and his stubborn resistance to their rule. His temperament, stern and gloomy, sought for companionship and society solely among the most bigoted and narrow-minded of the Mollahs and expounders of the law of the Koran, and to them solely did he ever apply for advice, they alone seeming to possess any influence over him. Even at the final moment, as was seen, when surrounded by the foe on all sides, he took their opinions as to whether he as a Mohammedan could yield to the Christian; and even since his capture he has busily employed himself in religious

studies in his forced residence at Kalovga. His prisoners he usually treated with great harshness ; many of them were even put to death by his orders at different periods. He carried his hatred of the Russians to great extremes, punishing the natural preference shown towards them by his eldest son, who had been brought up and educated at St. Petersburg, by treating him with great severity, when he received him back in exchange for his prisoners, the two princesses ; so much so, indeed, that it is currently reported the young man died from the harsh usage he received. But his impartiality and justice, not less than his reckless bravery, and the skill which he always displayed in organizing expeditions against the common enemy, made him greatly respected, and procured him unlimited influence over his followers. His rule was a stern one, but the same measure of reward and punishment was impartially meted out to all ; and though living among, and recruiting his troops from, tribes notorious for their disunion and dislike to a central authority, he never admitted the slightest dissensions among those subject to his sway. His proclamations to the tribes were almost invariably of a religious tendency, exhorting them to rise against the Russians as infidels and contemners of the true belief, more than as invaders come to reduce them to subjection. He thus always turned to the utmost account the fanaticism of his followers. His gallant resistance for so many years to the forces of one of the great powers of Europe shows that he possessed military talents of no common order ; and his protracted and obstinate defence of his native land against a foe alien in race and religion, must ever place him in the foremost rank of those devoted men who have fought to the last for their homes against the overwhelming force of a too-powerful invader.

CHAPTER X.

SCHAMYL'S PRISONS FOR RUSSIAN CAPTIVES—SCHEMES TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE RUSSIANS AT GOUNIB—HOSPITALITY OF RUSSIAN OFFICERS—SOLDIERS AND NATIVES AT WORK—A RUSSIAN COMMANDANT WITH A LARGE FAMILY—KUTISHI—A NIGHT WITH PRINCE CHAVCHAVADZEY—WARS BETWEEN THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES—WATCH TOWERS—FIRST SIGHT OF THE CASPIAN—RECEPTION BY RESCHID KHAN AT GENGUTAI—A DRUNKEN LANDLORD—THE FORTIFICATIONS AND GARRISON OF SHURA—CAPTAIN RUGETSKY—MOHAMMEDAN OFFICERS IN THE RUSSIAN ARMY.

CHAPTER X.

WE spent the remaining hours of the evening in wandering about the aoul, and looking at the different points possessing interest connected with the defence. Close to the house which Schamyl had occupied were the prisons in which he had kept in close confinement a few unhappy Russian soldiers who had fallen into his power, and who were only released on the capture of the place. They consisted merely of circular pits, some twenty-five feet deep and ten wide, which, originally built for storing up the winter supplies of corn of the inhabitants, were converted by him into cells for the detention of the captive Russians. They were closed at the top by a large flagstone, in which a small square hole admitted a scanty amount of air and light to the unfortunates huddled together below. In this horrible dungeon they were kept for weeks, being occasionally, but very seldom, allowed to come out and take some exercise while their den was being cleaned, after which they were again obliged to descend into the pit.

We were told numerous anecdotes of Schamyl, all illustrative of his fanaticism and stern love of justice. Shortly after his elevation to the command of the confederates, his mother was discovered in the commission of some act contrary to the tenets of the Koran, and being brought before him for trial, he sentenced her to receive a certain number of stripes. When half the quantity had been inflicted, he ordered the punishment to cease, and then baring his own

shoulders, received the remaining number of lashes himself, in order that the full amount of retribution for the crime might be endured by the family of the offender. Many instances were also related to us of the severity with which he visited any infraction of discipline or disobedience to his orders while in the field, and of the prompt chastisement with which he checked any disposition to plunder the property of a friendly tribe, sometimes even ordering the death of the culprit.

His house, situated at the top of the aoul, was a low shed-like building, a single storey high, running along one side of a courtyard, another side being occupied with a higher tower-like structure, to the upper part of which access was obtained by means of a broad ladder. The whole was formerly the residence of the chief man of the village, and had been appropriated by Schamyl when he dispossessed the previous inhabitants.

The view from the top of this extraordinary natural fortress was, as might be supposed, very extensive, extending to the snowy range of the Caucasus towards the south, and reaching far and wide over the broken and jagged outlines of the surrounding mountains. To the west, in the distance, was Khunsakh and the country of the Avars, between which and us lay, far beneath, the deep and wide valley in which was the Russian encampment where we had spent the night. To the north, a few trees appearing on the verge of the horizon showed where the forest commenced which covered the flank of the hills descending into the steppes, while to the east a mass of rocks of gigantic and fantastic forms extended as far as the eye could reach.

When darkness fell we returned to the house, where our host, the Polish captain, who had served in Siberia for some time, and who had long resided among the frontier Tatars on the remote borders of the empire, including a sojourn of some months at Kiachta, the mart for the exchange of Chinese

produce, made the evening pass very pleasantly with stories of his travels and adventures in those little-known lands. He informed us that it was the intention of the Russians not to permit any of the natives to reside thenceforward on the mountain, to defend the only practicable access to which a strong fort was being erected at the commencement of the chasm through which we had ridden up, and where Schamyl had established his system of loopholed walls.

As Gounib was considered a very healthy place, it was also in contemplation to build an hospital with the materials of the deserted aoul, where the invalids from the circle of Daghestan could regain their health, and recover from the effects of the various disorders contracted during their service in the fever-stricken districts so abundant in the newly-subdued country. The ground, composed of a limestone soil, at a high elevation and well drained, sloping as it did to the centre from three sides, presented all the qualities requisite for such an establishment, the want of which was much felt. Gounib was also intended to become the centre of a system of roads which were to radiate from it in all directions through Daghestan.

Having thus visited everything of any interest at Gounib, we took our departure from it the succeeding morning, the horses and guides which had been promised making their appearance punctually to the time. We stopped at the encampment half way down the mountain, and dined with the staff of General Lazareff, who was still himself absent. The officers pressed us very strongly to stay for the fête which was to take place in a few days on the mountain, to commemorate the anniversary of the day on which the stronghold was taken, and which numbers of native chiefs and their followers, as well as Russian officers from various places, were expected to attend. There were to be fireworks to please the wild mountaineers, games, dances, feats of strength, dexterity, &c., which were expected to attract vast crowds from all parts,

the viceroy himself having promised to honour them with his presence. But unfortunately we were pressed for time—alarming stories about the quantity of snow which had fallen in early winter on the Armenian mountains, over which we had to pass on our intended journey southwards to Mesopotamia, were still fresh in our memories, and we were obliged to decline the many offers of hospitality which we received and continue our journey towards Hadgelmach, a fort on the road to Temikhanshura, where we intended to pass the night.

The soldiers were all busily engaged in the construction of the large fort intended to command the entrance to the gorge which led to the summit. Parties of them were at work in every direction, some hewing stones, some making mortar, others laying the materials, but all seemingly working hard, in striking contrast to a few natives, who had been induced by the offer of half a rouble, or one-and-sixpence English a day, to assist in the task of erection. It was a busy scene; cooking, washing, and all other indoor arrangements were carried on in the outer air; and the different parties told off to their various employments, accomplished their tasks with the greatest order and regularity. It seemed, however, a strange position to choose as a site for a fortress, being commanded completely by the opposite mountain of Cheger, which overhung it at a distance of apparently not more than a couple of versts, and a battery established on which would soon render it untenable. But the few guns which the Lesghians could use would be too small to have any effect, and most probably the Russians never expect to be attacked by any more formidable force than a body of indifferently armed mountaineers, against whom their loopholed walls would afford an efficient protection.

After the usual siesta—the Russian officers all through the Caucasus adopting the custom of sleeping for a couple of hours after dinner, the hour for which meal is generally one



o'clock—we bade adieu to our entertainers, and continued our descent into the valley of the Kara Koisev by a mule-path winding among the huge limestone boulders which everywhere lay about; having fallen from the cliffs above and bounded down the slope to their present position, where the enormous masses were strewn in every direction. Crossing the river by a ford, we followed the course of a zigzag path up the steep side of the valley, and having in a couple of hours reached the summit, paused for a few minutes to rest our blown horses and take a final view of Gounib, which lay before us, the base studded over with the tents of the Russian soldiery, and the rock wall of dark grey crowning the summit with its massive rampart. But we could not delay long, and so, having taken a last look of that extraordinary fastness, we rode for some time down a gradual descent, then, our road suddenly rising, we crossed over another mountain, and thence descending into a plain, came upon a newly-constructed road, following the course of which for some miles we arrived at a late hour at Hadgelmachi.

It had begun to rain a short time before sunset, and had continued to do so more heavily as the evening advanced, so that we were in dismay when on our arrival we received a message from the commandant, informing us that, being a married man, with a large family of small children, his house was quite full, and he regretted much he could not receive us. His apologies being accompanied by a recommendation to go to an inn, which he said had been just established by an Armenian, we accordingly wended our way to this promised house of entertainment. But when, after much difficulty, we found it, it turned out to be only a wine shop some ten feet square, the proprietor of which, himself and all his family living therein, peremptorily refused to have anything to do with us. So there was nothing for it but to despatch Giorgi to the commandant again, and

this time with better success, as he consented to accommodate us, and we dismounted at the door of a very good-looking house, only too happy at getting shelter anywhere from the drenching rain.

If we incommoded the worthy commandant, which no doubt we did, his sleepy and heavy eyes showing that he had only just risen from bed, he did not allow it to appear more than he could help. By his orders supper was soon got ready for us, and he made his unexpected guests as comfortable as he could. As neither his wife nor he could speak any language but Russian, we were reduced to making all our apologies through Giorgi, who, as we supposed by the few words into which he translated our elaborate excuses, cut them very short indeed. In fact, he afterwards told us that had he not, when we sent him to ask for admittance, adopted a very high tone, he never would have succeeded in obtaining it, so much had the large family deadened the usual Slavonic feeling of hospitality in the Russian commandant. Of the numerous children with which he was blessed we saw nothing till the morning, when they seemed to tumble out of the walls by twos and threes, in what number we did not exactly ascertain.

It continued to rain during the whole night, and we were roused up near morning by the fall of an outhouse roofed with wood, covered by the usual thick layer of clay. This had got so soaked with the water that it became too heavy for its supports, which gave way, and the whole came down with a crash. However, no more accidents occurred, and the rain clearing off at noon, the next day we bade adieu to the commandant, his wife, and numerous family, the latter collectively, and started for Kutishi, a village eight miles distant, where one of the princes of the Georgian house of Chavchavadzey, who was governor of the district, lived with a small garrison. Our road lay up deep gullies, excavated by torrents in thick beds of blue mud, which although

they had become solidified, crumbled away again under the influence of water.

Round stones, perfectly smooth, in some instances so much so as to appear polished, and of all sizes, from six inches in diameter to twice as many feet, were embedded in the sides of these gullies, the surface of the cliffs being everywhere studded with them as if they had been fired from a cannon. These water-worn boulders lay also in great numbers in the bed of the torrent up which we were riding, our horses often having much difficulty in keeping their feet while scrambling over heaps of them.

After a couple of hours of this kind of riding we got on more open ground, and soon arrived at Kutishi, where we were at once welcomed by Prince Chavhavadzey, who wore the old Georgian costume, a blue velvet cap, a gown of the same material, with a yellow silk tunic underneath, and loose white trousers. He was a large and handsome man, but as unfortunately he spoke only Russian, one of the officers who lived with him, and who spoke a very little French, had to act as our interpreter. His house consisted of the usual building round a centre courtyard, an open gallery running along one side, into which his own apartments opened. The wall of his principal room was decorated with a carpet, the design of which was "Returning from Deer-stalking," before which hung a number of guns and arms of all kinds, English, French, and Lesghian, forming a very handsome and well-arranged collection. The walls of the principal rooms, opening one into the other, were tastefully ornamented, but the ceilings of all dripped with wet, the roof being seemingly leaky in every direction. The prince gave us an excellent dinner, with all kinds of French and German wines; and we spent the evening very pleasantly, listening to the stories told by himself and by the officers of their campaigns against the mountaineers, and of the obstinate resistance to overwhelming numbers often shown by them.

From the gallery where we were sitting the prince pointed out a house in which, after the Lesghians had been driven out of Kutishi by the Russian troops, three of Schamyl's followers, determined not to survive the capture of the place, remained behind, and firing incessantly from loopholes in the walls, which were of stone and very thick, actually killed thirty of their opponents before they as well as the house were destroyed by the fire of a gun which was brought to bear upon it. He also related an anecdote which would serve to illustrate the constant state of warfare that formerly, and even up to recent times, existed between adjoining tribes, and the ludicrous results to which such a state of things between neighbours sometimes gave rise. He assured us that in a large aoul called Ratlou, not very far south of Gounib, which was built on territory inhabited by portions of two distinct tribes, that had for some reason about the beginning of this century declared war against each other, the males of the population dared not for a long time leave their houses for a moment, as, if they did so, they would be shot down at once from the houses of the opposite tribe. Accordingly the women of both parties, who were allowed to pass in and out unmolested, carried on all the agricultural operations, while to the men fell the indoor work; and this extraordinary state of things existed so long, that in 1836, when the internecine wars were all put an end to by Khasi Mollah and Schamyl, there were young men in Ratlou, of twenty-four years of age, who had never been outside the walls of the houses in which they had been born. It is said that the greatest difficulty experienced by Schamyl was that of putting an end to the constant petty wars which had from time immemorial prevailed among the tribes, and calming the bitterness of feeling engendered by frequent murders on both sides.

All around Kutishi we observed numerous aouls dotting the sides of the mountains, and many watchtowers, erected during the time of Schamyl's dominion as a safeguard

against his perpetual forays. Slender, lofty, and strongly built, they seemed like so many petty fortalices out of which a raid into the territory adjoining might at any moment be made.

Although the reception-rooms of Prince Chavchavadzey were so handsomely furnished, yet he did not seemingly possess a spare bedroom, or, still more curious, a bed. So we spent the night on sofas in the room in which we had dined, dodging the rain, which in several places penetrated through the ceiling.

Having a long journey over very bad paths to accomplish the next day, we left early and rode for some thirty miles through a stony, mountainous country, up one hill and down another, all presenting the same bare and sterile appearance, until at last, from the top of one a little higher than the rest, we beheld in the distance the blue water of the Caspian, which is eighty feet below the level of the Black Sea. Not a sail appeared upon its glassy surface, and the wide expanse before us seemed unruffled by a single wave. The mountain range upon which we stood gradually descended to the shore, which presented a desert and arid appearance throughout. No sign of life was to be seen on this vast inland ocean, and the dead calm of the heated atmosphere added to the monotony of the scene.

Our halting-place was still some miles distant; so, after a short delay, we resumed our route, and soon arrived at Gengutai, the fortified house of Reschid Khan, the younger brother of Ibrahim, Khan of the Avars. The latter had given us a letter to his brother while we were at Khunsakh, and on presenting it we were at once welcomed by him, and installed in very comfortable quarters. On our arrival we found that a number of officers from the garrison of Temikhanshura had also come to Gengutai, where they intended remaining for the night, and most of the available rooms were filled by them and their servants.

Reschid Khan himself was a slight, slim young man of twenty-two years of age, and had lately, after the manner of younger brothers in more civilized lands, improved his fortunes considerably by espousing a mature yet comely matron, widow of a very rich man, who dying childless, and having no near relations, bequeathed to his wife all he possessed. The lady very soon consoled herself, and bestowed her charms and wealth on the fortunate Reschid, who, being fifteen years younger than herself, had probably for that reason, found favour in her sight. Unhappily we were not favoured with the society of our hostess while we remained at Gengutai, she and her handmaidens being busily engaged in household occupations, and in superintending the preparations made for the entertainment of her numerous guests. Nevertheless we got a glimpse of her for an instant, when our attention was attracted by the sound of a shrill voice pitched in a very high key, apparently scolding some refractory damsel. She was a stout, handsome woman, with the usual large blue eyes of the mountain women, and a well-shaped nose and mouth; but she did not give us time to form an adequate appreciation of her beauty, a momentary glance being all that was permitted, as she at once disappeared on finding she was observed by the Franks.

The house was a large, two-storied building, with a courtyard in front, surrounded by a high wall, and seemed calculated to offer a stout resistance to an attacking party unprovided with cannon.

Reschid Khan wore the uniform of a lieutenant in the Guards—which rank he held in the Russian army—the light blue and silver of which added to his already too effeminate appearance. The jacket he wore open, displaying underneath an embroidered shirt; and the tight Hungarian hussar overalls were terminated by a pair of blue slippers. It was difficult to refrain from a smile on reflecting that the delicate figure before us, clad in a travestie of a hussar uniform, and

covered with embroidery, was an Avar—a descendant of those renowned and savage warriors of the middle ages.

Horse-trappings and arms inlaid with gold and silver hung on the walls, which were covered with Persian embroidered carpets; in niches in the wall also were carefully arranged a German silver teapot and a large supply of willow-pattern plates and dishes.

We dined in a room with rows of shelves all round on which were stowed away a quantity of the quilted cotton coverlets which are used universally through the East as beds, and under which some dozen, seemingly in use every night, were rolled up and put aside close to the wall as in a barrack-room. We sat down to dinner twelve in number, the young khan doing the honours in a nervous manner, and we soon found that, however true might be his fair widow's reputation for thrift, her cookery was of the simplest description; for the mainstay of the banquet consisted of an enormous pillau of rice, on the top of which was a very small portion of meat and fowl.

Two or three of the officers spoke French very well. One of them, a Pole, was colonel on the staff of Prince Melikoff, Governor of Daghestan. He had been exiled from Poland in 1830 on account of his having partaken in the rebellion, and was sent to serve in the Caucasus as a private soldier. But after a short time he was promoted, and rose from grade to grade, till he reached his present rank. He spoke with earnest longing of his desire again to revisit his country, an absence of thirty years having by no means extinguished his interest in it. But this natural desire he entertained no hope of ever being able to gratify. He was an extremely well-informed man, had read a great deal, and was well versed in all the better current literature of the day. We sat up talking on various subjects until a late hour, when we all retired for the night, finding our beds arranged for us on the floor, the silken coverlets of which were embroidered

with gold lace. One was also placed near for Giorgi, who, while he by no means seemed to appreciate the magnificence thus lavished upon him, complained loudly of the insufficiency of the means provided for satisfying his appetite.

The next morning our party broke up early, our host and his military guests going by the road we had traversed the preceding day to Kutishi, to spend the night with Prince Chavchavadzey, on their way to assist at the Gounib fêtes, and we proceeded to Temikhanshura, whence we intended to take the high road by the shores of the Caspian to Baku, from which we were distant about 200 miles. After a ride of three or four hours through a fertile, partially-cultivated country, we arrived at Shura, as it is called for shortness, and found that, as our arrival had been expected, the corporal at the gate had been told to conduct us at once to the "hotel." We accordingly accompanied him to a small brick and plaster house, the interior of which consisted of a raki shop and one room.

The furniture of the latter was probably unique among that of inns. A small table, which once had four legs, but now stood somehow on three, was in the centre of the room; a bench, broken across in the middle, occupied one side, and was faced on the other by a barrel organ in a sad state of dilapidation. This instrument, which completed the entire plenishing of the establishment, by no means surprised us, as barrel organs, whether out of order or in working condition, are much appreciated in the Caucasus, which, seemingly, is the ultimate destination of all these musical instruments when worn out by hard service in Europe. The Khan of the Avars possessed one at Khunsakh; his brother Reshid another at Gengutai; and in several aouls on our road our ears had been greeted by melodies familiar to the ear as "household words," proceeding from a machine which at one time had possibly been proudly borne

through the streets of London, but had now in its old age fallen from its high estate.

A soldier who seemed loitering about was appealed to by us, no one else being visible, as to the whereabouts of the landlord. He informed us that we should have to wait for some time before that worthy individual made his appearance, as it was his invariable habit to get drunk every day at eleven A.M., and remain so till four or five P.M.; after which he continued sober till it was time to get drunk again before going to bed. This information satisfying us that we should get on best by relying upon ourselves, we enlisted the soldier's services by the prospect of sundry kopeks, by means of which he would be able himself to arrive at the same blissful state of unconsciousness, and made ourselves as much at home as circumstances would permit. Although there was a large supply of ice in the house, no water could be found; and as after a hot and dusty ride a wash is always refreshing, we sent our military friend in search of the pure element. In a little time he returned with a black bottle full, carefully corked down. However, after some hours we got to rights, and leaving the soldier to desire the proprietor of the hotel to get us some "stehc," or cabbage soup with beef, ready as soon as he was recovered from his morning debauch, we walked about the town till such time as we supposed that event would take place.

We found Shura a large town, of probably six thousand inhabitants, built, on the general plan of the frontier fortifications, in the form of a square; a deep ditch and high clay wall, topped with the usual barrier of thorny brushwood, being flanked by square towers on which were mounted guns whose fire swept the sides. The houses were solidly built of stone and the usual mud mortar; the streets were all laid out at right angles to each other, and were ankle-deep in slush from the rain that had fallen some days previously.

This being an important position, placed as it is at the

entrance to Daghestan, was occupied by a large force, an entire regiment of cavalry raised among the Tatars being included in the garrison. The barracks were large and well built, the officers' quarters apparently roomy and good, and the house of the governor was a handsome building, erected in front of some extensive pleasure-grounds, which were tastefully laid out, and planted with shady trees, shrubs, and flowers. The town seemed singularly empty, and the long streets were apparently quite deserted, the greater part of the inhabitants having gone to Gounib for the fêtes, which were the only topic of conversation everywhere.

Having thus disposed of some hours we returned to our hotel, and found our host quite recovered and busied in the preparation of the stchee. He turned out to be a German, who had also some land in the vicinity, the possession of which most likely furnished him with the means of indulging in the luxury of getting drunk twice daily—a practice of which he did not seem by any means ashamed, or in the least disconcerted at its being remarked.

As Prince Melikoff, to whom we had brought letters from General Millivtine, was absent, we called next day, the night having been spent on the broken bench, on Captain Rugetsy, of the Prince's staff, to whom the colonel we had met at Gengutai had given us a letter. He invited us at once to stay with him, and as he spoke French very well, we spent our second day at Shura much more pleasantly than the first. Captain Rugetsy, belonging to the corps of Engineers, was a very well-educated man, and had been sent to superintend the construction of some of the military roads lately completed through the mountains.

It is a curious circumstance that when the Russian officers talk of each other as being able to speak foreign languages, and being otherwise better educated than is usual, they always use the word "civilized" as expressive of this kind of superiority. Captain Rugetsy showed us everything worthy

of remark in the town, and in the public gardens we were not a little surprised to meet ladies wearing European costumes. In the evening some of the Mussulman officers of the Tatar regiment of cavalry quartered in the town came into his rooms, and it was difficult to believe that the soldierly-looking men in tight uniforms, and in manner no way different from the other Russian officers, could be Mohammedans and Asiatics. The Russian system in this differs from our Indian one, inasmuch as, while in our army no native can command a European, in the Russian no distinction whatever is made; Mohammedan and Christian officers are intermingled, the senior commanding the junior in every case, and no limit being placed to the promotion of the Mussulman soldier. But it should be remembered that, while this is a very safe measure on the part of the Russians, in whose Caucasian army the Mohammedan soldier stands in the proportion of five to fifty, it would be different in India, where the European is as one in a thousand to the population.

CHAPTER XI.

ADVANTAGE OF TRAVELLING WITH A PADAROSHNA WITH TWO SEALS
—DERBEND—REMINISCENCES OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS' VISIT
TO DERBEND — AN OBLIGING POLICE-MASTER — GENERAL
MELIKOFF'S REMINISCENCES OF THE SIEGE OF KARS—RIDE TO
BASARI—A JEWISH VILLAGE—USE OF A RUSSIAN DOCTOR IN
AN ATTACK OF FEVER—THE ATESH DJA, OR FIRE TEMPLE—
MANUFACTURE OF NAPHTHA—FIRE-WORSHIPPERS FROM INDIA
—THEIR RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES AND CEREMONIES.

CHAPTER XI.

WE had now quitted the mountain district of Daghestan, or the "Land of Mountains," which certainly is appropriately named, had left behind us the country raised to European celebrity by the deeds of Schamyl, and were again to recommence our telega-travelling upon roads. We accordingly began to make the necessary preparations. Captain Rugetsy procured for us a padaroshna with two seals, which obtained for us the same position in the eyes of the postmasters as if we had been officers travelling on government service, and which was accordingly of great advantage to us all the way on our circuitous route back to Tiflis, as far as which town we were to travel with it.

We parted from Captain Rugetsy early the next morning, the 5th of September, and drove rapidly for some time in the direction of the Caspian, through a hilly country, which by degrees became covered with brushwood, apparently full of red-legged partridges, coveys of them feeding in every glade, so tame that they scarcely took any notice of us as we passed. There were also plenty of rabbits grazing in every direction in the more open parts of the scrub, which after some miles changed into forest, large trees making their appearance for the first time since we had left Videgne. Descending near to the shore, we drove along at some distance from it, the forest clothing the sides of the hills to our right. The trees commenced at the foot of the

mountains, the shore being nearly bare of vegetation, which was burnt up by the drought and heat. A scanty dry grass alone seemed to grow in spite of the parching rays of the sun. The Caspian was as solitary and deserted as when for the first time we saw its waters from the mountains above Gengutai; not a sail being visible upon their surface.

Changing horses four or five times, an operation which was now performed with a celerity that showed us the advantage of travelling with a government padaroshna, presumedly in the service of the State—we arrived at Dischlagar, another newly-established military post, at fifty miles distance from Shura, where we intended to pass the night. We found it a large town for these regions, approaching Shura in size, and resembling it also too closely in the character of its posting-house, which was also called an hotel. We began to find a great difference between the accommodation at the posting-houses on this by-road, and those on the main line through the Caucasus from Tiflis to Russia. At the latter, the universal steech was always to be obtained in a short time, and there was no difficulty in procuring tea and wine; but on the former we soon discovered that the traveller was expected to bring with him everything he was likely to want on the road, and that consequently no provision whatever had been made for his entertainment in any way, rye-bread, and occasionally tea, being the only fare to be met with in most cases. However, as we had become by this time well acquainted with the necessity of prompt action, Giorgi lost no time in going to the market, and purchasing mutton and potatoes, fare which we considered ourselves very fortunate in having been able to procure.

There was a large garrison at Dischlagar, which occupied an important position, commanding one of the passes into the mountains on the eastern flank of Daghestan. It was built in a similar manner to all the other frontier posts, but being surrounded with woods, had not the same forlorn and

solitary appearance that the other fortresses of the Line in general present.

We left Dischlagar next day, and had only gone two versts when one of our hind wheels came to pieces, and we had to send back for another. The next stage one of our horses kicked so furiously as to prostrate the unlucky animal in the centre of the three, and finally, four miles from Derbend, our front wheels broke up, and we had to walk the remainder of the way.

Our route for the fifty miles between Dischlagar and Derbend lay along the shore on a dead, flat, burning plain, intersected by numerous small sluggish streams from the mountains, which had here receded to a distance of some ten miles or so from the sea. These mountain torrents, on reaching the plain, become changed into muddy streams, slowly coursing across the parched steppe, in which they are often swallowed up, creating a marsh, covered generally with brushwood and rank grass, and a first-rate refuge for game, with which, we were told, it abounded, wild boar being very common, and pheasants and partridges in great numbers.

The town of Derbend, in Turkish "the Closed Gates," is built in the form of a parallelogram, three miles in length by half a mile in width. A spur of the Caucasus juts out to within a couple of miles of the sea, and on it the citadel, half a mile square, is built, the town extending from its foot to the water's edge, thus completely blocking up the only practicable road to the north from Persia, with the exception of that of Dariel. A wall, thirty feet in height by ten in breadth, surrounding both town and citadel, is flanked at equal distances by sixty towers, each of which formerly mounted cannon. This wall is of great antiquity, tradition attributing its erection to Alexander the Great. It also alleged that it was repaired by Chosroes, and in later times by the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, who inhabited the city for some time. The stones composing it are of great

size, some being six feet long by as many high. The whole is in perfect repair, and there being no suburbs or houses built outside, it stands out with the greater relief from the plain around. The interior of the enclosure is not more than half occupied by the modern town, the houses of which are small and mean-looking; but here and there a new street is rising up straight and wide, according to the usual Russian and American rule. The lower part, nearest the water, is an empty space, where markets are held, and horses, sheep, and cattle sold by the natives of the surrounding districts.

The port is small and shallow, and seemingly nearly empty. The only vessels to be seen are a few schkootes, as the flat-bottomed craft navigating the Volga and Caspian are called. These schkootes are often built at Nijni Novogorod and Kazan, of the timber composing the box-like boats in which the corn and other productions of the interior arrive at these places, and are then floated down the Volga, and sold to the Caspian merchants at Astrakhan. They are very rudely and roughly put together, sail badly, and never venture very far from shore. The harbour, or rather roadstead, was totally unprotected, but a breakwater to remedy this defect was in contemplation, to be completed in some years.

We crawled through the narrow and dirty streets at a snail's pace, in our broken telega, fearing every moment that the wheels, which we had patched up as well as we could, would again give way, and in this plight reached the post-house, in which, although an imposing-looking edifice, and containing some very large rooms for such an establishment, we were told we could get nothing but house-room, and that whatever we wanted we must buy in the bazaar. Giorgi was quickly sent out on a foraging expedition, and soon returned—the hour being too late to attempt any cookery—with a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine, and some grapes and figs, the latter remarkably good, Derbend being celebrated for the excellence and quantity of its

fruit, which is grown to a great extent on the plains and adjacent mountains. The grapes, which were very fine, cost two copeks, or two-thirds of a penny per pound; the figs half that price; and on them we dined very heartily, not having been able to procure anything since the previous day. An old soldier, who kept the keys of the different rooms, was urgently entreated to provide us with rugs or coverlets of any kind, but in vain, so we lay down on the boards, and in spite of the mosquitoes, which were in swarms, managed to sleep through the night.

Next morning, while engaged in discussing our breakfast of grapes and bread, we were visited by a M. Michelevsky, who was exiled to Derbend from St. Petersburg for having written some pamphlets displeasing to government, and for having been in correspondence with M. Herten, the editor of the "Kolokol," a newspaper professing more advanced principles than are tasteful to the Russian cabinet, which is published in London for circulation in Russia, and, in spite of censors, Custom-houses, and police, is largely read there. M. Michelevsky had already been two years at Derbend, but having lately petitioned for pardon, he expected soon permission to return home, and also to travel, a privilege which he seemed to value very highly. He had already been in London and Paris, and had a brother who was then studying at the Sorbonne. We found that by chance we had arrived at Derbend on the anniversary of the emperor's coronation, the 7th of September (N.S.), which was celebrated by the firing of salutes by the military. As the day was a general holiday, all who took part in the rejoicings were *en grande tenue*.

Derbend being very rarely visited by strangers, our arrival apparently caused much curiosity, no European traveller having passed since Alexandre Dumas, who seems to have discovered there "archives" of something concerning the existence of which nothing was known before or after his

visit, but on which he has enlarged in one of his remarkable volumes to no small extent.

While walking up from the post-station to the citadel, to present to General Loris Melikoff the letter we had brought to him from Tiflis, we came suddenly upon an open space, in the centre of which a knot of officers in full uniform were collected together round one who held in his hand a printed paper, which he was reading aloud for the benefit of the rest, who seemed to listen to him with great curiosity and attention. This turned out to be our padaroshna, which had been sent for in the morning by the police-master, who was the reader, and who, as soon as he perceived us, came forward and informed us that he had been ordered by General Melikoff, who had just heard of our arrival, to invite us to dine with him in the fort. He also begged us to come into his house while the horses which he offered us to ride to the fort were getting ready, and gave us some coffee, the first we had tasted in the Russian empire. In his drawing-room, which was very handsomely furnished, was a rosewood grand piano, that had been sent to him from St. Petersburg, down the Volga, and across the Caspian.

We spent an hour with him, chatting over our ride through Daghestan. He put many questions to us about the fête at Gounib, which seemed to be the universal topic of conversation. At last our horses appeared, and we rode up to the citadel, where we were most kindly received by General Melikoff, who spoke French and German fluently. An Armenian by birth, he was a brother of Prince Melikoff (the commander-in-chief of the Daghestan district, whose seat of government we had visited at Temikhanshura) and had only two months previously arrived at Derbend from Constantinople, where he had been attached to the Russian embassy. He was quite a young man, not seemingly more than three or four and thirty, and owed his rapid promotion in the first instance to his gallantry at the siege of Kars, of

which after it surrendered he was made governor. At the commencement of the siege he was only captain of artillery, but by his talents and distinguished service had risen in three years to be general of division.

He inquired very particularly for his late antagonist, General Williams, and expressed the highest opinion of the talents and skill of Colonel Lake, to whom he seemed to attribute the chief merit of the defence.

We walked round the citadel, which is in much the same state as when taken from the Persians, the same guns in some instances still remaining, and the fortifications being unchanged. Down below us lay Derbend, a narrow strip of building running like a road with high walls from where we stood to the water's edge. In the centre is a large church or cathedral, and there are also some smaller Christian chapels, and a Mohammedan mosque. The hill on which the citadel is built is some four hundred feet in height, thus commanding the whole town, which commences at its base. Not a vestige of building appeared outside the walls, the inhabitants considering it very unlucky to erect any dwellings beyond them. The town consequently presents an almost unique appearance, taking one back at once to the middle ages, the times when no one dared to live, if possessed of anything, without the walls of a fortified town. The roofs of the houses, with the exception of the few new Russian ones, being all flat, they have, as seen from above, a very mean-looking, dirty appearance, and they give the town an Oriental aspect.

Behind the citadel the wooded hills rise higher and higher till they assume the character of mountains clothed with forests, stretching away into the interior. General Melikoff assured us that the remains of a wall, which he believed to have been erected by the Persians under the Sassanian dynasty, as a barrier against the incursions of the wandering tribes to the north, still existed, running due west

from Derbend in a line towards Tiflis, and extending a distance of one hundred miles, until it reaches the main Caucasian chain, of which the range of hills we saw were only a spur. It had been built of large unbaked bricks, and was flanked by numerous towers and forts at certain distances from each other, commanding the weaker points. The bricks were, he said, eighteen inches square and six high. In many places the remains are still plainly visible, and some part of it existing in a nearly perfect state at only a few versts distance, he pressed us to go to see.

He also mentioned—a fact of which, though we had been at the place itself, we were ignorant—that from Sukúm Kalèh, on the Black Sea, to the summit of the Caucasus, forty versts distant, the ruins of a lofty wall built by the Genoese during their occupation of the post as a colony, were yet visible. Though by antiquaries the wall near Derbend, as well as those of the town itself, are attributed to the time of the Sassanian kings of Persia, yet the local traditions assert that they were erected by Alexander the Great, of whom numberless legends exist all through the East. General Melikoff showed us some exquisitely worked arms which he had procured in the mountains, and also assured us that he had himself seen at a village thirty miles off, on the hills, a large collection of European arms, armour, &c., of the time of the Crusades, on some of which the armorial bearings of their former owners yet remained engraved, but that he had vainly endeavoured to induce the owners to part with any of them, although he had offered large sums. He talked much about the numerous languages spoken by the mountaineers, amounting, according to some authorities, to seventy, and traced the origin of some of the tribes to Italian, Genoese, and German sources, many German and Italian words still existing in common use among them. Probably through the lapse of time, possibly through their unwillingness to acknowledge a Christian ancestry, their legends make

no allusion to their descent from European sources ; and some words only of their original language remain mingled with their adopted tongues to attest their foreign derivation. In many places in the still unconquered districts of the western Caucasus Italian inscriptions on ancient tombs are said by returned deserters to exist, and many ruins of Christian churches, showing in their architecture proofs of the European origin of their founders or builders, are reported yet to remain in the defiles of the mountains.

A very serious crime had occurred at Derbend a few days previously. A Tatar in a fit of jealousy, which was proved to have been totally unfounded, had cut his wife in pieces with a hatchet, and had then given himself up, feigning madness in order to escape punishment for his crime. He was to be tried the next day, and, to judge from the story told, had very little chance of escape from the bullet, the usual mode of execution for the Mussulman, although he still persisted in his feint of insanity.

Not far from Derbend, to the north, are the tombs of the Arab chiefs who shortly after the death of Mohammed overran Persia and spread their conquests over the whole of Asia Minor. Derbend was the limit of their victorious advance to the north ; the impenetrable mountains and boundless steppes opposing impassable barriers to their further progress in that direction. For a long time during the existence of the Arab power, Derbend was considered of great importance as a frontier town, and the Caliph Haroun al Raschid for some time resided in it and repaired the walls and defences.

On returning to the general's quarters, he called our attention to the window pierced in the thickness of the wall at the upper or northern end of the dining-room. This window was broken out by Peter the Great, who occupied these rooms when he captured Derbend at the commencement of the last century, the Persians, who had received large

reinforcements after their evacuation of the place, having reinvested it and shut him up closely within the walls. He remained thus besieged for many days, during which he anxiously expected the arrival of a force he had ordered to be despatched from Astrakhan to his relief, and in his eagerness to behold its first appearance, he had this window pierced in the wall to the north, from which direction the troops would arrive. General Melikoff, in a speech that he made at a dinner he had given a few days before our arrival to commemorate the taking of Gounib, alluded to this circumstance, saying that after the capture of Derbend, the fall of Schamyl and the reduction of Gounib were the last step to the conquest and ultimate civilization of Daghestan.

We dined and spent the evening with the general, our party including M. Michelevsky, who, beyond an enforced residence, had apparently nothing else to complain of. We had received much kindness from the general during the short time we spent at Derbend, and it was with great regret we afterwards heard that, while leading an expedition against some revolted tribes, he fell mortally wounded, thus terminating his brief but brilliant career. •

Having taken farewell of M. Michelevsky, we returned to our post-house, from which we were to depart the next morning.

We took advantage, however, of the hour which would still remain ere darkness set in to take another ramble in the lower part of the town, and we went to see the first resting-place of Peter the Great when he arrived at Derbend, and before he had taken up his quarters in the citadel. It was a small stone hut, and was surrounded by a plain iron railing, the space around being used as a market-place and covered with filth of every description. We spent our second night at the post-house more comfortably than the first, the police-master having sent us rugs and coverlets, when we informed him that we had been unable to get any at the station.

We left Derbend on the 8th of September, and drove for three or four miles through a succession of vineyards and orchards of fruit trees of all kinds, the plain being in this particular very dissimilar from that to the north of the town, which was bare and uncultivated. After passing the vineyards, the plain assumed again its arid and steppe-like appearance; in the distance we once perceived a few deer which had descended from the mountains. We passed near Derbend a number of bullock-carts laden with garance, the root from which the red dye used by the French for the overalls of their soldiers is extracted, which is largely grown in the neighbourhood of the town. The soil and great heat of the climate would seem to answer admirably for its production; we were told that the value of the quantity annually exported amounted to no less a sum than three hundred thousand pounds, and that the supply was on the increase.

At one of the post-stations the postmaster proposed that we should spend the time we had to wait while changing horses in eating grapes and peaches in his garden, and we accordingly made a hearty meal upon the bunches which hung invitingly from the vines trained over arbours. This, as we found afterwards, was a very foolish proceeding, as even the natives themselves seldom eat fruit in the heat of the day.

A muddy river, some hundred yards in width, crossing our course, delayed us for some time. It was the Samour, which being now greatly swollen by recent rains, our yams-tchik at first seemed doubtful whether we could venture to ford it. However, three men, who appeared to have been placed there for the purpose of assisting travellers to cross, assured us that we might go on, and gave us practical proof of the truth of their assertion by coming over themselves to help us across the water, which ran like a torrent, reaching over their hips. So in we went, the telega lurching to and

fro as the current bore down full upon it. When the wheels met with any obstacle on the stony bed, two men went to the horses' heads and held them in the proper direction, while another kept down the telega on the upper side, to which he served also as a breakwater. So we crossed; a few bullocks that had been driven in after us lost their footing, and swimming the stream gallantly, landed some distance lower down.

On the opposite side there was a fresh difficulty. The bank being very steep, and the water between three and four feet in depth, the horses were quite unable to pull even the little telega up. But ropes being procured, which we fastened round the vehicle, we took a long and strong pull together from the shore, and succeeded in bringing it safely to land, strange to say, without any accident. It being too dangerous to ford this river by night, travellers are obliged to spend the hours till morning breaks, upon whichever bank they may happen to be, and piles of brushwood are placed for them to burn. In consequence of this and other delays, it was very late when we arrived at Kuba, and we drove at once to the quarters of Colonel Broussiloff, the governor, to whom we had brought a letter of introduction from General Melikoff. We found that he was absent at a ball given by the officers to commemorate the submission of Daghestan, from which he did not return till after midnight. We then sat down to supper, and the morning light appeared before we separated.

The next day Colonel Broussiloff proposed that we should ride out to Basari, about six miles distant, formerly a fortified aoul subject to Schamyl, but now a Russian fort, and the permanent head-quarters of a regiment. It had been taken by storm in 1843, and the stumps of the forest trees which had been cut down to facilitate the Russian advance, and deprive the mountaineers of shelter for their marksmen, still covered the hills around.

We left Kuba by a road which crossed a small stream by a wooden bridge, the great length and height of which seemed very disproportionate to the size of the river it had to span; but we were told that this insignificant rivulet was often swollen by the winter rains to a large size, rising high above its banks in many places, and flooding the country for a great distance around.

We found Basari a very pretty town, beautifully situated among the hills which rise around it on all sides. The whole town is a strictly military settlement, all the houses being built by the soldiers themselves, who had erected rows of cottages which, for cleanliness and neatness, at least outside, could not be surpassed. The marriage of soldiers in the Caucasus is much encouraged by government, a married man being allowed many privileges, such as leave from duty while engaged in building his house, which thenceforth belongs to him. The officers' quarters were also built by the men, and a very handsome building of large size in the centre of the town, used as a club-house and for giving entertainments, reflected great credit on the military architects and workmen, who seemed to practise all descriptions of trades. Being the head-quarters of a regiment, four out of the six battalions of which it consists are supposed occasionally to be in garrison together; but this very seldom happens, as two or three are generally absent on various expeditions into the mountains, or occupying other posts. All the buildings are neatly roofed with tiles, the hideous yellow plaster is in most cases absent, and, on the whole, Basari would be considered anywhere as an exceedingly prettily-situated and nicely-kept town. We remained there for the night, putting up in the club-house, and returned to Kuba the next day by the same road.

Opposite Kuba, on the other side of the river, is a large straggling village, inhabited solely by Jews, who seem to be in a state of poverty and destitution, but nevertheless

continue to live there, probably because it has been for a long time, even under the Persians, set apart for those professing their faith. It stands on higher ground than Kuba itself, and is connected with it by the wooden bridge.

We called on Monsieur de Kotzebue, a brother of the savant of that name, who had come to Kuba for the sole purpose of speculating in garance, the cultivation of which dye he hoped to be able largely to extend. Although in such an out-of-the-way place, we found him surrounded with many comforts and even luxuries, his rooms well furnished, and the walls covered with numerous pictures and engravings. He expressed great confidence in the future of the country when communication with Europe became more easy, believing it destined to compete successfully with China, Syria, and Italy in the silk markets of the world. The climate is well suited for mulberry-trees, and the quality of the silk already produced is very fine. He expressed himself quite satisfied with his present residence, though at such a distance from all civilization, and found constant employment in the various occupations which he had created for himself.

We left Kuba on the 10th September, our road lying over a dreary steppe, on which nothing occurred to break the monotony, except the changing of horses at the different post-houses, and the various vexatious delays which always attended that operation, generally, however, put an end to by a small bribe. By evening we had got over fifty miles, and spent the night in a station better than usual, for, though mud outside, it contained bread and butter within; its appearance reminded us of the proverb, The greater show the worse reality. The next day again the same steppe, on which, however, there were now to be seen herds of two-humped or Bactrian camels grazing, finding a congenial food in the tufts of any thorny herbage which can exist

in the parched soil. We also passed some flocks of the large bustard, and numerous sand-grouse. The sun was intensely hot, there was not a breath of wind, and the heavy atmosphere was heated by the scorching rays which were reflected from the sandy, arid soil beneath. Save the sea on our left, the dreary, desolate aspect of which was broken only by one tiny sail, no water was to be perceived; the thirsty plain drinking up immediately the small streams that issued from the hills, some ten miles distant to our right. At the post-houses some of the horses were always employed in fetching water for the others, in skins slung on either side, and in many instances it had to be sent for thirteen or fourteen miles. In some places the salt crystallizing on the surface gave the plains a chalky appearance, and increased the look of desolation that everywhere prevailed. At last, when we had reached a point twenty versts from Baku, the ground began to rise, and we were soon driving over hills, from which we descended into the town, built at the water's edge, the harbour containing three or four steamers and a number of small coasting craft.

Baku stands in the centre of a small bay; the old town is surrounded with a double wall, within which are clustered together a mass of grey-coloured, flat-roofed houses, covered with a layer of asphalt. It is not very large, the greater number of the modern houses being built outside the walls, when, after the Russian conquest, it became safe to do so. The population consists chiefly of Tatars and Armenians. The houses have all an Asiatic appearance, there being no windows facing the street, and close lattice-work covering those in the rear that look out into the courtyard. The present residence of the Russian governor, which has been modernized into a mixture of European and Asiatic architecture, was formerly the palace of the Khans of Baku, whose descendant is now a Russian officer. The streets are very

narrow and dirty, and many of the older ones near the harbour are crooked and steep. The harbour is small, but seems large enough for the number of craft it has to contain, which are chiefly fish and fruit vessels plying between Astrakhan and the Persian ports, and occasionally calling in at Baku. The boats of the Caspian Steam Company also call at Baku on their regular voyages.

We drove first to the post-house, which was outside the town, but were refused permission by the master to remain in one of the three small rooms of which it consisted, as he alleged that he expected some officers to arrive shortly. So we went to the police-master, who, the governor being absent, brought us again back to the post-house, and insisted on our being taken in. In this dreary place, which boasted of nothing better than the usual bench and table, we had to remain for no less than a week, I being laid up with fever during that time. The Russian doctor of one of the ships of war in the harbour came to attend me, and although he had been a long time in the country, and ought to have been perfectly conversant with the nature of the complaint from which I suffered, he did not seem to have the slightest idea of what the illness was until four or five days had elapsed. He made a daily visit, opened wide his watery blue eyes, spoke in an oracular tone of voice some words which, though intended to be French, were often quite unintelligible, and departed, evidently as ignorant as when he came. However, at last he guessed that my illness was the usual fever, and soon brought me round.

On the 19th of September we drove out to the Atesh Dja, or Fire Temple, a place of worship which from ancient times has been esteemed most holy by the worshippers of fire in Persia, and their disciples in India. Our route lay for nearly twelve miles over some sandy and stony hills, and on approaching the temple, we saw in the distance a large building, surrounded by a wall, looking very like a cara-

vanseraï. All the hill was dotted over with small huts, inhabited by those engaged in the manufacture of naphtha, which everywhere issues from the soil in a gaseous form. The mountain is saturated with it to such an extent, that fuel is quite an unnecessary provision, all that is requisite being to make a hole in the ground, and put an earthenware vessel like a flower-pot over it, when the gas arising from the soil fills the vessel, instantly takes fire on a match being applied to the orifice in the top, and burns clearly and steadily, like that produced from coal, answering the purposes of cooking, heating, &c. On drawing near the temple, we passed a manufactory lately erected by German speculators, for the purpose of utilizing the naphtha. English machinery from Manchester lay about on the ground, waiting to be put together, in strange and irreverent proximity, as it seemed, to the sanctuary of an ancient and mysterious faith.

On entering the temple, we found ourselves in a courtyard, round which ran a row of low cells, whitewashed, to which low doors alone gave light as well as access. A stone platform, with three steps, standing in the centre of the court, served as a pedestal for four short, stout, square pillars, which were surmounted by a cupola; another pillar stood in a corner. All were hollow, and served as pipes to conduct the gas from the ground. In the centre, near the cupola, a jet of flaming gas issued from a hole in the middle of the platform, and burned steadily and clearly. Anywhere in the surrounding country, to the distance of a mile from the temple, on digging to the depth of a foot, the gas streams out and readily ignites. To this temple a great number of devotees from among the fire-worshippers of Persia and India used formerly to repair in the performance of religious pilgrimages; some of whom remained to end their days on the sacred spot, where the element, the visible symbol of Ormuzd, the Spirit of Good, is to be found in

its greatest purity issuing from the earth which they believe he created.

The present temple is quite a modern building, and small as it is, seems to afford more room than is occupied by the few worshippers who inhabit the cells around. Over each little door is an inscription. On entering, a low couch is seen, at the head of which is a hole in the ground, from whence issues a bright jet of gas. A little altar, composed of three steps, each of which is covered with brass and bronze images, stands on one side, close to which another jet of gas is burning.

The present inhabitants were only two in number, both from India, one being a native of Calcutta, the other of Delhi. They were both old men; one of them had lived there many years, the other had only arrived the year before, but hoped to end his days in the holy place. They wore the usual Indian dress and turban, having in addition a streak of yellow paint on the forehead between the eyes. At our request they went through some of their forms of worship, which consisted in prostration before these altars, singing alternately a monotonous chant, and beating cymbals in unison with the time. After they had spent about half an hour in these exercises they ate some sugar-candy, some of which they presented to us. They seemed in great poverty, to judge by their appearance, but nevertheless did not ask for alms or in any way solicit assistance.

Tradition attributes the first erection of a temple on this spot to Zoroaster, the teacher of the worship of fire or light, which he adopted as the emblem of Ormuzd, the Spirit of Good, as darkness was of Ahriman, the Spirit of Evil, ever since whose time a temple has stood on the spot, always considered as holy by the believers of his creed. They reverence the element, as they call it, in various ways, besides worshipping it as the emblem of Ormuzd. They will not feed it with anything dirty or impure; they will not extinguish it

but in a clean and careful manner ; and they do not use it for any dirty purposes, such as to get rid of filth. But to form an opinion from the present condition of their sanctuary at Baku, their faith cannot possess a great hold upon its professors, many of whom are wealthy; and judging by the numbers of pilgrims to the once-frequented Atesh Dja, the religion of Zoroaster must be in a very effete and exhausted condition in the country where for so many centuries it was the sole form of worship, and from whence it was so widely diffused.

We returned to Baku in the evening, after having conversed for some time with one of the young Germans who was attached to the manufactory in process of building, which he was certain would turn out a very profitable venture to its projectors. As we left, the gathering darkness brought out brighter the light from the fires issuing out of the ground all over the hill, and the appearance of the country was most strange, illuminated thus by the glare of the numerous jets.

Not far from Baku a spring of naphtha issues from the side of a hill close to the shore, and the oily substance, running down into the water, floats on the surface, on which in very calm weather it forms a film for some distance. After a long continuance of calms, it sometimes accumulates to such an extent that it may be set on fire, when it burns brightly until it is consumed, thus covering the sea for some distance with flame.

CHAPTER XII.

DRIVE OVER THE SPUR OF THE CAUCASUS TO SCHAMACHI—
THE SILK TRADE — CULTIVATION AND IRRIGATION OF THE
LAND — BAKERY FOR THE ARMY — GANJA — SCHOOL IN A
MOSQUE—SUBTERRANEAN POST-STATION—A GEORGIAN NOBLE-
MAN — FLOOD AND THUNDERSTORM — COMMERCIAL PRO-
SPECTS OF TIFLIS—CONTEMPLATED RAILWAY—ANNOYANCES
AND DELAYS IN TRAVELLING—HIGH TABLE-LAND OF ASIA-
MINOR — RUSSIAN COLONISTS AND THEIR PRIVILEGES —
GUMRI—ADJUNCTS IN OFFICE.

CHAPTER XII.

WITH the exception of the natural phenomena described in the preceding chapter, there is nothing to attract a stranger to Baku, or make him desirous of revisiting it. We left it on the 20th of September, on our return to Tiflis, driving for sixty miles to the first post-house, where we were to pass the night. The course we took led us over the last spur of the Caucasus, where it subsides into the steppe on the shore of the Caspian, and ends in low, bare hills, arid and stony, on which only a few sheep and camels are met with. In every direction throughout the entire distance, we saw only naked and rocky mountains, low and barren, not encountering a human being, or beholding, with the exception of the station, a human habitation. Except in the deep wells sunk near the latter, not a drop of water was to be found, and accordingly the flocks had all to be driven in every night for a supply. Near the station of Morosi are the ruins of a large town, which was destroyed in the time of Nadir Shah, and of which very little now remains.

We arrived early next day at Schamachi, which we found a large and thriving town, and where the government have erected a building for the reception of travellers. An earthquake in the year 1859 had done much injury, but the houses thrown down were being rebuilt, and the population seemed busy and stirring. It is the head-quarters of the silk trade, which is here a very important branch of industry; and as the silk-worms had hitherto escaped

the disease which had committed such ravages in the Levant, a number of persons connected with the trade had been sent from thence to Schamachi to bring back eggs from the healthy worms. The mulberry plantations in the neighbourhood are very extensive, and the quantity of silk annually exported to Russia and France by way of the Volga and Poti is very great. The bazaars are large and clean, and the whole town possesses rather an Asiatic than a European character, the population consisting chiefly of Armenians and Tatars.

Our advent seemed to occasion some excitement among the silk-merchants, and as travelling merely for curiosity was quite beyond the comprehension of any one here, we were repeatedly accosted with inquiries as to whether we had come to buy silk or eggs, receiving large offers of both.

The country round Schamachi is carefully cultivated, and a complete system of irrigation has prevailed from very ancient times, the laws of which are administered by regular officers, who allot to each his proper share of the precious water.

We found that no horses could be had till the next day, so we spent our time wandering through the bazaars and in looking at the shops, to whose contents Manchester appeared to contribute very largely. The Russian government had established here a large bakery for the use of the army, all the workmen employed in which belonged to the sect of the Skoptzi, of whom we had before met a penal battalion at Maran. In this is baked all the bread issued to the troops in the province, and some of the white, or better kind, is excellent.

The promised horses being forthcoming the next morning, we left early, and after a drive of some twenty miles over stony hills, we saw from the summit of one of them, over which we passed, an immense plain lying stretched out before us as far as the eye could reach. In the distance were some sluggish-looking rivers, with tortuous and winding courses,

and here and there brilliant patches of green encircling small villages, showed where the water had been utilized, and irrigation employed. These spots seemed like so many oases in the desert, the remainder of the plain being of a brick-colour, parched and arid with the excessive drought and heat. We descended by a steep incline into the plain, through which our course lay nearly all the rest of the way to Tiflis.

We passed the remains and ruins of innumerable ditches, dams, and canals, showing the extent to which the different systems of irrigation had been carried in ancient times, and the large population that must at one time have inhabited these desert tracts. The steppe was traversed in every direction by water-courses, a few of which were still in use, and the traces of a regular net-work of sluices were still plainly to be seen. The construction of these, involving such an extent of excavation, and the application of a complete system, must have required the power of a well-organized government. Wherever water was available, vegetation sprang up as if by magic, every kind of fruit and grain growing in the greatest luxuriance in the fertile soil. A number of villages dotted the surface of the plain, each with its surrounding vineyards and orchards.

By the time that evening fell we had got over one hundred and twenty-three versts, and spent the night at a station called Arabsky, where the mosquitoes were of a size and vigour not to be surpassed. It was no use whatever trying to contend with the countless swarms, and there was nothing for it but to walk about the courtyard till the morning light enabled us once more to start on our journey, and flee from our tormentors. We shortly after reached the banks of the Kura, which, now a dead, swollen, sulky stream, we crossed by a swing bridge, finding on the opposite side, a number of bullock-carts waiting for a passage, the drivers, who were mostly drunk, being fast asleep in the sun.

We arrived in the evening at Ganja, or Elizabethopol,

having driven ninety versts, or sixty miles. The appearance of this town in the distance somewhat resembles that of Damascus, as seen from the side of the desert; the numerous and extensive orchards and gardens surrounded by low mud walls extending for a great distance round the town, and giving it the appearance of a wood instead of a city. Over the tops of the trees rose the cupola of a mosque, near which stood some very large planes, through the branches of which glimpses of slender white minarets could occasionally be obtained.

Driving through a labyrinth of orchards and fruit gardens we came at last to the town, which is less altered than most other Persian cities by the change of masters; and after winding about through the bazaars, proceeding with some difficulty on account of the crowd, we arrived at the post station, which we found of a better description than usual, having no less than three rooms. One of these, which served also as a café, was filled with Armenians chaffering loudly, and busily occupied in bargaining with each other.

In the morning, while the telega was being got ready, we occupied our time in walking about the narrow, tortuous streets of the old Tatar town, and were much struck by the beauty of an avenue of plane-trees which led to the entrance of a mosque, the space between them serving as a market-place. It was about five hundred yards in length, and one hundred in width, and the planes composing it were of a great age and enormous size, towering to an immense height, and affording a grateful shade.

The mosque, which had attached to it a kind of monastery, also used as a college for the study of the Koran, Mohammedan law, &c., was surrounded by a high wall, by the side of which were built the cells of the dervishes who acted as schoolmasters and tutors to the Mussulman children, numbers of whom were seated cross-legged round the

rooms, studying their lessons with great gravity. The dervish sat in the centre in the same position, turbaned and dignified, his flowing garments tucked under him, and with spectacles across his nose. His papers, pens, books, ink, &c., were arranged by his side. The floors were covered with mats, which were kept scrupulously clean, the little slippers being left behind in rows at the door as the wearers entered.

The space between the cells and the mosque was laid out as a garden, through which ran little streams of water, and everything belonging to the establishment seemed kept in excellent order, the dervishes possessing much wealth, the legacies of deceased true believers.

We left Elizabethopol on the 24th, and drove for the whole day over the same dreary flat steppe, passing numerous villages surrounded by their little patches of fertility. Near one post-station, where we were compelled to stop for some hours, the plain for some distance round was covered with water-melons, which grew over an extent of some hundreds of acres. Some of these were of an immense size, and although the greater part of the crop had already been gathered, yet enough remained, one would suppose, to feed the entire population of the adjoining village for twelve months. The people seem to make them their chief subsistence, and give them to their cattle and domestic animals.

As evening closed in, we arrived at the bank of a small stream, near which a few dark-looking objects, seeming like the roofs of houses, appeared to issue from the ground. We found on approaching them that they were so in reality, the rooms being excavated to a depth of ten feet below the surface of the soil, and the clay kept from falling in by large beams. The roof was also composed of beams of wood, which were covered with a thick layer of clay. These excavations were the post-station and stables, constructed in the old Georgian fashion, such being the method

anciently employed for excluding the severe cold of winter, before the Russians introduced the common use of stone and mortar.

The post-horses from Elizabethopol to this station were provided by a Georgian nobleman, and were wretched animals, half-starved, and unable to go at more than a snail's pace. No inducement could prevail upon the *yamstchik*, who seemed to hold this dignitary in great awe, to hasten his pace, as he alleged that the great man was himself expected to travel along the road that day, and that he dared not be seen driving fast. And it so happened that at one of the stations we met the individual in question, dressed in his national costume, a blue velvet robe, trimmed with fur, silk coat, loose trousers, &c. He came to see us, and very politely regretted that we were unable to pay him a visit at his country place, which was not very far off. He was travelling about in a *tarantasse* which, to judge by the quantity of luggage stowed away in all corners of it, seemed provisioned for a month. We spent the night in our underground den, and left in the morning, gladdened by the hope of reaching Tiflis the same day.

The plain became more fertile and better watered as we drove along, and assumed a more inhabited and less deserted appearance. The surface became undulating, and was covered with large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. It had rained heavily during the night, and we found on arriving at a station thirty-seven *versts* from Tiflis, that we should have to wait for the subsiding of a torrent which had suddenly risen, ere we could attempt to pass, the bridge and causeway being covered with water to the depth of five or six feet. An immense mass of muddy water rolled by, streaming down from the Caucasus, and bearing with it trunks of trees, hay, and other things swept away by the sudden flood. However, the waters lowered as rapidly as they had risen, and after a delay of three hours we were enabled to continue our route, changing

our course to the north, to avoid the hills which lie to the south-east of Tiflis.

The road and horses both became of a better description as we neared the capital, and we spun along rapidly. At the last station but one our *yamstchik*, who in no degree differed in appearance from his predecessors, surprised us not a little by addressing us in French and Italian, and we discovered that he had been born at Odessa, his parents being of French origin, from whence he had come to Georgia to push his fortune. To judge by his appearance he was not very likely to do so, his face betraying his partiality to the fire-water of the country, the beloved vodka.

We drove our last stage into Tiflis in the midst of a thunder-storm. The incessant flashes of the vivid lightning were for the moment quite blinding, and showed all the brighter for the pitchy darkness, it being near midnight. The rain poured down in sheets of water, the deafening peals of thunder burst just over our heads, the flashes seemed to dance on the road before us close to the horses' heads, and yet, strange to say, they took no notice whatever either of the noise or glare, and continued their course quite calmly through the storm. At last it ceased; we saw before us the lights of Tiflis; we passed first one isolated house, then another, and after some time entered the narrow and winding lanes of the Persian quarter, to which the deluge seemed to have been an incalculable advantage in cleansing it from the accumulated filth of the summer. We drove into the courtyard of the *Hôtel de Kavkas* a little after midnight, having been absent thirty-eight days, during which we had successfully accomplished the object we had in view when we departed, in spite of the prognostications of failure that we had received on every side.

We found on our return to Tiflis that the great heat of July and August had disappeared, and that the air was now cool and enjoyable. The streets in consequence were fuller during the

day; but still, the viceroy not having returned, the wealthier inhabitants had not yet come back to the town. The opera was open, but we were told, in order to account for its empty benches, that very few people went save when Prince Bariatsky was expected to go. We found, however, that Baron Nicolai had returned to his house in town, and took an early opportunity of thanking him for having enabled us to accomplish our wishes, and travel over a district possessing so much interest, which, with the exception of the Russians themselves, had been for a long time unvisited by Europeans.

We occupied ourselves during the ten days we remained in Tiflis, on our return from the mountains, in making preparations for our projected journey southwards, through Armenia, to Nineveh and Bagdad. The first necessity was of course a servant and interpreter, and to find one suitable seemed for some time an insuperable difficulty. Our sailor boy from Kertsch would have been only a useless incumbrance, as he did not understand Turkish or Arabic, and moreover desired to return to his beloved sea-port, his ships, and his "English captains." He had found out a Persian merchant going to Trebizond, who could not speak Russian, and who had offered him a seat in his tarantasse on condition of arranging everything for him on the route. He had also expended his money in the purchase of furs for his winter wear at Kertsch, and bought sundry presents for his numerous friends and acquaintances there. We parted from him with real regret, as he was honest, hard-working, uncomplaining, and simple-minded, as most sailors are. He left us in great dignity, seated in his tarantasse by the side of the stately Persian.

For some time it seemed as if we should find it impossible to get any one to replace him, the great difficulty being to find an interpreter who spoke Russian and Turkish as well as a European language. At last, one evening, a tall Circassian,

armed to the teeth, and dressed in white from head to foot, appeared suddenly at our door, and addressing us in Italian, informed us that he had heard we were looking for an interpreter, and that he would be glad to come with us as such. He knew Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, Russian, and Italian, all equally fluently and imperfectly, and had already travelled in Georgia and Persia with an English gentleman, some years previously, who had brought him to London on his return.

We at once accepted the proffered services of this handsome and stately mountaineer, who turned out to be a Greek of Athens. He had left his native country some twenty years previously, and had spent the intervening time in Constantinople, in Russia, and in the Caucasus, in various capacities. He had accompanied the Russians on many of their campaigns into the mountains, going, however, as an officer's servant, not as a combatant. He had also served during the campaign of Kars as a volunteer, and had been present at the capture of the fortress. Altogether he seemed just the person, from experience of travelling, and unsettled habits, best suited to us, and we at once commenced under his auspices to fit ourselves out for the journey we intended making. Saddles we already had, but canteens, bullock trunks, and such like improvements made by civilization to increase the comfort of travelling in barbarous lands not being available, it was necessary to form a kit with the materials the country afforded.

We also purchased some quilted cotton rugs, which, with the addition of leather pillows, not only served as beds, but also, when rolled up in a waterproof-sheet, furnished us with comfortable seats in the post telegas, so long as we should continue to use that mode of travelling. A small pig skin, filled with wine, holding about twenty bottles, some ropes, a bag of potatoes, and another of bread, with German sausages, completed our preparations so far.

Our next difficulty, that of obtaining a passport which would enable us to leave Russia and return to it again, as we intended passing the frontier westward to pay a visit to Kars, was solved by Baron Krusenstern, the chief of the Bureau Diplomatique, who, when we called on him to explain our wishes, kindly procured for us an order for the necessary document, as also a government padaroshna for as much of the journey as we should perform in a telega.

Although the weather had now become cool and pleasant, yet still, owing to the absence of so many of the better class of inhabitants, there was a want of movement and gaiety. The St. Petersburg newspapers, with the news of European events, did not arrive until about a month after the occurrences of which they contained the record had happened; but the "Kavkas," printed in Tiflis, generally anticipated them by means of private intelligence. Sometimes a French newspaper was to be seen on the table of a French resident, but on the whole the inhabitants did not seem to care much for politics; railways, and the prospect of a great trade in silk, appearing, far more usefully, to occupy their thoughts. When the contemplated railway is finished, the trade between Europe and Central Asia, in silk and wool, is expected to elevate Tiflis to the rank of a first-class city, and probably will have that effect.

A few days before we left, Mr. Taylor, the newly appointed British Consul at Diarbekir, arrived at Tiflis on his way to Constantinople from Teheran, where he had lately been attached to the embassy. He related to us an incident which had befallen him en route, exemplifying the difficulties of Russian travelling in any but the rudest post conveyances. He had purchased a tarantasse at Erivan, in which he intended going as far as Poti, but when he had gone only two stages, it fell to pieces, so that he was forced to leave it, or rather its remains, on the road, at the mercy of the first comer, and, sending back the horses for a

telega, to pursue his journey in that more humble but satisfactory conveyance.

General Kolubakine, the governor of the province of Erivan, hearing that we intended going there, called to invite us to pay him a visit, and remain at his house during our stay, which kind offer we gladly accepted. He also informed Mr. Taylor that his tarantasse had been brought back to Erivan, and that he had made the man, who had sold him such a worthless bargain, refund the greater portion of the money. Nothing now remained but to get the passport, to obtain which it was necessary that we should present ourselves in person at the police-office, and we accordingly attended there for the purpose.

We passed through three or four rooms filled with clerks, who seemed busily employed in writing, and having explained what we wanted, mentioning also that a special order had been sent to the office to have the desired document at once given to us, we were gratified in a little time by seeing a large sheet of paper covered with stamps in the hands of one of the officials. This individual, having received a small gratuity, passed it on to another, and after it had been looked at by two or three more clerks, who all eagerly pocketed the expected roubles, we emerged from the Bureau with our papers in order.

On the 7th of October, we took our second and final leave of Tiflis, our luggage having increased so much in consequence of our recent purchases that we had to take two telegas, involving the necessity of employing six horses instead of three, thus doubling the usual difficulty of procuring animals at the post stations. We ourselves, seated on our cotton rugs, and with a portmanteau as a bench, occupied one; Demetri, our Greek in Circassian raiment, stowing himself away in the other among the pots, pans, and other

Our route for the first three or four stations lying

over the ground which we had traversed on our journey from Baku, we retraced our steps along the same road, coming, at the third station, to a complete stop, the horses having all been taken up by the courier with the post. We spent some hours in waiting till they returned and were sufficiently rested to go on with us; but unfortunately, after they had been fed and were ready to proceed, a certain General Andronikoff, who was travelling in the same direction, arrived, and with a profusion of apologies in Russian, carried off the animals which were being already harnessed to our telegas. So there was nothing for it but to spend the night in the post-house, which was far from being a bad one. We left the next morning at daybreak in the hope of making a long day's work. But all to no purpose; at the second station we were detained seven hours for a similar cause, and only succeeded in getting over three posts in the course of the day, sleeping in a kubitka, the post-house being under repair.

One station more brought us to where the road to Gumri, or Alexandropol, as that frontier fortress is now called by the Russians, turns off to the south from the road to Baku, which we had been hitherto following. Our way lay up the valley of the Akstafa, which falls into the Kur not far from the station; and as the hill sides on either hand soon became wooded, the scenery gradually assumed the character of a Swiss glen; a great relief after the dreary steppe which we had traversed between Baku and Tiflis, and over which we had been lately retracing our steps. Small farms were to be seen in the woods, and we passed cattle looking sleek and well-cared for, grazing in the numerous open glades of the forest.

At the second post off the main road we again came to a stop for want of horses, and spent our third night from Tiflis in the post-house. In consequence of these repeated detentions we found the provisions we had brought with us most

useful, there being nothing procurable on the road. Our route, the first half of the next day, continued up the same valley, which widened out and became more open as we advanced. The foliage had begun to change colour, and the rich autumn tints commenced to vary the dead green of the forest. Having for nearly two days been continually ascending, we had now reached an elevation of some 3000 feet above the sea-level, when, the stream of the Akstafa having become a mere rivulet, and the trees having suddenly ceased, we emerged upon a bare undulating plain, studded over with villages, and broken here and there by low hills.

We were now upon the high table-land of Asia Minor, which forms the interior of the entire continent, and descends to the sea-coast by a rapid incline, dipping also into the Arabian desert, part of its southern boundary. The steppe through which the river Kur winds its sluggish course forms thus also a boundary to Armenia, which rises from the edge of the plain to the level of the interior of the country around,—Koordistan and Persia,—the average level of the latter being about three thousand feet above the sea. Throughout the centre and south of Persia, the greater part of Koordistan, and a large portion of Asia Minor, so called, this enormous table-land, whose surface is broken into valleys and hills, the latter sometimes rising into ranges of mountains, is, as a general rule, devoid of forest; in many parts of Persia, no trees being met with save such as are artificially cultivated. Round the edges, on the contrary, where it descends into the Caspian Sea (forming the province of Mazanderan) the plains of Georgia, the Black and Mediterranean Seas, and the desert of Arabia, it is thickly wooded and covered generally with a dense forest, forming a fringe, as it were, with which this enormous plateau is surrounded. Thus bare of trees and at such an elevation, it is exposed equally to the extremes of heat and cold during the summer and winter,

and while in some places, as at Erivan, the summer heat rises often to 140° F., the thermometer in winter falls below zero.

Soon after entering on this vast table-land, we passed some newly-built Russian villages, the inhabitants of which had been transported with all their possessions from the interior of Russia to form settlements on the frontier of the empire. These villages are constructed of wood, on the same plan and in the same manner precisely as those met with around Moscow, and the broad, flat features and flaxen hair of the Russians in their native costume are peculiarly distinct, brought out as they are into relief by their contrast with the dark complexions of the inhabitants of the surrounding country. Their agricultural implements and general mode of cultivation, though of course of the rudest kind, nevertheless seemed far in advance of those of their neighbours, whose ploughs are formed simply of the forked branch of a tree, and who make use of no kind of vehicle for the carriage of anything to or from their fields, conveying all burdens on their backs.

These colonies, which it has long been the successful policy of the Russian government to establish on the frontiers of the empire, possess many privileges over the inhabitants of the interior, which may counterbalance the exile and hardships that have for some time to be undergone. They are exempt from taxes for a certain number of years, the land given to each colonist is his own to all intents, and they are free from the conscription or any compulsory levy of troops. They likewise meet with many encouragements in other ways, receiving presents of cattle, agricultural implements, &c. from the government.

Having driven ninety versts, we stopped for the night at a miserable station, which we quitted early in order to arrive at Gumri in the forenoon. However, being detained at the

next station for four hours, we did not reach it till late in the day, having thus taken, owing to the numerous stoppages we met with from the difficulty of procuring horses at the various post-stations, five days to accomplish the distance between Tiflis and Gumri, though only one hundred and eighty miles. This will serve to show what Russian posting is in the more out of the way parts of the empire.

Gumri is situated on the plain on the banks of the Arpatchai, a small river which, forming the frontier of the Russian and Turkish dominions, falls into the Araxes, a few miles farther south. Seen at a distance, on the side from which we came, the most prominent objects were a couple of large churches with the usual green cupolas; but on a nearer approach the lines, bastions, and detached towers of the fortress came into view on the right hand, and shortly after the immense ranges of barracks in the interior became visible.

We entered the town at first by some scattered mud huts, which, however, were soon succeeded by houses built of limestone in the most solid manner, chiefly only one story high. Having been before informed that an hotel existed, kept by a German colonist, we at once drove to it, and found to our great surprise a clean room and a sober host; of course we did not expect beds, with which we had provided ourselves, and were consequently independent. Although our good German had not been very long a resident at Gumri, he expressed himself satisfied with the manner in which he was getting on, having in addition to the hotel a small farm in the neighbourhood of the town. He spoke highly of the fertility of the soil wherever a sufficient quantity of water could be obtained, but the frequent droughts seemed to be much dreaded by the farmers.

Having brought a letter to the chief of the district, Major Noumankoff, from General Kolubakine, and being told that he resided in the fortress, we walked up there early the

next day to present it. We were at first refused admittance by the officer of the guard, but on mentioning our letter, and our wish to see the commandant, were allowed to proceed. On entering, we were at once struck with the great extent of the fort, the size of the barracks, and the solid way in which they were built. The ranges of building were some two, some three stories in height, the massive walls being of limestone. Immense sums of money must have been spent in their erection, as the workmanship was most excellent.

A large church stood in the centre, before which an open square, surrounded by barracks, served as a parade-ground, and behind were more long ranges of barracks, running parallel to each other. Artillery sheds and rows of stabling were between the outer works and the buildings inside. We were told that there existed barrack accommodation in the fort for 15,000 men.

On the east side the rock is escarped the whole distance ; on the north, which seems to be the weakest side, there are detached works and round towers, which, similar to those of Linz in Austria, constitute a formidable system of defence. Altogether the works are of a class that would offer a difficult obstacle to the advance of a far superior force to any that the Turks are likely to be able to bring into the field. The garrison, which in ordinary times consists of a very small number of men, might, in the expectation of war, be quietly augmented, and a large force out of the 15,000 men for whom quarters are provided, might in two days traverse the fifty miles distance to Kars, and at once seize upon that important position, there being absolutely nothing to prevent them. The works of that city are all in a neglected condition, cannon dismounted, and garrison withdrawn, and the road from Gumri is still in good order, having been rendered practicable for heavy guns by the Russians during the late war.

On arriving at the commandant's quarters we found we

had made a mistake, and that Major Noumankoff, who was the civil governor, holding by courtesy that rank in the army, lived in the town close to our hotel. However, we did not regret having done so, as we were thereby enabled to see the interior of this important frontier fortress.

Returning to the town we found the governor in his office, which was crowded with peasants from the surrounding villages, to whose complaints he was listening, and whose disputes he was deciding as judge and arbitrator. On reading the letter we had brought, he at once offered us all the assistance in his power to facilitate our journey, and promised that we should have horses brought next day to take us on to Kars, the regular post road ending at Gumri at the Russian frontier, the Turks being yet ignorant of the advantage of such an institution. He invited us to spend the evening with him, and in the meantime we passed the rest of the afternoon in wandering about the bazaars of the town, in which we saw nothing remarkable.

We bought a few of the largest green grapes we had ever seen, some of them fully an inch and a-half in length and an inch in diameter, tasting not unlike the black Hamburg grape, and also took the opportunity of laying in a fresh supply of provisions.

We agreed, through the chief of police, with an old Turk to take us to Kars, and thence by the ruins of Ani and the monastery of Etchmiadzin to Erivan, for sixty roubles, or nine pounds, he providing us with five horses, and stopping on the road at any of the above places for as long a time as we might choose to delay. In the evening we went again to see Major Noumankoff at his private residence, the adjoint to the chief of police, who spoke Italian very well, acting as our interpreter.

The Russians seem to follow this system of having two men to fill every office in common with the Japanese; almost every official we had met, from the highest downwards, having

a colleague or adjoint at his post. Major Noumankoff did not seem to have a sinecure, by his account of his constant employment in arranging the affairs of the inhabitants of his district, who, Turks, Armenians, and Georgians, all claimed, when practicable, to be judged by their own laws and customs, with which he had accordingly to make himself acquainted. He gave us letters to present to the officials when we should re-enter Russian territory at Ani, and promised to send persons there to meet us.

CHAPTER XIII.

ENTRANCE INTO TURKISH TERRITORY — A POST OF BASHI-BAZOUKS—CURIOUS STONES—ESCORT THROUGH THE STREETS OF KARS—A NATIVE SPORTSMAN—INTERVIEW WITH THE PASHA—REMINISCENCE OF GENERAL WILLIAMS—GREEK HEROES—THE PALACE OF THE PASHAS—HOPES OF ARMENIA UNDER THE PROTECTION OF RUSSIA—MOUNT ALAGHOZ—LABORIOUS MODE OF AGRICULTURE—RUINS OF ANI—CONVENT OF KHOSHAVANK—ARMENIAN POPULATION OF TALYN—PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM OF THE ARMENIANS—CONDITION OF WOMEN IN ARMENIA.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAVING finally made all our arrangements, and bought large bags in which to put our baggage, and sling it across the horses' backs, we left Alexandropol next day, October 13th; the adjoint accompanying us past the quarantine, a square stone building, on the bank of the river, about a mile from the town. Having here shown our passport we were allowed to proceed, and, bidding our friends good-bye, crossed the stream into Turkish territory. On the opposite bank was a small thatched building, serving as a post for the Bashi-Bazouks, who were employed as irregulars to guard the frontiers. They also fulfil the same duties as the Cossacks on the Russian side, arresting marauders, and preventing robberies by the subjects of both countries, of which, unless common report much calumniates them, the Bashi-Bazouks themselves commit not a few. We here procured a couple of them to accompany us to the next post, where we obtained the escort of a Koord very handsomely got up, and mounted on a chestnut Arab, who rode with us to Kars.

We slept half-way in the principal house of a village. Near it was a small river in which we saw a number of fish like perch, of a good size, swimming about. The villagers were far too lazy to fish for them, but by the promise of backshish, we induced a man to go down and try to get some. He returned in half an hour with half a dozen of them, which proved excellent food, though the people seemed by no means to appreciate it. Our sleeping quarters were

on a low platform at the upper end of a stable, in which were spread some rugs and mats. The stable was half full of cows and horses, who kept up a continual munching all through the night; and the fleas seemed, from their numbers, to have scented out the fresh game, and to have deserted their old quarters *en masse* to precipitate themselves upon us.

Early next morning we were once more on our way, our road, like that of the preceding day, being over a rich undulating plain on which there were villages scattered about. The surface was occasionally broken by low and stony hills, all utterly devoid of timber or brushwood and bare of any vegetation.

On approaching Kars, which is first seen from a distance of four or five miles, it seems to be built in a ravine in a dark-coloured high mountain, called Karadagh, or Black Mountain, the surface of which is covered with large broken stones of the same hue, generally about two feet in diameter, and lying five or six feet apart from each other. Thousands of these curious stones have rolled down the mountain sides, and now strew the plain at the foot, along which the road from the east leads to the town. Our Bashi-Bazouk having ridden on before with a letter to the pasha, we were met at the gate by a dozen dragoons, who escorted us through the streets, rugged, stony and filthy, to the palace of the pasha, a huge stone building, with great wooden galleries running around the upper story. We mounted some flights of rickety stairs, at the foot of which we were received by the secretary of the pasha, who, as we heard, was himself ill.

After the usual compliments, pipes, and sweetmeats, some leading questions were put to us, the purport of which was to discover our object in coming, and whether we had any commission from government; and it was evident that, although we denied this, it was the universal impression that our coming there had something more in it than mere curiosity.

In a little time the secretary told us that rooms had been prepared for us in a house belonging to the chief of the Customs, which had been newly furnished, and we were informed was the best in the town.

After a few more questions and inquiries for Generals Williams and Kmety, and Colonel Lake, we again mounted our horses and rode to the house provided for us, where we were very hospitably received by the chief of the Customs, and put up by him in the guest-room common to all good Turkish houses. The furniture of this room, like that of the other apartments, consisted of a divan round the walls, on which were a number of pillows and cushions, and above which were fixed presses and cupboards for holding the household goods. Our host welcomed us with the usual Eastern exaggeration, wishing that we had come to stay six months with him instead of two days, and asked numerous questions about General Williams, whom he said he knew, and for whom he professed great admiration.

Our dinner, which soon after made its appearance, was brought in on a tray and placed on a low stool in the centre of the room, round which we sat cross-legged. It consisted first of a stew of mutton and onions, after which came apricots and syrup, followed finally by a huge pilau, the apex of which was formed by four sparrows shot by Demetri during our ride.

We soon discovered that the greatest weakness possessed by this individual was an intense love of sport, to gratify which passion he did not hesitate to stoop to the lowest and smallest objects. Far from being too proud to shoot "sitting," his greatest delight was evinced when he could procure a flock of sparrows within a reasonable distance. At these he would take a long and steady aim, looking in his martial costume, armed to the teeth, with kandjar, &c., indescribably ridiculous; and when he pulled the trigger, the menacing operation, formidable as was the appearance of his murderous-looking

weapon, was not always followed by an explosion. This long and seemingly deadly arm had been the spoil which rewarded his own valour at the capture of Kars, he having penetrated into the city among the first after it surrendered. Of six guns which he bore off in triumph on that occasion, he sold five for half a rouble, or one shilling and sixpence, each, and the other he kept as a fowling-piece for himself; sallying forth with it at every post-house, his eyes gleaming with excitement when he discovered a flock of sparrows, or, which he prized much more, of starlings. At these he would take aim carefully, pull the trigger, re-cock, again take aim, repeating the operation until at last either the little birds flew away or the piece went off, the former being the most probable event. In the evening the produce of his day's shooting generally made its appearance in the shape of half a dozen miserable long-legged sparrows, which he would bring in himself with an air of triumph, apparently perfectly happy at the result of his skill.

After our dinner was ended, divers of our host's friends and acquaintances, some of them the notabilities of Kars, made their appearance. We talked on the usual subjects—crops, harvests, politics, war, peace, &c.; and at last gladdened the heart of our entertainer by informing him of the news we had heard, that the harvest which had just been gathered in in Europe was a poor one, and that, consequently, grain was likely to rise in price. As the corn crop had been very good that year in Asia Minor, our host had purchased a large quantity of grain, which he had then in store, and which, in consequence of what we told him, he said he would keep over for some time in expectation of making a large profit. After two or three relays of visitors had gratified their curiosity we were at last left alone, and passed the night on the divan as well as the fleas, who seemed to have early colonized the new settlement, would allow us.

Next morning we went to pay another visit to the pasha,

whom we found sufficiently recovered to see us. Indeed, we afterwards heard that the illness arose solely from an over-indulgence in raki. He was a short, wheezy, fat, courteous old gentleman, of some sixty years of age, of the old Turkish school, who had been in his present quarters but a short time, having come there direct from Constantinople. He made various inquiries as to our intended journey, told us of some places in his opinion worth seeing, and ordered his secretary to give us a letter to the Pasha of Bayezid, which we intended making one of our halting-places. He also directed us to be furnished with a beyourtec, or order to the head men of all the villages in his Pashalic to provide us with house-room, and promised to give us some Bashi-Bazouks to act as guides to the frontier. We then shook hands with him, and bade him farewell; and descending the rickety and dirty stairs mounted our horses, leaving Demetri behind to distribute some money among the servants, which is etiquette in Turkey on paying a visit of ceremony.

Having accomplished his task, that of pouring sundry piastres into the hands of a host of recipients, he rejoined us; and on our return to our house we dismissed the horses, and roamed through the small and dirty bazaars, which were in a ruinous state. We then went to look at the house occupied by General Williams as his head-quarters during the siege, receiving on our way numerous inquiries as to what had become of "Illyams Pasha," as he was called, and returned to our apartments again at noon, in time to go through another dinner similar to that of the day before.

In the afternoon we mounted our horses and rode round the fortifications, redoubts, and lines laid out and thrown up by Colonel Lake in front of the city and on the hills around, it having been the original intention of the Turkish pasha to shut himself up within the town, which he would infallibly have had to surrender within a week, had he not with some difficulty been induced to abandon his project. Although

nothing whatever had been done to keep the fortifications in repair since the evacuation of the place by the Russian army, yet they were still in fair preservation, and wanted very little to make them again defensible.

We got a magnificent view of the town, and of the ruined castle on the rock overhanging it, from the "Ingleez Tabia," a large redoubt crowning the heights on the opposite side of the deep and wide ravine, and commanding both with the fire of its guns.

The river on which Kars is built, and which bears the same name, turns sharply round just before issuing from the mountains, thus forming a craggy promontory on which the castle is built, while underneath is the town, surrounded by embattled walls similar to those at Baku, but in many places ruined and dilapidated. In front of it extends the plain, on which are erected two or three large redoubts, whose fire crosses each other. These form the defences of the city on that side.

Before evacuating the place, the Russians blew up and dismantled the castle, seemingly without any object, as under the modern system of warfare it could not form any part of the defences. We visited the spot where the battle took place shortly before the surrender, in which the Russian troops were repulsed with such heavy loss, acknowledged to be four thousand men, but which Demetri assured us was fully half as many more. By his own account, the part this strange individual acted during the siege was a curious one. A number of Greek bakers from Van, Sert, and other Armenian towns in the Turkish dominions, had at once, on the declaration of war, come to the Russian territory and volunteered for service against their former protectors. These heroes, to the number of seventy, were at once formed into a company, and placed under the command of Demetri, whose nationality and experience of Circassian warfare may possibly have suggested the selection. They were furnished with arms, the use of which, by

his account, they were utterly ignorant of, as for some time they could not be prevented from loading with the bullet first and then the powder. After a few days they were sent to Kars, the siege of which was then going on; and one of them happening to be slightly wounded, the remainder disappeared at once, and no more was heard of these warlike descendants of the countrymen of Alcibiades. What their leader did under the peculiar circumstances of the case, he did not vouchsafe to reveal. One fact alone, the successful plunder of the six guns, would make it appear that he remained in the Russian army in some capacity, and participated to that extent in the spoil of the beleaguered city.

We returned to Kars in the evening, ascending the side of the ravine by a zigzag road, which the winter rains had rendered nearly impassable. The houses in Kars are all of stone, and very solidly and massively built; the streets, as in most eastern towns, narrow and filthy. The palace of the pasha is a curious specimen of a Turkish architect's idea of what is requisite for a Government House. It consists merely of a two-storied building, resembling a dilapidated barn more than anything else, with a crazy wooden staircase, or rather wide ladder, outside, leading up to the entrance, which is on the second floor. The furniture and rooms inside are of the most miserable description, the result, probably, of the system which is followed in the selection and appointment of pashas, who are sent from Constantinople to their posts (for obtaining which they pay a heavy bribe to some one in office) only for a short time, during which their main object is not only to recover the money they have expended, but also to make as much more as they can, either by fair or foul means. Under these circumstances, it is not to be expected that, remaining as they generally do but twelve months in one government, they should pay any attention to the welfare of the people, or take any interest in

the condition of the country. The bribes which they have to pay to perhaps half a dozen hangers-on about the ministry, and to the ministers themselves, often more than swallow up the entire legitimate salary which they receive for the year they usually remain in office, leaving them no other mode of existence than that of extorting as much as they possibly can, by every means of oppression, from the people placed under their charge. This, of course, creates a general feeling of insecurity as regards property, and often gives rise to disturbances and revolts in the remoter portions of the empire.

We left Kars the next day (16th October) for the ruins of the ancient Armenian capital of Ani, and riding for five hours over some well-cultivated corn country, arrived at the village of Hadji Veli, which was to be our halting-place for the night. The chief of the district, Meddit Bey, who, in addition to being an official, was also an hereditary landed proprietor and noble—a very rare personage in Turkey, where no hereditary institutions exist—hearing of our intended visit, sent out his brother to meet us at a mile from the village; and on our arrival we met with a warm reception from himself. He had just built a large addition to his house, a guest room, at one end of which blazed an enormous fire of dried cow-dung, the only fuel in these woodless regions. This is collected in summer, and made into cakes, which are plastered on the walls of the houses, and thus dried in the sun; after which they are piled up in conical stacks for the winter consumption. Into this room we were led by our host, and when we had seated ourselves on divans, coffee and pipes were brought. After a short time, the Armenian archimandrite of the district entered. He had come to spend some time with the bey, with whom he seemed to be on the very best terms—a friendship rarely seen to exist between a Mohammedan and a Christian priest.

We found him an educated and well-informed man, who had travelled a great deal in Europe and Asia, had resided for a little time both in London and Paris, and was well versed in the ancient history of his own country, whose decline and present state he deplored, but whose restoration under the auspices of Russia, we could see, although politeness prevented his saying as much before his host, he, as well as most other Armenians, firmly believed in. Soon after, we sat down, seven in number, cross-legged, round a circular tray, elevated about a foot from the ground, and a regular Turkish dinner was brought in in successive courses by a number of servants. First appeared a large bowl of soup, into which every one dipped the wooden spoon which was handed to him, and thus helped himself out of the common mess until the whole was consumed. Then followed a number of dishes, one of which, forcemeat rolled up in vine leaves, and dipped in grease over which sour milk was poured, seemed an especial favourite. The whole feast concluded with an enormous pilau of rice, two feet high, and the same in diameter, into which the nimble fingers of the party soon made deep inroads. After dinner came pipes and coffee; and we had the usual conversation on politics. Surprise was expressed that England could go to war with such an empire as China so soon after the Russian campaign, and various wild surmises were hazarded as to the motives for doing so, as they never could have imagined that that country could think it worth while to enter into such a contest for the purpose of opening up a trade. At last this discussion came to an end, and we all spent the night on the divans which ran round the room. The fire was kept up and burnt brightly, the climate having become, now that we were on such an elevation, very cold after the sun had gone down.

The next morning we bade adieu to our host, who was a regular Turkish country squire, maintaining an establish-

ment of no less than forty servants and hangers-on of all descriptions, and rode on towards Ani, intending to sleep at the monastery of Khoshavank, near the ruins. The huge volcanic mass of Mount Alaghoz rose in front of us, its desolate and barren slopes covered with enormous beds of black scoriæ and ashes. Although for a long time extinct, the lava stream yet remains quite distinct, and its course could be plainly traced from the spot where it had issued out of the volcano, spreading over the surrounding country; the surface continuing perfectly devoid of any kind of vegetation, and preserving the same appearance as when it first cooled. Far away in the distance to the south-east was to be seen the snow-capped summit of Ararat, the base of which was still concealed by the intervening mountains, over the tops of which the peak was visible, sharp and well defined, against the blue sky.

We rode for some hours over the same kind of country as the day before, witnessing on the way a mode of agriculture probably the most astoundingly laborious ever practised. To a wooden plough of no great size were attached sixteen oxen, which were driven by five men, two more keeping the plough, which was of wood, and of the rudest manufacture, in its place. Perhaps a similar expenditure of labour for a like result has not been often beheld.

After some time we came in sight of some distant towers and cupolas, which we found on a nearer approach to belong to twelve or fourteen churches, standing among a mass of ruins on a promontory, encompassed on three sides by deep ravines, and on the fourth defended by a massive wall, built of alternate layers of black and red stone, of which the towers we had seen formed part. Through the ravine which encircles the town on the west and south sides flows the Ani Kai, or river of Ani; while through that on the east runs the Arpatchai. Although the other buildings of the town had disappeared, the churches seemed still quite perfect, and

the wall appeared in complete repair. The ground in the vicinity had become more rugged and uneven, the Arpatchai, which we had crossed at Gumri as a brook, had increased in size to a considerable stream, and ran through the ravine a sluggish and turgid river, at a depth of some hundred feet below, and was crossed under the town by the ruins of what had been a handsome bridge.

Making a long circuit, we entered the deserted city by the centre gate, there being three great entrances in the double walls, which were built of large blocks of hewn stone. Over the outer gate was an Armenian inscription, over the inner a leopard was sculptured in bold relief; while near it, on the towers, were carved crosses, ornamented with decorations and tracery of a very delicate nature. We found the ground in the interior covered with fragments of sculptured stones, broken columns, capitals, and carvings. Clambering over the masses of ruins we entered a few of the churches, three or four of which seemed, with the exception that their doors had been carried away, quite as perfect as when just out of the hands of the builder. One of them in particular, which stood just above the bridge that spanned the abyss below, was in complete preservation, the fresco paintings on the interior of the dome retaining their bright colour and hues uninjured by time, the subjects being Christ riding into Jerusalem, the Virgin at the Sepulchre, &c. These churches stand solitary among the ruins, in which, save a few pigeons, no living creatures seemed to exist. In the centre of the city were two lofty octagon towers, on which were small turrets; and not far from them was an isolated steep rock, near the edge of the precipice. This was also covered with scattered fragments of what had once been buildings—the citadel of the fortress city.

The walls of the palace yet remain, and are of great extent and solidity. The masonry is perfect, the huge stones are squared and put together with the greatest care, and the

whole is covered with the most elaborate carvings, decorations, and mosaics, all of exceedingly delicate workmanship. There were also two mosques; one built on the edge of the precipice, the interior of the dome of which was covered with perfectly preserved arabesques, resembling in character and finish of design those of the Alhambra. In fact, everything in this deserted capital seemed to have been spared by time, but so marred by the hand of man that it now appeared a complete wilderness. All through the decorations the shape of the cross is discernible under many forms, and over the doors of the churches there are long inscriptions in ancient Armenian. The streets, as well as they could be traced through the masses of débris, seemed to have been narrow, and no traces exist of what may be called private houses beyond some fragments of walls. Caves and chambers, which were inhabited by the poorer classes when the city was at its zenith, were excavated in the precipice overhanging the stream; and in many places, where the natural defences were not considered sufficiently strong, walls and towers had been erected as an additional security. The situation of the city, with the deep ravine running round two sides, bears some resemblance to that of Constantine in Algeria; but the extent of ground contained within the circuit of the wall and surrounding chasm is much greater. The churches seemed of the same style as the rest of the ecclesiastical buildings to be seen in the country, and were apparently of the date of the twelfth century.

The city of Ani, the last capital of Armenia as a kingdom, was much injured by an earthquake in the early part of the fourteenth century, and a short time afterwards was captured and utterly destroyed by Tamerlane, who carried off and dispersed the few inhabitants that escaped a general massacre. Since then it has been uninhabited. Its majestic walls and towers now stand in the midst of a desert, where a few miserable mud huts are still occupied by the descend-

ants of its ancient masters. Its massive churches, which have defied both the earthquake and the spoilers, now devoid of worshippers, are tenanted only by flocks of doves, an unbroken silence reigning over the wide scene of desolation and solitude.

As there was no place nearer to the ruins than the monastery of Khoshavank where we could pass the night, we rode on thither, a distance of half a dozen miles, passing on our route the remains of a number of round buildings at some distance from the walls. Two small churches yet remained entire, having the usual conical-shaped spire peculiar to the ancient Armenian sacred architecture. We also saw, a short distance before arriving at the monastery, an octagon watch-tower, similar to those within the walls of Ani.

We found the convent in a very ruinous condition, the church alone, which was large and handsomely decorated, remaining perfect. The cells for the monks, the refectory, the synod-room, and various other apartments were all roofless, or nearly so, and the carved stones which formed the ceilings strewed the floors. What remained of the roof of the synod-room was carved in the moresque style with the finest tracery work, the edges of which seemed as fresh and as clearly defined as if recently finished. Only one priest remained in the monastery to officiate for the few inhabitants of the wretched village adjoining its walls, who seemed poverty-stricken and miserable.

In one of the huts we put up for the night, and tasted for the first time a pilau made of millet-seed instead of rice or flour, resembling much in appearance and taste the kous-koussou of Algeria. A few books and manuscripts yet remained in the library, some of the latter illuminated in a very peculiar manner with figures of animals, birds, &c. Next day we bade adieu to the poor priest, the solitary inhabitant of the ruined walls and empty apartments, and

passing by two churches similar in architecture to that at Khoshavank, but smaller, and which the priest told us had been built by one of the Tiridates, kings of Armenia, and his queen—the smaller of the two by the latter—soon reached the Russian frontier, close to which was another church in a ruinous condition.

At the frontier we were met by a custom-house officer, who, announcing himself as Prince Arlotsky, of Georgia told us that he had been sent on from Gumri by Major Noumankoff to receive us, and have an escort of horsemen ready to take us on to Erivan. The poor man had been waiting patiently for us, and had fulfilled all his directions. He had provided five Armenian horsemen as a guard, who looked as unmilitary and unpromising a lot of warriors as could well be seen, sitting on their horses as if they were in momentary terror of falling off.

Our road continued south-east, over a series of low hills, without a tree or shrub to be seen, the entire country having the appearance of a vast wilderness, desolate and solitary, with here and there a ruin standing naked and isolated, as if to remind the traveller that this waste had once been fertile, populous, and inhabited by a highly civilized nation. Utterly devastated by the Tatars under Tamerlane, its cities destroyed, and its inhabitants either massacred or carried off into distant slavery, the face of the land has reassumed its primitive wildness, and now, abandoned to desolation, affords shelter chiefly to robber-bands, who fly to either Russian or Turkish territory to escape the consequences of their crimes. A few miserable, half-starved looking wretches are met with, few and far between, creeping about the mouldering walls of their mud huts, which are scarcely to be distinguished at a little distance from the surrounding soil.

We halted for an hour at a village called Mastara, where stood a church, in form and architecture similar to the others

we had visited, and built of the same red stone. A few stunted trees grew around it, the only ones we had seen for ten days. The building itself, though very handsome and well preserved outside, and still used as a church by the villagers, was very dilapidated inside, and filthy in the extreme, having been to all appearance quite recently employed as a stable. The pavement was dirty and broken, the plaster had fallen from the walls, and the rich mosaics strewed the muddy floor beneath.

The priest came to sit with us during the hour we spent in the village. He brought with him a book which he had purchased at Gumri from an Armenian, though, as it was written in Russian and German, neither of which he understood, he did not know what it treated of. It formed his whole library at present, and seemingly was not very well suited to his vocation, as it was "The Articles of War of Russia in 1777," with a German translation. The poor priest did not seem to be much disconcerted when we told him what it was—he had bought it as a book, and a book it was.

A few hours' more riding over the same kind of country brought us to Talyn, a village situated near the old Persian fortress of that name, and where we were to pass the night. We found there two more dilapidated churches, one having apparently suffered from an earthquake; the other, which was smaller and in better repair, was still used as a place of worship. They were both built of the usual red stone and on the ordinary plan—a Greek cross, with a conical or extinguisher-shaped dome over the centre. The fort, which did not seem to possess any very great antiquity, was quadrangular, with large and lofty towers at the angles and on the sides. It was of no considerable size, and seemed to have suffered hardly any injury or damage during the last war with Persia, which ended in the cession of the whole province of Erivan. It had been for some time deserted, its

situation not recommending it to the conquerors as a military post, and although it might have been converted into granaries, or put to some other purposes, it remained perfectly empty and abandoned.

The few houses at Talyn are built of stone, seemingly taken from the ruins of the former city; and the inhabitants, who are all Armenians, had been brought from Bayezid in 1829, when that city was captured from the Turks, and located as a colony on the site of a former town from which their ancestors had been expelled. The colony appeared to thrive, and the people seemed wealthier and in better circumstances than we had yet observed among the Armenian village population. We slept in a house the master of which, an elder of the town—and certainly so in every sense of the word, as he was upwards of eighty—was our companion in our sleeping-room. This apartment, as usual, consisted of the stable and cow-house, and what with the incessant wheezing and coughing of the old gentleman, the munching of the horses and cows, the crowing of the cocks, and the number and fierce appetite of the fleas, who repeated their often-repulsed attacks with unwearied pertinacity, we were only too glad when the first streaks of daylight told us that it was time to depart from our resting-place.

Our host, who was the patriarch of the village, had been the chief man ever since the inhabitants had settled there, and seemed well pleased at having come to reside under a Christian government, though, from his own account, he had not been badly treated by the Turks when living under their rule.

It would appear that nowhere is the patriarchal system carried to a greater extent than among the Armenians. During the lifetime of the father, all the sons and their descendants live together in one common dwelling; and thus houses may be found which, from the number of their inhabitants, resemble beehives, often comprising three and four

generations. All the property is held in common by the descendants of the head of the house. Brothers and sisters inherit equally, but until the death of the head no one can possess anything separate from all the others. Until marriage, the Armenian girls go about as they like; they are unveiled, and enjoy as much freedom as they could do in European countries, flirting, love-making, and marrying to please themselves, as in more civilized lands. But once married, and all is changed. From that time until she bears a child, she never speaks to any one except her husband; and then only in private. After she becomes a mother, she may speak to her mother-in-law first, and after the lapse of certain periods, to her own mother, her sisters-in-law, and her own sisters. She is always veiled, even in her own house; she never speaks to male strangers, and she seldom or never leaves the house. Her finery, jewellery, and ornaments can be shown only to those of her own sex; and in every way her seclusion is as complete as that of the Turkish women. On the other hand, the Armenian women seldom do any hard work; they remain at home while their husbands labour in the fields, and they enjoy, probably on account of their acquaintance prior to marriage, much more respect and confidence from their husbands than fall to the share of the Turkish wife, who, moreover, has to divide with two or three rivals the little affection or respect which her husband deigns to bestow on her. As the Armenian woman can only talk in her own house below her breath, that none of her male relatives may hear what she says, it follows that the consequence which usually results from the residence of so many women in one house, incessant quarrelling, is quite avoided. Custom, the strongest of all laws, forbidding them to speak above a whisper, a war of words could only be carried on under great difficulties; and as yet, at least, speaking on the fingers, which would also require a knowledge of spelling, an accomplishment very few of them possess, is not

introduced to facilitate the interchange of hostilities between those ancient enemies, mothers and daughters-in-law. Yet it is not easy to realize the idea of a large family circle in which all the ladies sit mute, or only converse among themselves in whispers.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAIN OF ERIVAN—ARARAT—PEAKS OF ALAGHOZ—THE MIRAGE
— SIRDARABAD — DEMETRI AND THE GAME — DOUBTFUL
COURAGE OF OUR ARMENIAN ESCORT—TSEEBÄ—MONASTERY
OF ETCHMIADZIN — INTRODUCTION TO THE PATRIARCH AND
BISHOP—LEGENDS, ORNAMENTS, AND RELICS—CELEBRATED
WHITE WINE—CHURCH OF ST. REPSIMA AND ST. CAIANA—
TOLERANT PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMENIANS—CONSTITUTION
OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH — AURICULAR CONFESSION —
MECHITARISTS.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR next night's halt was to be at Tseeba, a village where the Russian collector, and chief of the district, resided, to whom we had brought letters of recommendation from Gumri. An hour after leaving Talyu, we descended from the low hills over which we had been riding, into the vast plain of Erivan, extending in length some eighty miles, and from ten to twenty in breadth. The majestic mount of Ararat rose from its level surface at the opposite side in one unbroken slope to the summits, half its height being clothed in eternal snows. No hills intervened to take off from the immensity of the pile. One of the loftiest mountains in the world, it has the advantage possessed by few of being alone and isolated in its grandeur; the chains, east and west, being dwarfed by comparison into mere hillocks. The icy peaks rose clear into the blue sky, reflecting the dazzling rays of the sun; the brightness of the snow contrasting with the sombre colour of the lower part of the enormous mass. It has two summits; the eastern, which is much lower than the other, and at some distance from it, being separated by a deep depression or glen, is called the Lesser, while the loftier conical peak of the main pile is named the Greater Ararat, and is at an elevation of over 16,000 feet above sea-level, and more than 13,000 above the surface of the plain beneath. The Turks call Ararat "Agri Dagh," which, according to Von Hammer, is taken from "Arghi Dagh," or Mountain of the Ark; the Persians name it "Koh-i-Noo,"

or Noah's Mountain: and the Armenians denominate it "Massees," or Mother of the World. The form of the higher peak, which runs precipitously down to the plain on the north, is broader and less pointed at the top than that of the lesser. The colour of the mountain from the snow line downwards is of a peculiarly volcanic-looking black. On our left, opposite Ararat, rose the three peaks of Alaghoz, also covered with snow, the slopes of which were sterile, devoid of verdure, and covered with volcanic stones and masses of cinders and scoriæ. Although both Ararat and Alaghoz were originally volcanoes, the remains of former streams of lava to a great extent bearing witness to this fact, yet within the limits of historical record there has not been any eruption, neither has smoke ever been observed to issue from any part of these mountains.

Towards noon we approached what seemed to be a large town, surrounded by embattled walls and towers, the whole standing in the centre of a lake. The day was oppressively hot; we were riding over stony and arid soil, on which the only plants that seemed to thrive were numerous varieties of a little shrub, about eight or ten inches high, called by the Turks "Schura," and which were covered with small, primrose-like flowers, of every shade of colour, purple, red, pink, yellow, buff, white, and green, so compact that in some places it seemed as if a carpet covered the soil. As we advanced towards the city in the lake, the water, whose appearance was caused by the mirage, became gradually more circumscribed in its limits, and at last all semblance of it vanished. Yet it was hard to believe that the sheet of water, whose level and shores were so clearly defined a quarter of an hour previously, was only one of the commonest optical delusions in warm climates.

The town was Sirdarabad, so called from its builder, who was one of the last Sirdars or Persian governors of Erivan, and by whom it was erected about fifty years previously, and

roughly fortified with thick and high walls of dried mud. Two of these, thirty feet in height, and with an interval of fifty yards between the outer and inner line, surrounded the miserable collection of huts huddled together inside, every shower of rain carrying away large portions of both the walls and the hovels which they were erected to protect. On the towers which flanked the walls at equal distances from each other, were huge breaches and cavities that had doubtless previously been embrasures for guns.

The inhabitants seemed chiefly Armenian, but a few Persians yet remained lingering on in the wretched place, whose only attraction to them could be that it had been their home from childhood.

After passing Sirdarabad the plain became more fertile, a system of irrigation being practised which at once changed the nature of the landscape. The large extent of flat table-land before us was dotted over with numerous villages, round each of which fruit trees seemed to luxuriate in the rich soil. The careful cultivation that we observed everywhere, and the numerous canals that traversed the stubble in all directions, afforded the best proof that the country was inhabited by an industrious population. Game also made its appearance. We saw many flocks of sand grouse; and on approaching Tseeba an enormous quantity of wild ducks were feeding in a low rushy stream, or rather succession of ponds, that we passed on our right hand. The ardour of Demetri being excited to frenzy at the view of such large game within easy shot of the bank, he unslung the "fucile," but alas! the ducks not being either so ignorant or so foolhardy as the sparrows, would not wait for a second trial after the first cap snapped, and flew lazily away, angrily quacking at the disturber of their repose. After each exploit of this kind Demetri would recap and carefully sling round his shoulders the impracticable fucile, which he seemed to cherish the more as its utter worthlessness became more apparent.

At a short distance from Tseeba we saw some way off a small body of horsemen, whose appearance seemed immediately to throw into the most dire consternation the five valiant Armenians composing our escort. They at once stood still, and some of them proposed an immediate return at full speed to Sirdarabad, leaving, of course, the baggage behind at the mercy of the supposed robbers. We at once opposed this arrangement, and the trembling warriors stood their ground. The dreaded band approached nearer, and the escort flocked together with terror depicted in their features; but their alarm was turned into rapturous joy, when, as the advancing riders came near enough to distinguish their uniforms, it was discovered that they were Cossacks. We were received most kindly by the chief of the district, in whose house we put up, and the cleanliness and comfort of which we appreciated all the more after the cowhouses of the preceding nights. Tseeba is a large village, in which some Russian officials lived, their houses contrasting with the mud huts of the inhabitants—of a somewhat better description, however, than those in the more secluded hamlets.

We rode on next day (20th October) to the monastery of Etchmiadzin, or, as called by the Turks, Ouchkilissa, or the Three Churches. On approaching it all that could be seen was a high wall with eight towers enclosing a space of ground of some extent, over which, in the centre of the square, was visible the conical dome of a church. Around the wall were growing in rows some poplar trees, which were the more conspicuous from the dead flat on which they stood, and on which the monastery was built. A few mud houses—in all probability originally erected there for safety in the Persian times—clustered near the gateway, on reaching which we dismounted and found ourselves in a bazaar filled with shops of every kind, at the opposite end of which was an archway with side doors.

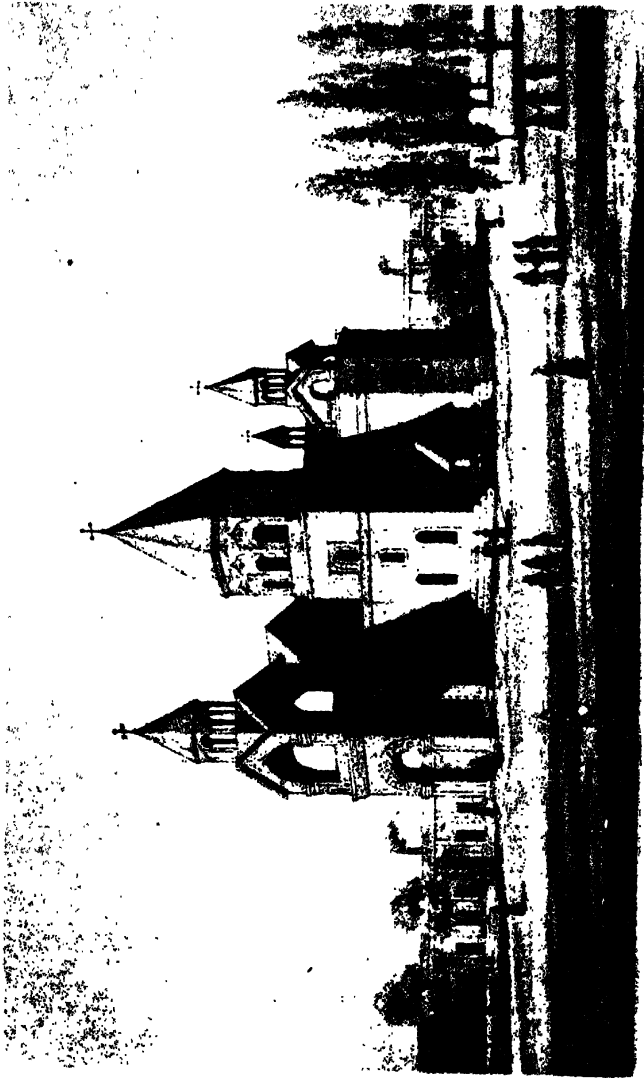
On passing through this, we entered a cloister running round the inner court, in the centre of which stood the

church, and where in a few moments we met one of the six bishops who always reside in the monastery. The bishop whom we met in the cloisters wore a robe of black silk; a high conical black silk hood covered his head, coming low down on his forehead, and fell down over his shoulders behind. Although a young man, he had a careworn air and sickly appearance, probably from the confinement of the convent. His servant, who wore the usual Armenian dress, to which were added long red stockings, was in attendance. The chief of the district of Tseeba presented us to him, and after some minutes' conversation he offered to introduce us to the patriarch, to whom he sent to announce our arrival.

Conducted by him, we passed through a low corridor leading from the cloisters into another court, laid out as a garden, and surrounded on two sides by various buildings. Crossing this we entered a small archway on the left hand, and ascending a short flight of steps, found ourselves in an ante-room, small but neatly furnished. After waiting here for some time, we were led into a large room with a throne at one end, before which hung a red silk curtain, drawn partially aside. One side of this long chamber seemed wholly glazed, and looked out into the garden beneath; the other was covered with glass, cut in various shapes, and of every colour and hue, exquisitely arranged in arabesque designs. In other respects the room was handsomely furnished with Turkey carpets, embroidered sofas, &c. Out of this hall opened three or four smaller rooms, into one of which we were conducted by some attendants in red stockings. The bishop accompanied us, and presented us to the patriarch, who was seated at the further end of the apartment. He received us with much dignity, yet most courteously. We kissed his hand, he, as we did so, touching our heads with his lips. He had sent for his physician, who was an Italian, to interpret, at which we rejoiced exceedingly for many reasons. He seemed to be about fifty-five

years old, was a very handsome and dignified-looking man, with a remarkably fine profile, and a large iron-grey beard, which fell down over his chest. He was dressed, like the bishop, in black silk, but wore a diamond cross round his neck, and another glittering in the front of his conical cap. He seemed careworn and delicate, his features having the sickly look produced by want of exercise. He desired us to be seated on his left, the bishop who introduced us, as well as another, who for some reason wore a purple robe instead of a black one, with the star of an order on his left breast, sitting opposite us on his other hand.

We talked for some time, through the medium of the Italian doctor, on various subjects; the patriarch, who had resided for some time in Constantinople, seeming well versed in all European diplomacy, at least so far as regarded the East. He spoke with much joy of the rising state of Armenia, and related some circumstances to illustrate the improvement now rapidly taking place in the condition of the inhabitants, who, as the means of intercourse became more facilitated, he hoped would be brought more into communication with the civilized world. He handed us a book entitled "Stubbs' Register; or, Succession of Bishops in England," which he said had been sent to him by Mr. George Williams, who, he believed, shortly intended coming to visit the monastery. Not having at the convent any one who could read English, he asked us to inform him what was the subject of the book. Alluding to the then absorbing Italian question, he said that although such an ancient institution as the temporal power of the papacy could not be done away without exciting much disturbance, yet he could not regret such an event, as a priest had no business to meddle with the affairs of this world. After an interview of half an hour's duration we rose to take leave, when he invited us to remain for the night in the monastery. We gladly accepted the invitation, and the bishop who had accom-



St. Mary's Church, New York

St. Mary's Church, New York

panied us offering to be our guide over the building, we left with the same ceremony as had been observed on entering.

We went, immediately on quitting the apartments of the patriarch, to the church, which is in the centre of the great court, and, like all the other Armenian churches we had seen, built of red sandstone. We entered by a portico, or three-arched gateway, the outside of which is very richly decorated with tracery and friezes carved in stone. Over the gateway is a curious old fresco painting, the ground of which is of gold; but the whole portico seemed to be of a later date than the rest of the building. The centre of the church underneath the dome is occupied by a high narrow baldachino, covering a stone on the spot where St. Gregory the Illuminator, the patron saint of Armenia, to whom the church is dedicated, saw, in the year 302, Christ descend, and, opening the earth, cast down into the chasm a statue of a pagan deity which stood near, together with all the devils which happened at the moment to be in Armenia. Hence the Armenian name of Etchmiadzin, or Descent of the Redeemer. St. Gregory had a block of marble placed on the spot, but the Persians carried it away on one of the numerous occasions when they plundered the monastery.

The patriarch had two thrones, one quite close to the altar, the other removed to some distance from it. Near the altar was also a very beautiful chair, carved and inlaid, a present from the pope to the patriarch in the sixteenth century. In a recess was a curious genealogical tree, if it can be so called, having its root in Abraham, the ends of many of its branches terminating in crowned busts with mild and joyous countenances, and on the highest the Virgin and Child, all being of silver. The whole church, which is large, and to judge from the massive chandeliers and the number of silver vessels and ornaments it contains, very rich, is covered from about eight feet from the ground with

frescoes and paintings of saints, martyrdoms, and scriptural scenes, executed early in the last century by an Armenian artist in the Persian style. The interior was very dark and gloomy. The monks boast of the numerous relics that are contained in the monastery, the chief of which are the hand of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the spear which pierced our Saviour's side, the body of St. Repsima, and the arm of St. Caiana.

Old Chardin, who wrote in 1686, gives a very detailed account of the monastery as it existed in his time. He says:—"The first Monastery of this Church was built by Narses the 29th Patriarch of Armenia. This the Táatars ruined, and if we may believe the chronology of the place it has been five times levelled with the ground. It is at present built of brick, the Patriarch's apartment lying to the east. There are besides in the convent lodgings for all strangers that come to visit it, and for 80 monks besides, but usually there are not above 12 or 15. And here it is that the Patriarchs of Armenia are compelled to reside. But to say truth, the avarice, envy, and ambition with which they are possessed in this age finds 'em so much business, that they spend all their time in rambling over Persia and Turkey. This Patriarch hath 20 Bishopricks under him." He also enumerates the relics and wealth of the church in ornaments and plate, remarking in the same spirit of the latter—"The chiefest of which wealth was the munificence of papal liberality, and testimonies of Rome's credulity as well as Armenian dissimulation." In winding up his remarks, he says—"I shall forbear to speak of the other Monasteries, or of the particular stories which the Armenians recount concerning them . . . for in truth the Armenian tradition has nothing of common sence. Nor shall I speak anything of the Armenian belief or worship, for it is well known what they are, as having been for several ages wrapped up in the opinions of the Monophysites, who in the East are

called Jacobites, of which at this day, they understand nothing at all, being altogether drowned in ignorance." The old traveller loses no opportunity of conveying to his readers his disbelief in the legends which he relates.

The church was founded in 304 on the site of a heathen temple of Artemis by St. Gregory and Tiridates the Great, but was destroyed by the Persians half a century afterwards, and it remained in ruins till the seventh century, when the present building was erected by the patriarch Gomidas.

On leaving the church, we found at the entrance a number of the monks, all dressed in black robes, whom curiosity had collected to see the strangers. Near the door lies buried the body of Mr. Macdonald, a former minister from England to Persia; and above the grave is a small monument in the wall, with an inscription to his memory in English, Greek, and Persian. One could not help contrasting the kindly feeling thus shown towards the remains of a stranger of a different faith with that manifested by Roman Catholics in Rome. We visited the refectory, a large apartment, the walls and arched roof of which are of stone, and in which the monks, the boys of the school, and the servants of the monastery were at dinner at separate tables; the fathers sitting at one table by themselves, the boys occupying another opposite, and the servants being placed at a cross-bench at the lower end of the apartment. Stone seats lined the walls, in front of which ran the stone benches, some three feet in height, which served as tables, all covered with white table-cloths and a plentiful supply of provisions. Between every two monks stood a bottle of wine, for which the convent is famed. The bishops and superior monks dine always in their own apartments.

There seemed about fifty or sixty boys present, with bright, intelligent, and lively countenances, looking as if they led a very happy life. They were nearly all destined for the

priesthood, and some of them would probably remain all their lives within the walls where they had been educated. The monks were about forty or fifty, chiefly men in the prime of life, as most of the provincial dignities in the Armenian church are filled up from their number; consequently, while their youth is spent in the convent, their old age is generally passed in different sees.

Re-entering the patriarch's house, and passing through two rooms which were undergoing repair, we came to a third in which a mass of books and manuscripts lay piled up on the floor, but all numbered and ticketed, awaiting their places on the shelves of the new library, which was not then completed. Many of these were of great antiquity, and beautifully illuminated in a style which seems peculiar to Armenia; some Bibles in particular, of the fifteenth century, were marvels of labour in that art. They were all written on vellum, and were well preserved. The writing was very clear and good, and the execution of the designs, which were generally very minute, and interspersed with grotesque figures of animals and monsters, was perfect. The monks said that there were many more ancient illuminated manuscripts than those which they showed us, but it would have taken too long to search for them among the heap of books in which they lay.

On leaving the library, we descended into the smaller court in the patriarch's palace, and crossing it entered a room in which we soon after dined, our companions being our fellow-guests. We tasted the celebrated white wine, made only at the monastery, and which is renowned all over the Caucasian provinces for its delicacy and flavour. It certainly merited justly its fame, having an exquisite bouquet, and tasting something like Château d'Yquem. The manufacture of a wine so delicious does much credit to the care and attention which the monks are said to bestow on it. After dinner the Russian chief of the district went back

to Tseeba, promising to return next morning and ride with us to Erivan, where he had business. Being left alone we found ourselves our own masters, and able to employ our time as we wished—a luxury which can only be fully and thoroughly appreciated by those who have travelled in the East, where a traveller is the common property of all who may take it into their heads to gratify their curiosity by sitting down opposite to him and staring at him fixedly, perhaps for hours.

We spent the remainder of the evening in strolling about the environs of the monastery. Near it, but now in ruins, are the two churches dedicated to St. Repsima and St. Caiana, Roman martyrs who were put to death on the spots where the churches stand. In the neighbourhood is the large reservoir which furnishes water to the convent and village, and also the necessary supply to a poplar grove at a little distance, where the trees seemed to thrive well and grow rapidly, although without this artificial irrigation they would certainly perish in the arid and burnt soil.

The Italian doctor who had interpreted for us during our interview with the patriarch, joined us at supper, and we found him a very agreeable and well-informed man. He had been for some time in the monastery, and professed to enjoy the life of tranquillity and quiet that he led there. The next morning we had another interview with the patriarch, to take leave and thank him for the hospitality and attention which had been shown to us. He asked us about the route we intended taking, said he had been at some of the places we purposed visiting, and recommended us to see some other spots of interest.

We then kissed his hand, and having bid him farewell, departed from Etchmiadzin, and in company with the chief of the district of Tseeba, rode on to Erivan, where we arrived in a few hours. The revenues of the convent, and the means

of maintaining the large establishment which is kept up for educational and ecclesiastical purposes within its walls, are derived partly from the contributions of Armenians all over the world, and in some degree from lands which belong to the monastery, and for which certain sums are paid by the villagers as rent. There are also some lands in Georgia which are the property of the monks.

The convent both in ancient and modern times has done much for the population of the surrounding villages, in assisting them with means to undertake larger works than they would be otherwise able to attempt, and in making new and restoring old canals for the purpose of irrigating the thirsty plain. The villages belonging to the convent, as well as the monks themselves, pay no taxes to the government.

Being the central point to which Armenians all over the world turn as the seat of their first bishop and head of their religion, Etchmiadzin was a great acquisition to the Russian empire—a centre of unity, destined, perhaps, in future times to be of infinitely-increased importance. It is true that at Sis in Cilicia and at Akthamar, a monastery on an island in the lake of Van, two other patriarchs exist who do not recognise the supremacy of Etchmiadzin. But they are both in a state of great poverty; their authority is very circumscribed, being acknowledged but by a very few in the immediate neighbourhood; and they are regarded as schismatics by the great body of Armenians.

The Armenians recognise the pope as the first patriarch of Christendom, taking the first place; but in all other respects refuse to admit his universal authority. The Catholicos or Patriarch of Etchmiadzin, once anointed, cannot again be deposed without his own consent. They are a very tolerant people, as was evinced by the permission to inter the body of Mr. Macdonald close to their principal church; and they recognise every baptized person as a Christian, no matter to what sect he may belong. The number of Armenians

now in Armenia Proper is not very large ; they are supposed altogether to consist of ten or twelve millions, scattered over nearly every country in the world.

Haxthausen says with regard to the mode of electing the Catholicos and the history of the Patriarchate—"The Armenian legend of King Abgar, who wrote to our Saviour, relates that shortly after the Ascension, Thaddeus, one of the seventy disciples, came to Edessa, where he baptized Abgar and several of his subjects. Abgar's successors, however, apostatized, and Christianity retained its footing in Armenia with difficulty until the arrival of St. Gregory the Illuminator, descended from the royal line of the Arsacides. After preaching the Gospel to the people and enduring severe persecution, he succeeded in converting the king, Tiridates the Great. St. Gregory has from that time been held in honour by the Armenians as their apostle and the real founder of their Church. At the commencement of the fourth century he was consecrated by Pope Sylvester independent Patriarch of Armenia, and the Patriarchs of Etchmiadzin maintain that they derive from him their dignity and right transmitted in unbroken succession. They are therefore always consecrated by the incorruptible hand of the saint, which is preserved as a relic in the cathedral of Etchmiadzin. The Catholicos alone, as Head of the Church, has the right to appoint Bishops and prepare the holy oil used for anointing in baptism. On the other hand, the patriarch recognises the authority of the Œcumenical Councils in all things ; even the decisions of the council of the separate Armenian Church he regards as binding. As it is, however, almost impossible now to assemble such a council, a synod is constituted at Etchmiadzin, which, under the presidency of the patriarch, decides all ecclesiastical regulations and controversies. The number of members has varied from time to time. The patriarch can attain his office and dignity only by election. When Armenia was an independent kingdom, all classes, spiritual and

secular, were summoned by the king to the election of a new patriarch; frequently he was chosen by acclamation. The participation of the laity subsequently diminished, and the appointment remained chiefly in the hands of the clergy, often entirely with the monks. Still the laity have never been excluded, and recently they have again taken a decisive part. The secular government has always claimed the right of confirming or sanctioning the choice. Formerly this was natural and just, when Armenia had her own kings. When all took part in the election the king could not be excluded, and as it was his duty to protect the patriarch, it was right that the election should await his sanction. But when Armenia fell under Mohammedan rulers, this right of confirmation became both unnatural and unjust, and gave rise to grievous abuses. The primacy was put up for sale by the Persians, and conferred upon the highest bidder, and simony penetrated from the centre of the Armenian church down to her lowest offices. The catholicos, in order to pay the enormous sum for which he had purchased his see, was obliged to sell the archbishoprics; the archbishops, in their turn, sold the rite of consecration to the priests; and the priests sold the sacraments to the laity. The degradation of the patriarchs at length reached such a point that they came to attach greater importance to a firman of confirmation from the Sultan at Constantinople than to the canonical election. Thus, for instance, they asserted their superiority over the Patriarchs of Sis on the ground that the latter were confirmed only by the Pasha of Adana. This degradation of the patriarchal see lasted till late in the eighteenth century. . . . Russia has earned the gratitude of the Armenian Church by taking the patriarchate under her protection, as on this ground she interferes in behalf of any Armenian who suffers persecution in the Mohammedan states; she has also removed most of those abuses in the mode of electing the patriarchs which had for so many centuries corrupted the clergy. The

deputies, members of the synod, and the seven eldest bishops at Etchmiadzin take part in the election."

Haxthausen continues:—"The Armenians were the first beyond the limits of the Roman empire to accept Christianity as a nation, with their king at their head. The constitution of the Armenian Church is in all essentials identical with that of the Latin and Greek Churches; but in non-essential points it occupies an intermediate position. It owed its origin to the Greek Church, but afterwards uniformly connected itself rather with Rome than with Constantinople, its independence appearing to be more threatened by the latter. No absolute heresy separates it from Rome, nor did it ever represent Rome as having apostatized from the faith of the universal church, as did the Greeks. . . . I have already described the office and privileges of the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin; the other patriarchs, of Jerusalem and Constantinople, are, properly speaking, only his representatives. Patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops are selected from the monks, and always reside in the monasteries. The priests are mostly chosen by the communities and ordained by the bishops; they must be married before they are consecrated, but are not allowed to marry a second time. The revenue of the Catholicos is derived from the offerings of pilgrims, the sums collected for him by all the Armenian monasteries, contributions levied every three years in all Armenian churches by his vicars, the property of deceased archbishops, the vast sums he receives for the holy oil (which he alone can consecrate), and fees paid by the patriarchs and archbishops on entering upon their office; he also receives the revenues of several villages belonging to the patriarchal see, of which Vagharshabad is the largest. The archbishops have the revenues, often considerable, of the monasteries in which they reside. On their annual visitations a collection is made for them in every church. They receive considerable sums for the ordination of priests, and on the transfer of ecclesiastical appoint-

ments, an arrangement which formerly often degenerated into simony. To them also accrues property left by childless priests, as well as by all persons dying without heirs. Clearly defined parishes are not always to be found in Armenia; but every village has at least one, often three or four, ecclesiastics—in the latter case certain farmsteads are assigned to each. . . . The principal source of income, however, is the tithe. The church revenues of the whole village are thrown together and divided among the priests, the head priest receiving considerably more than the others. For all ecclesiastical services, baptisms, marriages, burials, and special prayers, payment is demanded. There are no settled fees, but the offices of the church are frequently subjected to the most disgraceful traffic. When any one dies, a full suit of the deceased person's clothing must be given to the church. The secular priests are almost without exception uneducated; in their earlier years they have generally been artisans or shopkeepers. . . . On Sundays and feast-days mass is celebrated, but not on ordinary week-days, unless specially required and paid for. Auricular confession is practised, and if no priest can be found, confession may be made to a layman. In case of necessity—for instance, if a person is at the point of death and there is no human being near—confession may be made to a tree or a stone, and in place of the consecrated elements the dying man may take earth into his mouth. . . . A considerable number of Armenians are in connexion with the Roman see—they are called the United Armenians. . . . The Armenians of Poland, together with their patriarch, submitted to the Holy See as early as the year 1616. But a more important fact in connexion with these views was the foundation of the order of Mechitarists, first in the Morea, and afterwards in the island of San Lazaro at Venice. Mechitar, an Armenian monk, was born at Sebaste, in Asia Minor, in 1676; thirsting after knowledge, and filled with ardent love for his people, he endeavoured, by spiritual and

moral influences, and the dissemination of European culture, to elevate his unfortunate and oppressed nation, and to this purpose he dedicated his life. He submitted to the pope, and founded with his consent, an order and a monastery, into which only native Armenians were received. He also established an Armenian printing-press. He and his companions and successors have done much in translating from other languages into Armenian. He himself translated Thomas à Kempis. These Armenian books are sent by caravans into Persia and India, and prepare the way for the education of the people. . . . In Georgia there are many Roman Catholic Armenians; they have a great dislike to their non-united countrymen, and do not call themselves Armenians, but Catholics, as if that were the name of a nation. . . . Many attempts have also been made to unite the Armenian with the Greek Church. Six Armenian villages on the west bank of the Euphrates have adopted the Greek faith, the largest of which is called Aga or Aguntsi. The Protestants, too, have endeavoured to make converts. The Basle missionaries founded an Armenian school at Shusha, which was however removed at the request of the patriarch, who regarded it as dangerous. In Calcutta the English have established an Armenian college and printing-press, probably to counteract the Russian influence over Armenians. Russia, however, has always kept aloof from proselytism."

CHAPTER XV.

ERIVAN—THEATRICALS AND BALL AT THE GOVERNOR'S—
GARDENS OF SIRDAR HUSSEIN—PALACE OF THE PERSIAN
SIRDARS—EATING-SHOP—SPLENDID MOSQUE—THE SCHOOL-
MASTER AND HIS PUPILS—SERVICE OVER THE DEAD—
GENERAL KOLUBAKINE—A VILLAGE TRAGEDY—IKDYR—
—YEZEEDIS AND KURDS—MR. THURSBY'S ASCENT OF ARARAT
—SUPERSTITIOUS IDEAS REGARDING THE SACRED MOUNTAIN
—THE ICE-SERPENT—TENT OF A KURDISH CHIEF—BAYEZID
—AN ITALIAN EXILE—MODE OF WARMING THE HOUSES.

CHAPTER XV.

AS the town of Erivan, which is open to the plain facing Ararat on one side, is surrounded on the other three sides by hills, we did not come in sight of the fortress which commands it from the eminence on which it is built, until quite near, nor did we see the town itself until we had almost entered it. As we approached, the ground became more uneven; we passed through numerous orchards and vineyards, surrounded with high mud walls. Riding for some hundred yards up the craggy valley of the Zanga, we crossed it by a stone bridge, and soon found ourselves in the great square, on one side of which is a series of bazaars, and opposite to them the house of the governor. We went at once to it, and were soon greeted by General Kolubakine, who had returned from Tiflis, and was expecting us.

In a short time we sat down to dinner, forming with the general's suite a large party. The centre of the table was occupied with a large plateau, heaped some feet in height with layers of red and white grapes, the contrasting colours of the strata having a very original effect. These grapes were of enormous size, some of the red being two inches and upwards in length.

In the evening we all went to a little theatre, which had just been built, to see the performance of some private theatricals by the young lady pupils of the "Institut," or Government School, for girls of the upper classes, of which the

empress is patroness all over the empire, and which she endows liberally. A comedy was acted, seemingly with much calmness and self-possession, by the young ladies; but as all the dialogue was in Russian, it was not easy for us to make anything of it. Later in the evening there was a ball, at which all the young performers appeared, together with about a hundred others, Russians, Armenians, Georgians, and Persians, whose rich and varied costumes gave the whole scene exactly the appearance of an exceedingly well got-up fancy-ball. The room was most tastefully and beautifully decorated. The walls were not only adorned with a profusion of foliage, and as many flowers as, notwithstanding the advanced state of the season, could be found, but also hung with festoons of vine leaves, out of which peeped numerous bunches of real grapes. Some of the Georgians were very pretty, and shone to much advantage, as far as personal appearance went, among the Russian ladies; their graceful figures, in their becoming national costume, quite eclipsing the latter, in their French dresses and crinoline. A supper concluded the ball, which lasted till after midnight, when we returned to the general's house, thinking of the very different manner in which we had spent the last few nights, passing from a cow-house to a monastery, and thence to a ball and the palace of a governor.

After breakfast the next morning, General Kolubakine lent us horses, and we rode out to get a view of the town from the top of a neighbouring hill, from whence it had the appearance of an enormous orchard, so numerous were the fruit-trees growing both around and inside the city, only the great square, or meidan, and the government-house, appearing out of the thick grove.

We thence went to the gardens of Sirdar Hussein, the last Sirdar or Governor of Erivan under the Persians, from whom it was taken by Prince Paskievitch, and who in con-

sequence of his surrender was disgraced and punished by the Shah.

In the centre of the gardens, which were sadly neglected, stood a large summer-house, or kiosk, of an octagon shape, partitions from each angle joining in the centre, and thus forming eight small rooms. Here the sirdar, with the ladies of his seraglio, used to resort in the intense heat of summer to enjoy the grateful shade of the surrounding trees, while numerous fountains, now broken, and their basins overgrown with weeds, cooled the parched air with their gushing waters. The rooms were painted in the style of the modern Persian school, in which great attention is paid to the careful execution of minute detail, the rules of perspective being utterly neglected.

We visited the old fortress of Erivan, with its mud walls and bastions, now in a tottering and ruinous condition. Formerly, before the introduction of artillery, a place of great strength, it is now useless as a defence to the town, being commanded on every side by the adjacent mountains, at a distance of five or six hundred yards. The palace of the Persian sirdars is contained within the circuit of its walls, which enclose a good deal of ground, and are above two thousand yards in length. The palace is built on the western side, its front standing on the verge of the precipice which overhangs the Zanga, flowing at a distance of eighty or one hundred feet below. A great part of it is now in ruins; some of the part which is still standing is used as an hospital. A small mosque yet remains, covered outside with tiles of different colours, green, blue, and white, presenting an odd and brilliant appearance among the dirty buildings and mud walls by which it is surrounded. Some of the reception rooms are still maintained in a state of repair; among the rest, the Hall of Mirrors, or audience chamber, one end of which is open to the court inside, while the other is terminated by a

large coloured glass window looking out over the abyss of the Zanga far below, into which in ancient times culprits were thrown, sewn up in bags, from the roof of the palace.

The view from this window is very beautiful. The old stone bridge over which we passed on entering the town stands at some little distance up the stream, the gardens of Sirdar Hussein lying opposite, separated from us by the wide and deep chasm through which runs the boiling Zanga.

The interior of the hall is fitted up with mirrors, a vast number of which are let into the walls and ceiling. On the walls, as well as on those of the kiosque in the garden opposite, are painted some of the most wonderfully conceived lions, not bigger than cats, hunted by very big men in splendid dresses, who obstinately persist in looking in an opposite direction from the tiny animal they are pursuing. The magnificently caparisoned horses on which they are mounted do not seem to care in the least for a lion leaping on their backs, continuing their canter calmly, their necks being rather longer than their bodies, and arched like a bow.

There are also pictures of scenes in the life of Rustum and other fabulous heroes of Persia, and others representing the Shah, Futteh Ali, and the last Sirdar. Rustum is invariably painted beardless, with an enormous moustache; the Shah, on the contrary, being celebrated for the length and beauty of his beard, is represented with one two feet long. All the paintings are executed with an utter disregard of perspective, the artist making an officer much bigger than a soldier, and a general on a still larger scale than either, whatever position he may occupy in the distance. The Shah himself, seated on a horse of colossal bulk, is of gigantic size; his height in proportion to that of the private soldiers being almost equal to that which distinguished Gulliver from

the Lilliputians. A couple of small white marble fountains still stand on either side of the hall.

The remainder of the ground enclosed within the walls of the fortress is used by the Russians for different purposes. Some of the buildings are converted into an arsenal, and others into sheds for artillery and gun-carriages.

The bazaars of Erivan do not present any features different from those of an ordinary Eastern town. They are small and dirty, like the streets, which are purely Asiatic; for very little European architecture is anywhere to be seen. The shops, filled with the usual admixture of Eastern and Russian produce, are almost wholly kept by Armenians, very few Persians being visible.

In the course of our wanderings in the city we observed several objects that excited our curiosity, among the rest a primitive bellows for maintaining the blast to the furnace of a forge. A small boy, sitting on his heels between two little goat-skins, open at one end, the orifice being closed at pleasure by small sticks held in his hands, worked them up and down alternately with either arm, and so communicated a feeble current of air—which, however, seemed to be quite sufficient—through leather tubes, to the furnace. Some oddly-shaped boots were exposed for sale, the toes elongated to a length of eight or nine inches, and pointed at the extremity, which curved backwards, precisely similar, in fact, to those seen in the prints of costumes of the time of Henry II. of England. The heels of these extraordinary boots, which are worn by some Kurdish tribes in the south, were shod with iron pegs an inch in length, rendering it an impossibility even to attempt to walk in them.

The thin cakes of bread in use everywhere in Persia and Turkey are made particularly well at Erivan. The paste is placed by the baker on a long and broad wooden shovel, which is whirled about until the dough spreads suffi-

ciently to form a sheet as thin as a shilling, and about four feet in length by one in breadth, when, with a dexterous turn of the wrist, which long practice alone can give, it is thrown on some hot stones at the bottom of the oven.

Immense quantities of fruit lay about everywhere. The sweet stoneless green grape seemed to be the commonest and most sought after, the larger kinds having thicker skins, and a coarser flavour. Nothing can be more delicate than these grapes, which are small and of a pale green colour, without any stones or seeds.

Eating shops, where the filthy Eastern cookery was continually going on, everywhere abounded. Chopped liver and onions, meat and fat, cut up very fine, and fastened to skewers ready for frying over a charcoal fire, lay close at hand, ready for the process of cooking whenever the delicate-looking morsels should have tempted the appetite of a hungry passer-by. Kabobs, or bits of meat and fat transfixed on wooden or cane sticks, were also in the greatest demand by those who could afford such luxuries, the majority of the poorer classes living on rice and bulgour, or pilau of millet. All the bazaar was roofed in with rotten boards and beams.

We visited a large mosque, the handsomest building in Erivan. The court in front was lined with an arcade, divided into small cells. A few old plane trees stood in this court, throwing their shade over the greater part of it. Very few people seemed to be in the interior, into which we contented ourselves with looking from the gate. In one of the cells of the arcade were assembled a number of boys sitting cross-legged round the schoolmaster, a venerable-looking Mollah, all reading aloud as hard as they could from different books, and creating a noise sufficient, one would suppose, to distract any one else; but which the hoary-headed Mollah did not seem to mind in the least, as he sat calmly and quietly

in the midst of the deafening uproar. A tray of coffee cups and a pipe lay beside him, the whole scene reminding us of a similar one we had seen at Elizabethopol. Opposite the entrance to the mosque a corpse, enveloped in a white sheet, lay on the ground, over which a Mollah was lazily droning out some passages from the Koran; the relatives of the deceased stood about, but, save by some veiled women, very little grief or interest seemed to be shown by any one. The Mollah stood in front, the rest behind him in two rows.

We spent the few days we remained at Erivan in visiting everything that was mentioned to us as being of any interest in the town, the kindness of General Kolubakine affording us every facility. The general is a well-known officer in the Caucasian provinces, where his services, talents, and bravery in numerous campaigns against the mountaineers, raised him to the high rank he occupied as general of division and governor of an important province.

Various anecdotes of his courage and presence of mind under fire were related by the soldiery, by whom he was much liked; one of which is very characteristic of the Russian soldier. During an engagement with the mountaineers the hour of evening prayer arrived, when the Mohammedans at once commenced their devotions. Observing this, the Russian soldiers hesitated to attack them while so engaged. General Kolubakine, inquiring the reason for this reluctance to advance, was told that the soldiers did not like to attack men praying, whereupon he rushed to the front and asked them "whether they were not also fighting for their religion and their God," and "whether they were not better than the religion and god of the enemy?" With loud cries of "They are! they are!" the soldiers at once advanced, and closing with the mountaineers, who did not expect the attack, drove them back in confusion. Remarkably well informed on the condition not only of his

own, but of most of the other European countries, he took a deep interest in the then absorbing topic to a Russian of the abolition of serfage, which he earnestly desired, hoping to see it carried into effect in the manner in which it has been accomplished since, by giving the peasant, in addition to his personal freedom, the land on which his house stood, and a small additional portion.

He had formed a very good library of books in French, German, Italian, and Russian, in his house, which he had furnished also with much taste. One of the reception-rooms was fitted up in the Persian style. The windows were of coloured glass, niches in the walls were lined with small pieces of looking-glass set at different angles to refract the rays of light, the walls were hung with suits of armour richly gilt and inlaid, and carpets and divans covered the floor. He often spoke freely to us on the great difficulty of contending with the dishonesty of the Russian officials, which is everywhere complained of both by residents and strangers; but he hoped in time to succeed in eradicating it in his district, or, if he should fail in accomplishing an object which he so earnestly desired, at least in checking it considerably.

We took our leave of him on the 24th October, he also quitting Erivan on a tour of inspection to the district and town of Nakchivan, distant about seventy miles from Erivan, on the east or Tabreez side. All the officers, the ladies of Erivan, the pupils of the "Institut," and a number of Persian and Armenian dignitaries, came to bid him farewell, as he was to be absent for a month. We parted from him with much regret, expressing our sincere wish for a future meeting.

We retraced our steps over the same road by which we had come to Erivan; the chief of the district of Tseeba, who had been our fellow-guest at General Kolubakine's, accompanying us. Crossing the stony and sterile spur of the hills

which project into the plain west of Erivan, we soon descended into it, and passing by Etchmiadzin, arrived at Tseeba, where, as we were to stay for the night, we were again received by the hospitable chief.

Early next morning we were roused by the sound of wailing and great lamentation proceeding from a crowd assembled in front of the house, and, on looking out, we noticed one man in particular who distinguished himself by his wild gesticulations and the energy with which he beat his breast. On sending out Demetri to ascertain the cause of all this grief and excitement, he returned laughing heartily, as if something most comical had occurred to occasion so much mirth, and informed us, grinning from ear to ear all the time, that the brother of the man whom we had remarked in the crowd had been murdered during the night, his throat having been cut while he lay asleep, and his house robbed, by some marauders. On inquiring why he was so much amused at such an event, he carelessly said that these people were always cutting each other's throats, and that, as it was an event of such common occurrence, nobody minded such things; adding, with a fresh burst of laughter, that most likely all the grief which we had seen exhibited by the brother was only feigned, in order to get some money from anyone whom he could induce to sympathize with his sorrow. The village where this tragedy had occurred lay, as it happened, in our route southwards, and in the district of our host, who accompanied us so far, it being his duty to make immediate inquiry into the circumstances.

Riding due south from Tseeba, our course lay in the direction of the western shoulder of Ararat; and on our route to Bayezid we had to pass over the high hills which joined on to that side of the great mountain. We forded the river Aras, the ancient Araxes, in this part of its long course a wide but shallow stream, a large portion of its clear waters

having been diverted for the purpose of irrigating the thirsty plain.

We stopped for an hour at the village where the murder had occurred. From all that could be ascertained, it seemed that the crime must have been committed by some persons living in the neighbourhood, as no robbers or marauders had been observed to cross the frontier anywhere. We parted here from the chief of the district, who, having been our companion for the last week, seemed almost an old friend, and rode on to Ikdyr, a village on the frontier, where there was a custom-house station.

We arrived there in a few hours, and became the guests of the custom-house officer, who at once, on hearing of our coming, invited us to stay in his house instead of remaining in the mud hut to which we had at first been brought by our guides. There were two or three officers employed in the collection of the revenue on the imports which crossed the frontiers at this post, but, according to report, their duties must have been very light, smuggling being carried on to an enormous extent along the whole line of the Russo-Turkish frontier. Occasionally an insignificant capture is made, but always of small value; and, as we heard, smuggling is the rule, legitimate trading the exception, in these wild and lawless districts.

The house to which the custom-house officer brought us was small but neatly furnished. He showed us with much pride a collection of arms, among which figured a revolver-rifle by Deane and Adams, which he evidently valued very highly. One of the officers also showed us a collection of coins which he had made during his residence at Ikdyr, a period of sixteen years. They were of all nations—Persian, Greek, Roman, and Cufic, including a number of coins of the ancient Armenian and early Mohammedan kingdoms of Asia Minor. He seemed to have made his collection solely as a

speculation, not knowing anything whatever of numismatics, and spoke of shortly sending it to St. Petersburg for sale by auction.

We tried to gain some information about the route we intended taking through Kurdistan, but beyond Bayezid every one seemed in ignorance of the country or passes which we had to traverse. We accepted from the numismatist what turned out to be a most invaluable present, viz., a large bag of flea-powder, the use of which saved us much annoyance in the half-underground mud houses in which we passed many a subsequent night. This powder is made from a small plant growing wild in large quantities on the plains and hills near Erivan, which, after the summer heats have dried up the stem and withered the leaves, is pounded or ground into a fine dust. Its effect was miraculous as a defence against the attacks of those lively little insects, as well as those of bugs, both these pests seeming to hold it in such abhorrence that, although the roof, walls, and floor of the dens in which we slept were frequently swarming with them, a small handful thrown over our rugs or carpets was sufficient to secure the most complete impunity from their attacks.

We engaged at Ikdyr horses to take us on to Bayezid. An Armenian, who seemed to possess the only animals for hire, took advantage naturally of the monopoly, and charged us accordingly.

We left Ikdyr on the afternoon of the next day, 26th of October, and soon reached a large encampment of Yezeedis, who divided the pastures at the foot of Ararat with a tribe of Kurds professing allegiance to Russia. Both were dwelling amicably at a short distance from each other, an advantage that only the all-powerful protection of Russia could have procured for the former; the Kurds, as good Mohammedans, regarding the Yezeedis as utter infidels, whom they may lawfully spoil, seeing that they are neither Jews nor

Christians, with whom, though unbelievers, yet as "People of the Book," or mentioned in the Koran, and followers of the prophets anterior to Mohammed, it is lawful to make treaties which are binding on true believers.

With Yezeedis, on the contrary, devil-worshippers as they are considered, no bargain is binding, no oath is sacred; they are not only considered outlaws in this world, but condemned to eternal damnation in the next. Nothing indeed but their bravery, and the determined resistance they have several times made to acts of oppression, could have enabled them to exist for such a length of time, scattered as they are in small bodies over a large portion of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, where from time immemorial they have enjoyed an independence which they have never forfeited, acknowledging even in their dispersion a central spiritual authority in their supreme chief who resides in the mountains near Mosul.

We halted for half an hour at the encampment, alighting at the tent of the chief of the tribe, who pressed us to stay the night with him, and on our declining set before us coffee, buttermilk, honey, and other refreshments. He was very handsomely dressed in the Kurdish costume,—a purple velvet short jacket braided with gold, the sleeves open and hanging down from the elbows, a waistcoat or tunic jacket of the same material, and loose trousers tucked into yellow boots.

The Turks of our escorts neither entered the tents of the Yezeedis nor ate with them, considering them unclean. This tribe had long occupied their present pastures, having found in olden times a secure refuge from the attacks of the Turks and Kurds in the fastnesses of the neighbouring mountain of Ararat, to which they fled with their flocks and herds, offering a desperate resistance if followed, and remaining there till their enemy had retired. There were about five hundred tents composed of the usual black horsehair, each family

paying a small tax to the Russians for the pasturage. They all seemed fine handsome independent fellows, and would doubtless form efficient allies for the Russians in any future war against the Turks, whom they detest and despise. Leaving the encampment of the Yezcedis, we rode on in a few hours to Orzof, another encampment occupied by Kurds on the frontier line at the foot of Ararat.

Our road for about an hour before we arrived at the tents began to ascend from the plain, and we soon reached a considerable elevation, the black tents dotting the mountain sides all around us.

From the encampment we looked down upon the vast table-land studded with countless villages. A spur of the mountain hid Erivan from view, but opposite rose the snow-capped summits of Alaghoz, no longer dwarfed by comparison with Ararat, which lay to our right hand, hidden by some intervening eminences. The evening being advanced, the flocks and herds were all returning from their pastures to their accustomed sleeping ground near the tents, where a sufficient number of watchers guarded them from both four and two-footed marauders; this part of the country, we were assured on all sides, being one of the most lawless on the entire frontier. The pastures lay on both sides of the frontier line. A small tax for the privilege of grazing their flocks was paid by the tribe to both the Russian and Turkish governments, but the encampment was prudently placed on the Russian side, where they had nothing to dread from Turkish rapacity.

The chief of the tribe, Eyoub Aga, not only had a bell tent pitched for us, but also provided us with numerous carpets and coverlets; and in spite of the cold, which began to get severe, as we were not far from the snow level, we managed to make ourselves very comfortable. He gave us a very good dinner of boiled mutton and rice, the large wafer-thin cakes of bread serving for plates and napkins as well as food. His

own tent was a large and handsome one; Turkey carpets both covering the ground and being so suspended as to separate the division appropriated to the women from that occupied by the other inmates.

Our host was a man of very dignified appearance and courteous manners, and he talked freely of the advantages which he enjoyed by placing himself under Russian in preference to Turkish rule; a small tax per tent being all he had to pay to the former government, while, whatever amount he paid the latter, he was never safe from extortion at the hands of the Turkish pasha in whose government he might take up his abode. We spoke to him a good deal about the late ascent of Ararat by the Rev. Mr. Thursby and his companions, which he asserted had not been quite successful, inasmuch as a wall of rock of great height surrounded the summit and barred effectually any further advance. However, as he only spoke from hearsay, and, like everyone else dwelling near the great mountain, was deeply impressed with the superstitious idea that it was impossible for mortal feet to tread the sacred and mysterious summit, his testimony, opposed as it was to that of our countryman, who had, without meeting with any such difficulty, ascended the highest peak, was not of much value. Indeed, on the 9th of October, 1829, Parrot, with six companions, after some unsuccessful attempts, reached the summit of Ararat, and there erected a cross, having ascended to the height, according to his measurement, of 17,210 feet.

The legends related about events said to have occurred to too curious investigators into the secrets of the holy mountain are very numerous, and always inculcate the same reverence and awe for the sacred ground, on which, if not the whole ark, at least some fragments of it, are still believed to rest. Ghouls, or beings half mortal, for they are born and die, half supernatural, for they live for a period surpassing the age of man, lurk in the rocky caverns, and dragging the

lonely traveller or solitary shepherd into their bloodstained caves, there devour him at leisure. Most of the stories relating to these ferocious, yet stupid and cowardly monsters, whose existence has never been doubted by the inhabitants of the plains, run upon the manner in which they have been deceived by the ready wit of some intended victim. Another supernatural dweller on the haunted soil of Ararat is the ice-serpent, of which there is only one, existing in the caverns and crevasses that intersect the ice and snow near the summit. Of a light blue colour, and transparent as the purest crystal, it seldom issues from its frozen retreats, but when beheld, on those rare occasions, by those who are rash or curious enough to delay for an instant immediate flight, a mortal chilliness penetrates their frames, their bodies become benumbed and paralysed, and their lifeless corpses are found frozen, but in other respects uninjured, on the spot where the deadly glance of the ice-spirit fell on them.

A number of wild animals are said to find a secure refuge among the rocks and crags of the mountain side. Bears and deer are not uncommon, and the gigantic partridge is often met with on the verge of these perpetual snows. We were also made aware of the existence of a more familiar animal, by the numerous visits paid to us during the night by inquisitive rats, which, discovering as if by instinct the presence of strangers, satisfied their curiosity and love of amusement by running races over our prostrate bodies as long as darkness lasted. In the morning, a breakfast consisting of tea, bread and butter, with mountain honey, was placed before us. It was curious to find such fare in the horsehair tent of a Kurdish chief.

We rode on, starting as early as we could, to Bayezid, our road for a couple of hours ascending the mountains, which soon became rocky and broken into crags and fissures, through which we wound our way in single file. We quickly came upon snow, of which there had been lately a heavy

fall, and our horses had enough to do to keep their footing, floundering about in it over the knees. We passed several tracks of bears, and jackals appeared to be in great plenty, to judge by the number of footprints visible. All the hills around us were covered with a thick layer of the freshly-fallen snow, the pure white surface of which reflected the dazzling rays of the sun, which shone out brightly. We now perceived that we had acted wisely in taking the advice of our friends at Tiflis, by whom we had been urged to cross the Armenian mountains before November, as although this was only the 27th of October, yet, the elevation being so great, and the winter having set in rather early, it was as much as we could do to get the baggage-horses through the snow-drifts, often very deceitful and deep.

On reaching the summit of the pass, if it could be so called, where no trace of a path existed, we saw beneath us to the south a large plain, similar in appearance to that of Erivan, but not of such extent. At the opposite extremity was a lofty range of mountains completely covered with snow, the summit line of which was very broken and irregular, presenting a grand panorama in the clear, frosty air. •

Floundering down the steep descent through the soft and treacherous snow, in a short time we reached the plain, which we crossed in the direction of a hollow in the mountain, in which our guides told us was the town of Bayezid, although, covered as it was, like all the surrounding country, with a snowy sheet, we could not distinguish it. However, after a couple of hours' riding, a large square stone building, having partly the appearance of a monastery and partly of a barrack, became visible, perched on the summit of a crag half way up the mountain side, which receded at this point and formed a large amphitheatre. Round and below this building lay the town, which seemed to consist of a number of houses piled up one over the other, without any apparent plan, wherever a spot of

ground could be found among the rocks sufficiently large to erect a dwelling upon. The stone of which they were built was quarried from the hill-side, and there being no plaster whatever used in their construction, it was almost impossible to distinguish them from the surrounding crags, the snow with which both were covered rendering their appearance more deceptive, so that at the distance of a couple of miles it was difficult to believe that we really had a large town before us. On approaching nearer, there appeared high up in the rocks above the town the ruins of an ancient fortress, the towers of which, perched among the cliffs, were connected with each other by walls that ran up and down the rocks without any seeming plan or regularity. The whole formed a mass of disjointed shattered ruins, which, standing out clearly defined against the blue sky, and rising from amid the snow that lay upon and nearly hid the few wretched hovels forming the town, had a most picturesque appearance.

Having sent on one of our Kurds to inform the Pasha of our arrival, we were met half way up the winding ascent to the town by his son-in-law, who had been sent by him to welcome us, and who brought us to the house of Mehemet Effendi, alias Count Alfred di Romano of Venice, who received us warmly, and expressed his joy at meeting with travellers from Europe in the out-of-the-way miserable place in which it was his fate to live. His house, which he had just finished, was small but clean, and was an astonishing structure considering that he himself was both designer and builder. It was, indeed, the only house in the town that deserved the name. Our host was one of the numerous Italians who had had to leave their native land in consequence of their participation in the events of 1848. After various adventures and vicissitudes he had found his way to Turkey, and having had some slight previous knowledge of medicine, was, upon changing his religion, appointed staff-surgeon, and sent to Bayezid, where he had remained for a long time, employing his time as well as

he could in a place so devoid of occupation to a man of his stirring and active mind. Nevertheless, he was cheerful and even gay, resembling in his lightheartedness a Frenchman far more than an Italian, and spoke with apparent interest of his little avocations, the affairs of the province, and one or two projected roads which were to be made at some infinitely distant period. In this contented mood he presented a strong contrast to an unhappy fellow-countryman and friend, a native of the Italian Tyrol, who was staying with him, and for whom he had procured an appointment as doctor to the quarantine establishment, still kept up in name on the frontier. The latter, having served against the Austrians during the late war, could not return to his native place, and having been invited by his friend the count to emigrate and try to push his fortune in the East, he had come to Bayezid, where he had now been for some months. He was most melancholy and desponding, and evidently did not intend remaining long among the Turks, for whom he seemed to have the utmost contempt. In short, it would have been difficult to find a more disappointed man in every way, one more completely destitute of the power possessed by the count to such an eminent degree—that, namely, of accepting his situation. Our host was married, *à la Turque*, to a pretty little Mussulman woman, who of course did not appear publicly, but of whom, nevertheless, a momentary glance was sometimes obtained.

Our arrival seemed to be a godsend to both, the latest news they possessed being already out of date in more civilized places, and we spent the evening discoursing chiefly of what, to them, naturally were all-absorbing topics—Italian affairs. The cold in these high regions was excessive, and was felt all the more from the absence of good fuel, the only means of heating the rooms being “mongols” or braziers placed in the centre, previously filled with red-hot embers. The natives, who were wrapped up in furs and sheepskins, seemed

to feel it as much as if they had not been accustomed to it from their birth, crowding together in the most eager manner over any morsel of fire that they could obtain, and crouching round the tiny mongols in shivering circles. The windows of our house were all hermetically closed, and only one pane of glass, a rare thing in Bayezid, where oiled paper generally serves the purpose, was occasionally opened to admit a small draught of fresh but icy-cold air.

When it was time to retire to rest, the mongol having been replenished with a fresh supply of embers, we lay down close to it, wrapped up in quilted coverlets and furs, and soon forgot all about the cold outside.

CHAPTER XVI.

PALACE OF THE PASHAS OF BAYEZID—HORSE-HIRE IN TURKEY
—YEZEEDIS OF KARA-KEND—A DESOLATE SCENE—BELIEF
IN LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE'S INTEREST WITH THE
SULTAN—LAST SIGHT OF ARARAT—DISTURBED STATE OF
THE COUNTRY—POSITION OF FRANKISH TRAVELLERS AMONG
THE KURDS—MAINTENANCE OF TURKISH AUTHORITY OVER
THE KURDS—THE SHEM-SEDDIN—LAKE OF ARTSHAG AND
LAKE VAN—ANCIENT FORTIFICATION—CITY OF VAN—
TABLET IN THE ROCK.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the morning we went to see the Pasha, who lived in the large monastic-like building whose appearance had struck us from the plain below. We rode up and down streets which, from their narrowness and ruggedness, were more like broken flights of stairs, and having turned and twisted through a number of tortuous passages, at length came to a small piece of level ground before the entrance to the palace. On approaching it we were very much struck with its size and the richness of its decoration, the walls being all of cut stone, in many places ornamented with the most elaborate and intricate carvings. We had heard the beauty of this edifice much spoken of before, both at Erivan and Tiflis, but had set down what we had heard to the usual exaggeration so prevalent, and were, consequently, so much the more surprised when we beheld it.

The palace of the hereditary Pashas of Bayezid, now possessed by the Turks, was erected by one of them a century and a half ago, Italian and Greek artists having been brought to execute the work. The entrance gateway, some twenty feet in height by ten in breadth and seven in depth, is carved in stone, in the Byzantine or Arabesque style—the tracery, which is of the most intricate and difficult description, interlacing and intertwining in all directions, being cut out of the marble with the greatest delicacy. On passing through this gateway, we found ourselves in a courtyard, on the oppo-

site side of which was another gate or archway, leading into a second court. The pillars of this archway were ornamented in a different manner from the first, being covered with foliage, fruit, and flowers, carved in the marble in the most exquisite manner. The right and left hand sides of the first court appeared to be used as stables; at least, a few Kurdish horsemen attached to the Pasha's service had stabled their horses in the deserted buildings.

On passing through the second archway, we found the second court, which seemed to be of the same size as the first, paved with blocks of marble. Opposite to us was another archway carved in a similar manner to that through which we had just passed; but the decorations were still more elaborate, and the foliage and flowers, if possible, still more delicately executed. On our right was the entrance to a mosque, whose slender minarets of alternate layers of black and white marble rose high above the roofs of the surrounding buildings. The gateway to the mosque was also covered with carvings, and the cornice which ran round the court under the eaves of the flat roofs was of great beauty. To our left, standing isolated in the court, was a building, the use of which we could not ascertain. It consisted of a small, low tower with a conical roof, the walls of which were richly decorated. The vaulted dome of the mosque, built of marble, was of very graceful proportions, and still in perfect repair. The slender iron bars to support the lamps used in the mosque yet remained pendent in their places, but the lamps themselves were gone.

The remainder of the interior of the building, the decorations of which had not been of the same solid kind as those that still existed in perfect preservation outside, was in a ruinous condition. A few rooms alone remained habitable and weathertight, and in these the successor to the proud race of hereditary chiefs, who had erected the palace from which they governed a large district of Kurdistan with irresponsible

power, dwelt with half-a-dozen ragged followers. On the walls of some of the dilapidated rooms were still to be seen the remains of paintings and frescoes very creditably executed, and the gilding, which had been applied with no sparing hand, still shone on the remnants of plaster that adhered to the stone. Niches in the style of those at the Alhambra lined the walls, the painting and gilding of some of which were yet fresh and uninjured, and the ceilings of one or two of the handsomest rooms had once been finished in a similar manner, but the plaster had nearly all fallen down, and a thick, black coating of soot now obscured the gay colouring of the small portion that yet remained to show the former beauty of the apartment.

Emin Pasha received us in a small room the walls of which were perfectly black from soot, and which, at the moment when we entered it, was nearly filled with smoke from a fire of damp wood that had been lately kindled. The Pasha was quite a superior man for a Turk, had travelled a little, had been for some time Turkish consul at Tiflis, and really, considering the disadvantages of his early education, seemed to have profited by the experience which he had gained in other countries. Our host, Mehemet Effendi, or Count di Romano, acted as interpreter for us, and we spent half an hour in conversing about various topics, the chief subject being Garibaldi, who the honest Turk conceived would, some day or other, make himself "Padishah" of Italy, not being in the smallest degree able to understand how any one could take so much trouble save for himself. He did not seem to have much liking for his present residence, the feeling with which he regarded it being much the same as that professed by the poor confrère of the count, who nevertheless smiled merrily as he translated to us the Pasha's regrets at leaving the delights of Tiflis for the snows and barbarism of his more dignified but less enjoyable abode of Bayezid. Some ragamuffins, with most undeniable cut-

throat faces, dressed in their national Kurdish costume, with jackets whose long sleeves were covered with faded embroidery, brought in coffee, and listened with glistening eyes to the glowing description which their lord gave of the delights of the Russian, or rather Georgian town, most probably drawing in their vivid imaginations lively pictures of the joys that true believers would experience in sacking and plundering such a city.

Having decided upon going straight to Van, we asked the Pasha to procure horses for us thus far, as those with which we had come from Ikdyr had been dismissed on arriving at Bayezid. This he not only promised to do, but said that he would give us some Kurds to escort us to Van; adding, that he would come and pay us a visit in a couple of hours. We then took our departure, and the tribe of retainers outside having been duly backsheeshed by Demetri, we floundered and scrambled back to our house through the break-neck streets.

The Pasha in due time made his appearance. Our host, who again acted as interpreter, coming forward also as an entertainer, *produced a bottle of brandy, a glass of which he offered at once to his Moslem guest. The Pasha, giving at first a sly glance at a white-bearded dignitary who sat by his side on the divan, then smilingly reached out his hand and swallowed the forbidden strong drink with an ease which showed he was by no means unaccustomed to the use of such powerful stimulants. Our host, without changing his countenance in the least, next offered some to the white-bearded old gentleman gravely looking on, who, being celebrated for his piety and blind devotion to the law of the Koran, refused it; whereupon he was laughed at by the bystanders. When some sweetmeats had been handed round, more brandy was offered to the Pasha and his suite, who all accepted it, and after some time departed, the various individuals forming the cavalcade being much more joyous, though possibly not quite

so steady, as when they came through the winding lanes of Bayezid to visit us.

In the evening we walked about the town, making our way as well as we could through the snow and mud which lay deep in the streets. Two-thirds of this once large and important place lay in ruins, and the remaining houses were hardly worthy of the name, inhabited as they were by a few wretched, half-starved creatures, who seemed in the utmost extremity of misery and want.

The old castle of the ancient Pashas, perched high up among the crags, and now, since the destruction of their power, deserted by their successors, seemed to be used as a quarry by any one who wished to erect one of the cavernous-looking dens which appeared to be the usual dwellings of the inhabitants of Bayezid. The earthquake, which we were told had done so much injury to the town in 1840, had wrought great destruction among the ruins, large portions of which were prostrated by the first shock. Still, enough remained to form a very extensive fortification, which, no doubt, before the invention of gunpowder, was all but impregnable. Now, however, being commanded on all sides by the surrounding heights, it is quite untenable, and has been long deserted. While the hills and crags around us were covered with snow, the plain below was green and cheerful. We looked down on it from an elevation of more than a thousand feet, our height above the sea being probably from five to six thousand. Opposite us lay Ararat, not appearing, however, so imposing and stupendous as when viewed from the plain of Erivan on the northern side. Seen, as it was at Bayezid, from a different angle, the mountains around it seemed to touch it, and to form part of the mass, and thus to a considerable extent diminished the majestic appearance which it presented as it rose in its isolated grandeur from the great plain of Erivan. All the mountains were completely covered with snow, and it seemed strange that such bleak and wintry weather should

have so soon succeeded the intense heats to which we had been exposed in Georgia, and on the Caspian, only a few weeks previously.

● We returned to the house to make preparations for leaving the following day, and found that the tariff of charges which we had hitherto been paying the Armenian horse-dealers under the Russian auspices, was to be changed very much to our advantage. We had paid from Erivan to Ikdyr, not more than twenty-five miles, fifteen shillings, or five roubles for each horse; from Ikdyr to Bayezid, thirty miles, eighteen shillings, or six roubles; while from Bayezid to Van we were told we were to pay only nine piastres, or one shilling and sixpence, per day. We were to change horses each day at the village we stopped at for the night, the zabchis or guards whom we brought with us procuring us fresh ones; and we found the people quite contented with this rate of hire.

On the afternoon of the next day we bade adieu to our host, who accompanied us to the bottom of the hill, and we parted from him sincerely wishing him a more enjoyable scene of existence than his present one, though with the happy art of a contented mind it seemed that he could find satisfaction even in it. The Pasha gave us half a dozen dragoons to accompany us as far as the village of Deriazin Abba, the residence of Mehmet, scheikh of the Heideranly, and the greatest Kurd chief in the neighbourhood. We had also a couple of zabchis who were to go on with us to Van, and make themselves generally useful, procuring us horses from village to village, acting as guides, and doing everything that was wanted.

As we left Bayezid so late, we only went about ten miles to the village of Kara Kend, inhabited by Yezedis, who seemed in a totally different condition from their thriving co-religionists on the plain of Erivan, being in a very poverty-stricken and miserable state, living in semi-subterranean houses, mere dens of filth and vermin, which swarmed in the

crevices and chinks of the mud-walls in which they found a congenial warmth. By means, however, of the Persian powder which we had procured at Ikdyr, we were enabled to set at defiance their fiercest attacks. Early next day we left this wretched village, whose misery was to be accounted for by Turkish oppression and misrule, and riding for some time across the plain in a southerly direction, soon began to ascend the range of mountains which bound the plain of Bayezid on that side.

In a short time we reached the snow, and continued for five hours to ride through and over it; the ascent, which occupied about half that time, being very tedious and laborious. The snow lay about two feet deep, but in the drifts, of which there were many, the surface being so uneven, it was much more, and it was with difficulty that the laden horses could be extricated when they chanced to flounder into one. There was no trace whatever of a path, and our guides were frequently at fault, not knowing in some places in what direction to move. Luckily, however, the worst mischance that resulted from their ignorance or embarrassment was an occasional fall in the soft snow. A biting cold blast swept with unchecked violence over the frozen surface of the mountains, and whistled through the rocky gullies down which we sometimes rode. Not a tree or shrub of even the smallest size was to be seen; there was nothing to oppose the least obstacle to the icy wind. The mountain seemed devoid even of wild animals or birds—no tracks or traces of life being observable on any side. It was a scene of utter solitude, the silence of which was unbroken by a single cry of any living creature. A more desolate country we had never travelled over.

On our right hand rose the grim summit of a long-extinct volcano, from which an immense stream of lava extended in an unbroken line far into the plain of Bayezid, and for a still greater distance into the plain of Deriazin, to which we were then descending. The distance from the point at

which it commenced to flow out of the crater to that where it finally ceased abruptly in the plain, could not have been less than ten miles.

We rode, for some time after leaving the mountains, by the edge of this river of stone, the margin of which was marked by enormous blocks of scoriæ lying strewn about on the surface of the lava and adjacent soil. The black mass being completely devoid of vegetation, and on such a low level that the snow had melted on it, stood out naked and bare amid the surrounding pasture. We rode across the plain of Deriazin for some hours, and while still only half way we were overtaken by the darkness of night; and as none of our guides had the slightest idea where the scheikh then lived, we rode about for some time in utter uncertainty where to go, until fortunately being attracted by a distant light in a small village, we galloped up to it, and on inquiring of the inhabitants, we received from them directions as to the course it was necessary to pursue.

In due time we arrived at the scheikh's village, and were soon seated at a roaring fire made of the usual dried cow dung, which, under the name of argal, forms the only fuel procurable in these woodless countries. The scheikh, who was an old and seemingly simple-minded man, spoke a good deal to us about the prospects and present condition of the tribe over which he ruled.

He complained of the excessive taxation to which he was subjected by the government. For the grazing of the flocks and herds of the tribe, which could send out one thousand men well mounted, he had to pay 15,000 piastres, or about £130 annually. The tribe by his account possessed six thousand sheep, one thousand head of cattle, and one thousand five hundred horses. A new impost of one piastre and a half, or three pence sterling, per head, had just been laid on as an annual special sheep-tax; and this he considered greatly too much. The price of

a sheep was thirty piastres, or five shillings. They were all of the fat-tailed breed. He might levy the gross sum at which the entire tribe was assessed as he chose among it; but the sheep-tax being a special one, he did not like it for many reasons, the chief one probably being that the government would thus arrive at a knowledge of the wealth of the tribe. He told us also that he had only occupied his present pastures for a few years, as he had till then lived in Persia, not far from Choi; but being interfered with by the authorities there, he had crossed the frontier with his tribe, and had been allotted his present pastures by the Turkish government. Since his emigration, the Persian government had often sent to try and induce him to return to his old quarters; but he said he never would trust himself into their power again, whatever promises might be made to him.

Although he spoke of the taxation it had to pay as impoverishing the tribe, yet there was very little appearance of poverty visible around us. The scheikh's own house, which had been but lately finished, was most solidly built. The men of the tribe whom we saw also appeared well dressed and in good circumstances, and we could not help thinking that the old gentleman rather exaggerated the amount of his burdens. However, he was a fine specimen of the chief of a tribe of pastoral Kurds, and it was impossible to look without interest on a man who, though living in a house worse than a labourer's cottage in England, as far as comfort went, had at any time the power of directing and ordering one thousand horsemen, and had been solicited as a favour to re-enter the dominions of a powerful monarch.

The scheikh asked with much interest whether we intended to return by way of Constantinople. On our replying in the affirmative, he requested us to represent his case to the English ambassador who, he said, he had heard, could do as he chose with the sultan—and to ask him to interfere to have his taxes lowered, as he asserted it was of no

use for him to apply to the Pasha of Van, his immediate governor, in whose district his pastures were. This of course we said we should do, if we had an opportunity, and the old chief seemed much pleased by our acquiescence to his request. It was strange that the knowledge of the great influence of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe over the Turkish government should have penetrated even to the tents of a Kurdish tribe, in one of the most remote and unvisited districts of Kurdistan, and that his favour should be solicited by a man who would think but little of leaving the Turkish dominions should he receive a slight, or have to endure any intolerable amount of oppression; for the only English Elchi he knew of was one that had been at Stamboul a long time, and could do as he chose with the Padishah.

After some time the pilau of mutton and rice made its appearance, and shortly after, the hour being late, the scheikh retired and left us to ourselves.

We left him early next morning, and rode still in a southerly direction over the mountains, which shut in his pastures on all sides, forming thus a kind of basin. As the dragoons whom we had brought with us from Bayezid were to return from Deriazin Abba, the chief gave us three or four men of his tribe to accompany us to Van, our zabchis continuing to procure us horses at the different villages. We were soon again in snow, which came down nearly to the level of the plain, but was not very deep, and, continuing in it for a couple of hours, descended into another plain, where we spent the night in the village of Nushar, after a very short journey of only five hours.

The country now began to present a strange appearance. Between the snowy mountains, the aspect of which was desolate and bare, there were several green and grassy plains, on which numbers of sheep and cattle were grazing.

On crossing the mountains this day (31st October) we got our last sight of Ararat, the lofty peak of which was

plainly visible over the range we had crossed on the preceding day from Kara Kend. The air being clear and frosty, the outline stood out well defined against the blue sky, and appeared much nearer than it really was, the mountains intervening between us and its base forming a false foreground. There was nothing in Nushar to distinguish it from any other Kurdish village which we had passed through. We observed only the usual semi-underground houses with mud walls and flat roofs, and the dirty women, men, and naked children by whom they are inhabited.

We had now left the more settled districts, and were entering upon what had lately been the most disturbed part of Kurdistan, the country around Lake Van, and thence to Sert, which enjoyed the reputation of having been the most lawless and barbarous place in the whole Turkish empire, inhabited as it was by a set of banditti who, constantly at war with each other, every man plundering his neighbour, combined only to resist the pressure of established authority.

This rugged country is in the possession of several petty Kurdish Beys, or chiefs, who, though now shorn of the power which until a recent period they possessed, are yet, owing to the difficulty of identifying or apprehending the culprits, enabled to commit many robberies and assassinations with comparative impunity.

In a country which is covered with snow for seven months of the year, it is not easy to track to their mountain homes the bandits who sally out, sometimes for long distances from their recesses. Being, as they usually are on their plundering excursions, well mounted, they are enabled to laugh at any attempt at pursuit. When the crimes and robberies of some particular chieftain have brought his name into celebrity, the Turkish Pasha of Van, or some other large town of the country, is roused into a fit of activity, large rewards are offered for the head of the offender, with proportionate backsheesh for those of any of his tribe or followers ;

his nearest friends and most trusty companions are bribed, and after some time, unless he speedily comes to terms by bribing not only the lower officials, but also the Pasha himself, in order thus to obtain from him a pardon on promise of better behaviour in future, he is tracked down and betrayed into the hands of his pursuers.

The district to the east of Lake Van, through which we were to pass, was considered the most lawless of all, on account of its vicinity to the Persian frontier, there being no such things as extradition treaties between the two great Mussulman powers, who, on the contrary, endeavour, by shielding refugees, to people their sparsely populated borders. A few Armenian and Nestorian villages are scattered among the mountains, but the oppression and spoliation which the inhabitants undergo at the hands of the Kurds have reduced them to great poverty and misery.

Descended from the ancient Carduchi, who opposed such a fierce resistance to the passage of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand, the sesavage mountaineers have in no way departed from the habits of their ancestors, cherishing a liking for that kind of independence which is implied in the right of every one to do as seems good in his own eyes. The name of Kurd is synonymous all through the Turkish and Persian empires with that of a savage, bloodthirsty, and treacherous barbarian, who but too often adds cowardice to the list of his other bad qualities. They have enlisted largely in both armies as irregulars, but their impatience of discipline makes them almost as formidable to their friends as to their enemies; and so great is their love of plunder, so inveterate their roving habits, that, when most wanted, they are generally found to be absent. In short, to call any one a Kurd is a deadly insult among the more civilized Turks or Persians; and, while hated and despised, they are also feared and dreaded by all their neighbours. Like most other Asiatic depredators, however, they have a well-grounded dislike to inter-

fering with Europeans, not that they are more watchful or more difficult to plunder than the natives, but on account of the consequences which any act of violence against them invariably entails. Representations are made by ambassadors at Stamboul to the ministry, the Pasha of the district is goaded into fury by a series of reproaches from head-quarters, necessitating the payment of large bribes to avert the consequences of the neglect of which he is accused, he in his turn visiting with his wrath the entire district inhabited by the tribe to whom the robbers are suspected to belong. Many of the more influential are seized and put into prison until large sums are extorted from them, which serve in some measure to repay the Pasha the expenditure that, to avert the consequences of the crime, he has been obliged to make in bribing the officials at Constantinople; and for many years subsequently the robbery or assassination of the Frank serves as a pretext for any act of extortion or of oppression that the Pasha or his successors may practise on the inhabitants of the ill-famed district.

The prescriptive rights claimed by the various tribes to certain pastures give the Turks favourable opportunities for checking their excesses. If the Turkish government finds it necessary to punish a refractory village, no method is more effectual than that of giving to another in the neighbourhood a coveted tract of grassy land, in the possession of which the new owners are maintained by troops sent to assist them in resisting any violence. Thus by various means, generally arbitrary and unscrupulous, but doubtless best suited to their character, the Kurds are held in a kind of subjection by the Turks, who, fully understanding the danger of allowing any individual to become too powerful and prosperous, foster internal dissensions among the tribes as much as possible.

We left Nushar on the 1st of November, and rode for five hours in a westerly direction across a plain covered with the flocks of the Shemseddin, a tribe of nomad Kurds

similar to, but not so numerous or powerful as, the Heideranly. Several of these nomads, who inhabit tents during the summer, returning on the approach of winter to the mud huts, which they construct with much ease and abandon with as great indifference, had only just taken possession of their dwellings, which they were busily employed in making weathertight by piling up heaps of stones and mud on the roofs.

Having crossed to the other side, we threaded our way for some time through small but tortuous defiles in the hills which shut in the plain on the south. Keeping as much as possible to the bottom of the valleys, and following the course of the small streams which ran through them, we passed several small mud villages, generally consisting of not more than twelve or fourteen houses, the inhabitants of which stood upon their roofs and at their doors, gazing upon us with as much amazement as if we had fallen from the clouds. The water-courses along which we rode seemed well stocked with wild fowl, numerous flocks of duck and teal rising before our horses. They appeared more tame than usual, probably from being so little disturbed.

At last we arrived at the foot of a steep ascent, up which we toiled for a mile, and, on reaching the summit, were gratified by the sight of a large sheet of water lying in a south-westerly direction far beneath us, among the rugged and rocky mountains to our right. On the eastern shore, where the hills receded for some distance, leaving a large plain between them and the water, stood a village surrounded by trees, which, from being such rare and unaccustomed objects in this barren land, at once attracted the eye. The mountains around descended abruptly to the water, which was of a deep blue colour. Though the lake was of large size, being fifteen or sixteen miles in length, no boat was to be seen on its surface. The lake of Artshag, as this sheet of water is called, lies some twenty miles from that of Van, with which, however, short as is the distance that separates them, it has no communication.

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In an hour after commencing the descent from the summit of the steep pass we reached the level ground on the shore, and riding along it for a few miles arrived at the village of Kara Kenduz, which was inhabited solely by Armenians, who seemed more prosperous and thriving than we had as yet seen any of their countrymen under Turkish rule.

The village, a place of considerable size, possessed a church, near which stood the residence of the priest. As it was rather more respectable-looking than the other houses around it, we would fain have taken up our quarters in it. But our wish was not to be gratified, the mudir, or head man, who was applied to by the zabehis, allotting us another, whose dilapidated and dirty outside but too faithfully indicated what was to be expected in the interior. We found that we were to be lodged in a stable, which seemed never to have been cleansed since it was first built. The space in one corner of it given up to us was hardly six feet square, and on two sides cattle were busily employed munching their suppers. Our disappointment at being so lodged was the greater, as from the apparent size and wealth of the village, we had been promising ourselves luxurious quarters. However, as there was no help for it, we submitted to necessity, and by degrees became accustomed to the stench, which at first seemed unbearable. Having disposed of the usual old cock and matronly hen, a sacrifice which it was our greatest care to effect immediately on our arrival in any village where we intended to pass the night, we retired into our corner, keeping as far as we could from the cattle, which evinced a great liking for the cotton wadding of our rugs, and slept as well as we could in spite of the various sounds that never ceased till day dawned.

The next morning we found that the rascally mudir, not satisfied with having given us, as we were afterwards told, one of the worst houses in the village, was trying to make us pay double the rate we had hitherto paid for horses, with which he was bound to provide us, supposing probably that

he could easily cheat us in this instance, as we had acquiesced so readily in accepting the stable which he had given to us as our lodging the preceding evening. But one of our zabchis soon settled the point, by telling him that if the horses were not at once brought at the usual rate, he would enter his own stable, before which we were standing, and take the animals inside for our use. This threat at once so frightened him, that in a few moments more the horses appeared, and the mudir who at first was so insolent, became at once, like a true Armenian, when met with a determined spirit, cringing and submissive.

The trees we had seen round the village were chiefly poplars planted in rows, the branches of which were used as fire-wood; and between the poplars stood plum and apple trees.

On leaving Kara Kenduz we skirted the lake of Artshag for three or four hours, riding along the shore to the south-west, and then began to ascend one of the hills which we had seen from the mountains we had passed over the preceding day, and which separated the lake from that of Van. Near the top we came upon the remains of an extensive fortification of a square form. The large stones of which it was built were put together without mortar or plaster of any kind. Some of these stones were of great size, and the entire ruin seemed to be of very remote antiquity. We inquired in vain from our guides whether there were any legends or stories about it, but they declared they had never heard any, all they knew being that it was "chok iski," or very old.

From this we saw below us at only a few miles distance the city of Van, squatted round the base of a gigantic rock which rose isolated near the edge of the lake, and whose summit was crowned with numerous towers and fortifications. The great lake which lay beyond formed the background, its opposite shore not being visible from the haze which over-

spread the water. The plain below, on which the city stood, extended from the foot of the mountains to the shore, a distance of some miles, and was dotted here and there with groves of fruit trees surrounding small villages, forming a warm and pleasing contrast to the bleak and rugged mountains around, which were covered with snow for half their height.

We soon descended into the plain, and rode across it through well-cultivated fields and carefully-kept fruit gardens towards the town, having sent on a zabehi with a letter to the Pasha, which had been given to us by the Pasha of Bayezid. Our messenger returned with a request from the Pasha that we would stay with him; and accordingly turning out of the direct road to the city, we rode to his house, which was about a mile from the town. We found it a large two-storied yellow building, with numerous balconies, most of which seemed thoroughly rotten, and on the point of falling by their own weight. It stood in the centre of an extensive but badly-kept garden or orchard of fruit trees, surrounded by a high mud wall, and intersected by many walks and alleys almost hidden by a dense matting of weeds and briars.

Dismounting among a lot of wild-looking Kurds, who eyed our baggage most longingly, we climbed up a filthy staircase on which the dirt that had accumulated during a succession of years was thickly encrusted, and after passing through a few corridors, the appearance of which matched the stairs, entered a small room furnished with divans and cushions. On one of these, in the corner, sat the Pasha, who rose as we entered, and begging us not to apologize for our travel-stained and muddy condition, desired our luggage to be brought into the house. He again asked us to stay with him while we remained at Van, and after we had partaken of the usual coffee and smoked the inevitable pipe, he said he was sure we would like to take possession of our room as soon as possible, to which we at once agreed.

Accordingly, we were conducted to an apartment in which were seated three or four grave-looking Turks, engaged in casting up accounts and transacting business with a number of people who stood in the doorway and passage outside. Into this room as much of our luggage as we wanted was brought, and we were informed that we were to share it with the Pasha's treasurer and secretary, to whom it belonged. In some time the business was got over; the crowds who seemed never to tire of staring at us, were unceremoniously dismissed, and the secretary began a conversation with us on his own account. At last he also departed for a time, and we were enabled to look about us.

From the window was plainly visible the large tablet, cut in the face of the precipitous side of the rock below the fortress, at a height of eighty or one hundred feet from the ground. The entablature, scarped as it was out of the front of the crag overhanging the town, at once attracted the eye, though we were at too great a distance to distinguish any of the characters engraved upon its surface. After a little time a dinner, of the usual Turkish kind, ragouts covered with sour milk, and sweetmeats swimming in grease, the whole followed by an enormous pilau of rice and mutton, made its appearance, the dishes, as soon as they were removed from the room, being emptied by the herd of half-famished retainers outside the door.

The sun set brilliant and gorgeous over the snow-capped mountains on the opposite side of the lake, which, calm and smooth as glass, reflected their golden-tinted summits from the unruffled surface of its waters. By and by these disappeared, a leaden haze overspread the horizon, the night clouds gathered rapidly, and a gloomy darkness gradually overshadowed and obscured the splendid panorama which lay extended before us.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADMISSION TO THE FORTRESS REFUSED—CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS—VICISSITUDES OF THE CITY OF VAN—LAKE VAN—THE INSCRIPTION OF XERXES—LEGENDS—DESTRUCTION OF STATUARY—GREAT ROCK OF VAN—CANAL ATTRIBUTED TO SEMIRAMIS—ADRAMIT—CONDITION OF ARMENIAN CHRISTIANS—CORN PITS—VASTAN—AGHAVANK—ARMENIAN CHURCH DIGNITARIES—PRIMITIVE HOSPITALITY—IGNORANCE OF ARMENIAN ECCLESIASTICS—THE MONASTERY OF AKTHAMAR
—COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPTS AND BOOKS.

CHAPTER XVII.

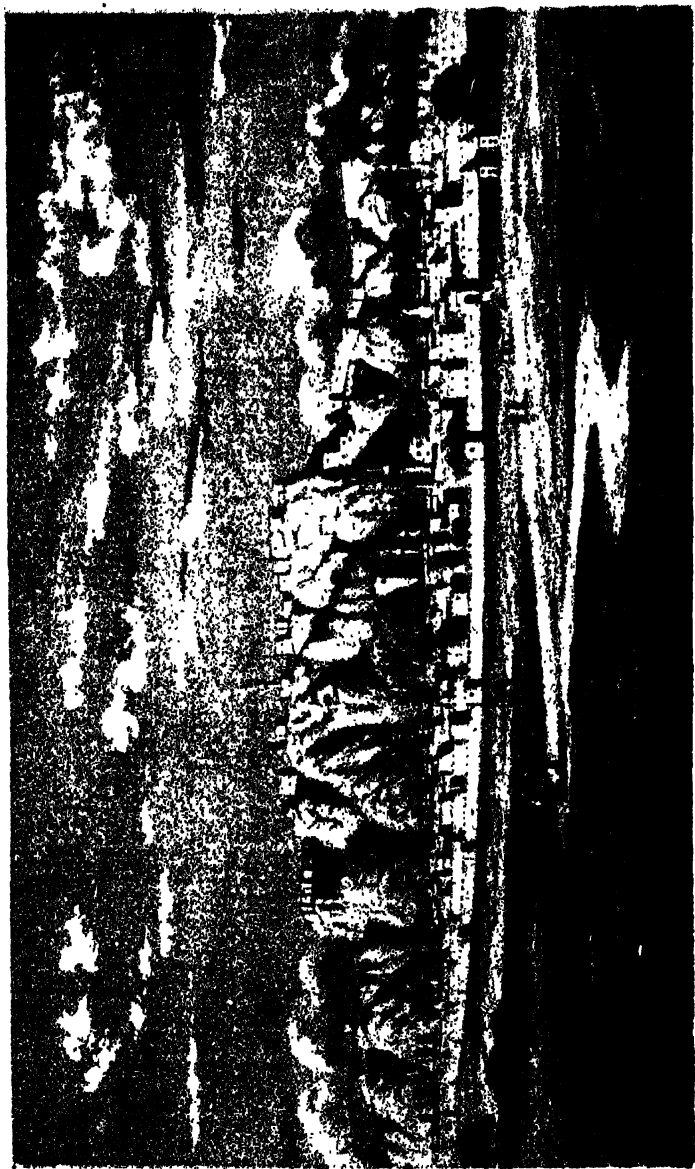
EARLY next morning we rode up to the castle on the summit of the rock. Precipitous on three sides, on the fourth, that namely opposite to the city, it is only approached by a winding ascent, in some places very steep and rugged. Before the invention of artillery this fortress must have been quite impregnable, the only access being crossed in several places by walls and other defences. These are now, however, mostly in ruins, those that remain are toppling over to their fall, and it did not require much more than a single glance to convince us of the truth of the boast uttered by one of our guides, who happened to be an Albanian, that as it then stood he could, with a couple of hundred of his countrymen, take it from the Turks in a few hours. Yet it is held by the rulers of the country to be a first-class fortress, on the possession of which depends the security of the province, and admittance is jealously refused to any one without special permission. This we found to be the case in a very disagreeable manner, being denied permission to enter by the commandant, although accompanied by the servant sent with us by the Pasha. He requested us, however, to come again the next day, when he held out a hope that he might have changed his mind.

We were thus obliged to abandon all hope of seeing the celebrated inscriptions in cuneiform characters which are carved on the walls of a series of chambers, supposed to be tombs, excavated in the rock on the southern side, at a

few yards below the summit of the precipice, and to which access is obtained by some broken and nearly destroyed steps. The eminent antiquarian, Dr. Hincks, considers these inscriptions to be the work of a king of Armenia who reigned about seven hundred years before Christ, and was contemporary with Sargon, King of Assyria. The monarch in these inscriptions celebrates his victories, describes the deeds of his armies, and recounts the immense booty which he has carried away from the country of the enemy. The name of the king, as it has been deciphered, is Arghestis, the language, Medo-Assyrian. The chambers were probably the tomb of the monarch whose name is recorded on these walls.

There are some more inscriptions on the northern side of the rock, carved on the sides of a deep recess. These are attributed to the grandson of Minuas (who was the father of Arghestis). They record the amount of spoil and booty carried away from three different countries, and the victories gained over their inhabitants, together with various other exploits of the king. The name of one of these countries is supposed to be Babylon. On the walls of an inner chamber are more inscriptions, according to Dr. Hincks, of Minuas himself, containing only his titles and the usual invocations to the gods.

We returned, after our failure to gain admittance to the fortress, to the town below, and spent the remainder of the day in wandering about the bazaars and streets. The city is of very great antiquity, its situation near the shore of the lake and at the foot of what was long an impregnable fortress, presenting great advantages. Founded, according to tradition, by Semiramis, who made it her favourite summer residence, and who built numerous villages, excavated many canals, and turned the plain around into a garden, the name of Schamiramjird was given to it after her own, and for a long time subsequent to her death it enjoyed great prosperity. Having, however, in the course of time fallen into decay, it was rebuilt



by a native king called Van, who gave the restored city his own name. It was again rebuilt by Vagharsch, the first of the Armenian dynasty of the Arsacides, and then fell under the power of the Byzantine emperors, from whom it was taken by the Turks. At last it was captured by Tamerlane, the great destroyer, who, according to his usual habit, massacred all the inhabitants, after which for some time the once populous city was deserted.

By degrees Van began to recover from the terrible disaster, settlers came from the surrounding country, and until recently it was ruled by a race of hereditary Pashas, who, originally Turks, and professing a nominal allegiance to the sultans of Constantinople, yet were in everything but name independent rulers. At last it was seized by a rebel Kurdish chief, Mahmoud Khan, who cut the throats of the Turkish garrison, and levied large sums of money upon the Christian inhabitants, oppressing, torturing, and despoiling them in every way he could. He was driven out some years ago by the Turks, under whom the place now constitutes an important pashalic, and who maintain in it a garrison of some strength. Since then the town is beginning to recover from the effects of the vicissitudes it has so long undergone, and according to the inhabitants themselves is every day advancing in wealth and importance.

At present it is a collection of mud huts, for they can scarcely be called houses, which are inhabited by twenty-five or thirty thousand Armenians, Turks, and Kurds. There are no old buildings within the town, excepting one or two Armenian churches; that of St. Peter and Paul is considered to be very ancient. The streets and bazaars are narrow and dirty, and the houses, which are low and flat-roofed, are covered with a thick coating or layer of clay, wrought into plaster, to serve as a shelter against the long winter's cold, and the short but fierce heat of summer. The garrison consists of one thousand men, the commander of whom is also governor of

the fortress, and independent of the Pasha. At the time of our visit, he was on bad terms with him; a circumstance that in all probability procured us our exclusion from the fort; in fact, we were afterwards told as much.

Van is situated at a considerable elevation, its height above the sea being 5600 feet. The waters of the lake are salt, its depth in some places very great, and it has no outlet. A few small rivers falling into it supply the loss sustained by evaporation. It is said that only one kind of fish is caught in it, but as large shoals of these approach the shores at certain seasons, they are then taken in great quantities. Its greatest length from west to east is about forty-five miles; its breadth, where widest, north and south, through the island of Akthamar, about thirty. The mountains which surround it are sterile and bare of vegetation, except on the southern shore, where they are covered with a close growth of dwarf oak and hazel, while a few splendid ash and plane trees grow to an enormous size in some sheltered spots in the secluded valleys which intersect the hills. An occasional sail was to be seen creeping along by the shore, the boats being laden generally with timber and brushwood brought from the southern side for consumption at Van.

The best view of the great inscription, executed by order of Xerxes, in the face of the precipitous side of the rock overhanging the town, is to be obtained from a street opposite it, and a short distance from the base of the cliff. The tablet is divided by two perpendicular lines into three compartments, the first of which is larger than the two others. The inscription is repeated in three different languages, Median, Babylonian, and Persian; one in each compartment, and all in cuneiform characters, every letter being clear and of large size, and forming in all twenty-seven lines of writing. The lines were distinctly visible, but the characters themselves could only be made out with the aid of a good telescope. At

such an elevation they have escaped the fate which generally befalls such remains of antiquity, that of being disfigured or obliterated by the hand of man; and probably they have never been touched since the time when they were completed by the proud king. The lapse of so many centuries, and exposure to the weather for so long a period, did not seem to have affected the clear and well-defined edges both of tablet and letters. The former appeared about twenty feet square, the lower edge being, as well as we could judge, some ninety or one hundred feet from the base of the rock.

Sir H. Rawlinson translates this rock writing as follows :—
 “ The great god Ormazd, the chief of the gods, (he it is) who has given that heaven, who has given mankind, who has given life (?) to mankind, who has made Xerxes king, both king of the people, and lawgiver of the people. (2) I am Xerxes the king, the great king, the king of kings, the king of the many-peopled countries, the supporter also of the great world, the son of King Darius, the Achæmenian. (3) Says Xerxes the king, King Darius who was my father, he by the grace of God executed many a noble work; he also visited this place; in celebration (?) (of which) why (?) did he not cause a tablet to be engraved? After that I arrived here, I caused this tablet to be written. ”

This inscription, as far as the word “ Achæmenian,” is precisely the same as the inscription of Xerxes at Elwand.

There are no means of ascertaining at what period of his life the king had this inscription executed; it might have been on his march westwards with the host which met with such a signal overthrow at the hands of the Greeks. We inquired in vain for intelligence concerning the bronze tablets, gilt statues of bulls, and vases, which, according to a letter published in the “ Levant Herald,” were found a short time previous to our arrival. All that we could ascertain was that in the spring, on making certain trifling excavations for watercourses in the neighbourhood of the town, a number

earthen vessels, with characters of some kind stamped upon them, had been dug up, but what had become of them we could not learn.

The first person who gave any detailed account of the antiquities of Van was Schultz, a German traveller sent by the French government to explore the antiquities of Persia and Armenia. He went to Van in 1827, and soon sent home to Paris a memoir of his researches, with copies of no fewer than forty-two cuneiform inscriptions, among which was the great one high up on the precipice, which he copied by the help of a powerful telescope. Having some time after returned to Kurdistan, he was murdered in 1830 by the Hekarri tribe, who supposed, from his having Persian servants, that he was sent by that government to survey their country, an idea probably strengthened by the circumstance that he was wandering about, as it appeared to them, without any intelligible object.

The inscriptions on the rocks at and around Van are believed by the Kurds to be magic words, which, when spoken by the fortunate person who deciphers the characters, will prove a talisman to open at once the caverns behind them, which, filled with gold and precious stones, are guarded by demons, to whom this duty is allotted as a punishment. Near the city is a long inscription on the rock, not far from the ground, from behind which sounds of wailing and lamenting are sometimes heard by the lonely husbandman toiling at his task near the spot.

Various legends have grown around this ancient inscription. A story is told of a shepherd to whom the words composing the all-powerful talisman that would open the rock and place in his possession the enormous riches in the cavern behind were revealed in a dream. Immediately on awaking, he pronounced the sentence, and the solid rock before him opened with a fearful crash. Tempted by the sight of the glittering heaps by which his eyes were dazzled,

he summoned up courage to enter, when the rock behind closed round him. Being in possession, however, of the talisman, he felt no alarm, but proceeded to fill with gold the bag in which he carried his food, and then uttering the spell, the cliff was rent asunder with the same hideous clang. Having gone a few steps, however, towards home, he discovered that he had left his crook behind him in the enchanted cavern, to which he returned with the view of recovering it. Again uttering the words which possessed such mysterious power, the solid stone was once more torn apart with a sound like thunder, and he entered the enchanted portals. Alas! it was for the last time, for when, having recovered his crook, he desired to come forth, he found to his horror that he had forgotten the magic words, which not only opened the rock, but made the demon guardians of the treasure submissive to his will; and as he has never since been able to remember the talisman, he still remains imprisoned, his life preserved by the power of the charm, weeping and bemoaning his sad fate. His sole hope of deliverance is that some one else may yet be able to interpret the mysterious lines, and thus restore him to life and liberty.

Other legends resembling those told of the Alhambra, are related of various persons who have suddenly disappeared, and years afterwards been found living in great wealth and luxury in distant lands by travellers whom misfortune or a desire for gain had led to wander far from their native country.

The recent researches of Europeans, particularly those of Mr. Layard at Nineveh, have served to strengthen the natives in their belief that enormous wealth is buried in the bowels of the earth near the mysterious writings on the rocks. People so rude and ignorant are of course unable to understand why any value should be placed upon "old stones." Nothing can shake the conviction universally entertained in the remoter districts, that the excavations and explorations of

which they have heard so much had for their only object the discovery of hidden treasure. This conviction is strengthened by the general belief that in very ancient times the country was inhabited by a race of the same origin as that from whence the European peoples have sprung, and which was expelled by the ancestors of the present possessors. This forgotten race, flying before their conquerors, buried in the earth, or concealed under rocks, the more valuable portion of their wealth, in the hope of afterwards returning and recovering their property, the security of which they further provided for by placing it under the protection of potent spells and magic enchantments.

Meanwhile any antiquities discovered in the wilder and more inaccessible districts have but a poor chance of preservation from destruction. On the one hand, the Moslems, deeming all the statuary that is excavated to be the idols revered by the former infidel inhabitants of the country, consider it as a duty peremptorily commanded by the Koran to break them in pieces; while, on the other hand, the no less ignorant and bigoted Christians, convinced that these figures are the images of demons and evil spirits, regard it as an act of piety, worthy of all commendation, to mutilate and destroy them. The great rock of Van, visible as it is from a considerable distance all round the lake, and celebrated for its caverns filled with inexhaustible treasures, its magic writings, and its traditions of Semiramis, the Great Queen, has long been regarded with peculiar awe and veneration by the wild and uncivilized inhabitants of Kurdistan.

We remained at Van till the 5th of November, employing our time between visits to the Pasha, with whom we had frequent conversations, and riding about the environs of the town. We were told that a canal constructed of large blocks of stone, which conveyed water from a great distance to the city, was, from some cuneiform inscriptions found on

the rocks through which it is carried, attributed by the inhabitants to Semiramis. The gardens surrounding the town were well watered, and there seemed no scarcity of the precious fluid from whatever source derived. Our next halting place for any time was to be Bitlis, our road to which would lead us round the whole southern side of the lake, passing by the nearest point of land to the island of Akthamar, the monastery erected on which, being one of the most ancient in Armenia, and the seat of a patriarch who, in opposition to the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, claims to be the legitimate head of the Armenian church, we desired much to visit.

By the advice of the Pasha we hired horses for the whole journey, which, including one day spent at Akthamar, we were to accomplish by easy stages in six days. The price we were required to pay was one hundred and twenty piastres for each horse, about twice as much as the sum we paid for the horses we obtained for each day's journey by means of zabchis and a government requisition. However, it was a much more convenient arrangement, inasmuch as the inevitable delays in procuring fresh animals were thereby avoided. We laid in a fresh supply of provisions, as the nakedness of the land through which we were to pass was described to us as very great, the constant robberies of the Kurds from the mountains having deprived the poor Armenian dwellers on the shores of the lake of nearly all they possessed. The necessaries of life did not seem to cost much at Van. A sheep was sold in the market for sixteen piastres, or three shillings and eightpence sterling.

Having bidden farewell to Ressoul Pasha, who gave us a couple of zabchis to attend us to Bitlis, and made many apologies for his inability to compel the caimacam, or commandant of the fortress, to admit us within its walls, we left behind us the dilapidated kiosk in which he lived. Emerging from the garden in which it stood, we rode for

some time by the walls of the town, which were double, and from the distance at which we saw them appeared solid and in good repair, and then continued our course along the shore, close to which the road ran, arriving in a couple of hours at Adramit, an Armenian village, where, as we had started late in the day, we were to pass the night.

The plain was well cultivated the whole way, and we passed through numerous vineyards, the vines in some of which were of great size and age. Adramit is a place of some beauty as to situation, being nestled in among crags and rocks, at the foot of which, wherever space was available, fruit-trees and small gardens were planted. There were some large and very old plane-trees, underneath which the inhabitants seemed to have assembled, and one of them, who turned out to be the head man, came forward and brought us to a house. The huts were of the same miserable description as those of the other Armenian villages which we had seen, built of rough stones, put together with mud, and erected close up to the side of the hill, into which part of the dwelling was excavated. The flat summit of the rocky hill, on the slope of which the village stood, was surrounded by an ancient wall, built of huge stones laid one upon another, without mortar or cement of any kind, and resembling somewhat in appearance Cyclopean remains. To our infinite satisfaction we found that our resting-place for the night was not to be the usual stable, with its accompanying noises and smells. Having walked about the village till sunset, we were surprised to find the inhabitants—at least the men, for the women kept close to their houses, and favoured us with only an occasional sight of their faces—so cheerful-looking, and apparently comfortably off.

If only a quarter of the stories told about the sufferings which the Christians in this district have undergone at the hands of the Kurds be true, they must be the most extraordinary race in existence, endued with more fortitude and

perseverance than usually falls to the lot of mankind, to enable them, after the many repeated misfortunes they have endured, still to maintain themselves in such comparative prosperity as that enjoyed by the inhabitants of Adramit.

A great part of the summer crop of fruit was saved and stored up for winter consumption, the dried figs and plums being boiled and eaten with the pilau of grain, which, with the usual wafer cakes of bread, forms their chief food. The corn is kept in large pits dug in the ground in dry places, the sides of which are coated with cement, and become after a little time perfectly solid and impervious to damp or wet. The mouth, made very small, is closed with a flag, over which the earth is piled, thus forming a safe and secure receptacle, possessing also the advantage of not being easily discovered by robbers unacquainted with the neighbourhood.

We were told that there were some inscriptions on the rocks not far from the village, similar in appearance to those at Van, but much smaller.

The next morning we made an early start, wishing, before sunset, to arrive at the monastery, from the usual ferry to which we were distant more than twenty miles. Our road for the first part of the day led over a broken, hilly country, rocks of red and green marble appearing in many places; it occasionally descended to the level of the water, and then rose to cross some steep and rugged promontory jutting out into the lake.

The hills were covered with dwarf oak, a thick brush of hazel, and wild cherry-trees—large gaps in which showed where the supplies of fuel for the towns on the shores were obtained. We passed but few people on the way, those whom we met being chiefly Armenian villagers mounted on donkeys. The views up some of the ravines, with small hamlets on the limited portion of level ground at the bottom of the valleys, were very pretty. Large trees, much valued

by the inhabitants for the shade afforded by their leafy branches during the summer heats, sometimes appeared in these secluded nooks.

We crossed the Khash Aub, the largest stream which runs into the lake, and continued our route to the village of Aghavank, the usual landing-place for the boats belonging to the monastery, which is three or four miles distant from the shore. We passed Vastan, once a place of some importance, but now a miserably poor village, and soon after arrived at Aghavank, where one of the bishops resident in the monastery (there being always some of that degree in attendance upon the patriarch) met us and invited us to a house to await the arrival of that dignitary, who happened to be then on the mainland. He offered us bread, honey, and kymak, a kind of thick cream, made by boiling the milk of buffaloes and then letting it stand for some time. It is eaten instead of butter, for which it forms an excellent substitute, all through Asia Minor.

After about an hour, during which time we strove in vain to obtain from the worthy bishop any information as to antiquities, even of his own church, or about any objects in the neighbourhood likely to interest a traveller, the patriarch himself arrived, attended by a few monks, and taking his seat cross-legged on a divan in the corner of the apartment, the bishop sitting at a little distance from him, welcomed us to the monastery, and made a few inquiries as to whither we were going, and whence we had come, getting, however, at once out of his geography as soon as we proceeded above a hundred miles in any direction from where we were. He questioned us a great deal about Etchmiadzin, being very desirous apparently of ascertaining the number of monks, the size of the monastery, and more particularly the condition and circumstances of the wealthier and more powerful ecclesiastic, whom he looked upon as a usurper. His own

circumstances, indeed, were very inferior to those of his great rival. Save for the better material and more ample folds of his black robes, he was in no way different in appearance or manners from an ordinary Armenian monk. He was dressed in much the same way as the patriarch of Etchmiadzin. A conical cowl covered his head, from underneath which some stray locks of his long dark hair escaped. He was a man of middle age; not a gray hair could be seen in his jet black beard, which was of ample dimensions, and came down low upon his chest. The expression of his countenance and the brightness of his eye showed great keenness and acuteness, if not intellect.

Having replied as well as we could to all the questions he put concerning Etchmiadzin, we began in our turn to ask him for some information about his own monastery and archiepiscopal seat of Akthamar; but in all relating to it, its founders and antiquities, he displayed the most profound ignorance. At last an idea, more brilliant than those which usually occurred to him, seemed to strike upon his mind. He informed us that there was a large stone in the court of the monastery with a long inscription on it in English, which he was told would, if conveyed to England, be worth a great deal of money. He begged of us eagerly to look at it, and tell him what the writing on it meant, his manner at the same time indicating his readiness to sell the precious mass to us if we should desire to purchase it. Having promised him to examine carefully the stone, and, if possible, let him know whether it could be turned to any advantage, he informed us that the boat was ready to convey us to the island, and that the bishop whom we first met on entering the village would accompany us to the monastery, and remain with us there to show us all we desired to see, and afford us any information he could, which, judging from what we had already experienced, was not much. We then

rose and took leave of him, he again impressing upon us his wish to ascertain the value of the stone with the mysterious writing.

We embarked on board a flat-bottomed boat, built, evidently by no boatbuilder, of thin boards of pine so crazy and frail that it was certain to go at once to the bottom if the water became rough. We were accompanied by Demetri and one of the zabchis—the other remaining on the mainland with the owner of our horses—and a few of the convent followers. Having all taken our seats, we waited impatiently for the bishop, who was to be our fellow-passenger, and who had disappeared shortly after we quitted the patriarch. In a little time he arrived, carrying in his hands a cock and hen screaming loudly, which we at once divined were to form our dinner at the convent. The good man apologized for keeping us waiting, stowed the fowls carefully away, and then, squatting down on a bench, chatted and talked gaily in Armenian with those around him.

We partly rowed, partly sailed, to the island, which did not seem more than a couple of miles distant, and the wind being very light, and the water so calm that there was hardly a ripple on the surface, we were two hours in reaching the convent. Adjacent to the island on which the monastery was built were two small islets, about a hundred yards apart. On one, a mere rock, were the ruins of a church and fort, partly covered with water, the level of which, both from appearance and report, varies considerably at different times. The larger of the two islets, about a mile and a half distant from the convent, appeared devoid of buildings or ruins. It was quite dark when we arrived at the island, on reaching which we had to clamber up the slippery and sharp-edged rocks.

Deferring to the next day our sight-seeing, we went at once to the bishop's apartment, which was very small, but comfortable enough. A number of cupboards were in the



walls, in which were a few articles of crockery, and on one side of the room, which was not more than twelve feet square, blazed a wood fire, all the more cheerful for the cold and darkness outside. Though the walls were formed of mud and the ceiling of wood, the bishop had made himself very comfortable inside with carpets and divans, and had done the most he could with the limited space at his disposal.

In a short time one of our feathered fellow-passengers made its appearance, manufactured into soup with rice. We sat down on the floor around the little tray, the worthy bishop, as well as another who came in shortly before dinner, refusing to join us, alleging an obligation to fast as an excuse. Both these poor men performed the duties of hospitality to us in the most simple manner, removing and placing the dishes with their own hands, and then squatting down by our sides, looked on at the meal which they did not touch. They did not offer us wine, not possessing any, but after some time our host rose, and opening one of the little cupboards, took out carefully an English ginger-beer bottle, from which, after withdrawing the cork and smelling the contents, apparently to his satisfaction, for he smiled approvingly, he filled a small glass and handed it to us. We found it to be an excellent raki, as hot as fire, and of this, after a little solicitation, the good bishops partook along with us. Our hosts were dressed in the same manner as the patriarch, but being within doors had removed their cowls, and wore simply the round cap with flat top which is the usual head-dress of the Armenian clergy in common with the Greek, from underneath which their long hair fell in flowing locks over their shoulders. They did not seem to be treated with very great respect by the inferior clergy or the people employed about the monastery, and were in a state of ignorance perfectly amazing to one who had not previously been made acquainted with the limited amount of education commonly possessed by the Armenian ecclesiastics.

After dinner they asked a number of questions about Europe—whether England was not a large town on a rock on the coast of Spain, which with France seemed to be the only countries they had heard of—how many days' riding it was to Stamboul, and from thence how many to England, and which was nearest to Stamboul, England or France? The evening passed in answering such inquiries as these, and at last, at a late hour, our simple-minded hosts withdrew, evidently considering that they had gained a great accession to the very limited store of geographical knowledge which on their own admission they possessed.

The whole convent and its inhabitants excited equally the contempt and ridicule of Demetri, whose opinions were always formed from present and exterior impressions, and who spoke of the poor bishops in quite a patronising manner as "*questi poveri diavoli.*"

Our first business on rising the next morning was to view the church and buildings composing the convent. The monastery consisted of a square, three sides of which were occupied by the cells of the monks and other conventual buildings, while on the fourth was the church, built of red sandstone in the same style as the other Armenian churches which we had seen at Ani, Etchmiadzin, &c. Like them it was in the shape of a cross, the centre surmounted by a many-sided low tower, with pointed conical roof. Built, according to Layard, by Kakhik, King of Armenia, who reigned in the tenth century, and of very small size, its exterior was nearly covered with ornaments and bas-reliefs, a most striking and original cornice of animals and scroll-work running round the top of the centre tower underneath the eave of the conical roof. A frieze composed of heads of animals, interlaced with the most intricate lines, ran round the aisle under the eave of the roof, and underneath this were carved bas-reliefs representing in the most grotesque manner scriptural subjects, among which were inter-

mingled the figures of Armenian saints, the size of life, in remarkably curious costumes, those most quaint and peculiar in design being apparently the best executed. A row of human heads was underneath another portion of the projecting roof, and a border of scroll-work encircled the church at some feet from the ground.

The interior was very poor. A paltry gilt throne for the patriarch was placed near the altar, the walls being covered with frescoes in a desperate state of dilapidation, representing saints and martyrs, many of which were nearly obliterated, and hardly any uninjured. Over the door of the church inside was a row of heads of sheep, lions, horses, and elephants very boldly but rudely carved.

We were shown several manuscripts, two of which, we were told, had been copied by a Catholic priest who had remained for five months in the monastery for the purpose. Many more had been lately taken to Constantinople, but the greatest loss had been sustained at the hands of the Kurds, who had destroyed many from sheer wantonness, using the covers in some instances to make soles for their boots.

On the steps of the church we were shown the stone which the patriarch believed bore an inscription in English. It was in form like a small millstone, circular, and of a black colour, and was covered on both flat surfaces with cuneiform characters, which had already been copied by Schultz. The monks evidently seemed deeply disappointed when we told them that we were not able to decipher it for them, the writing not being English, as, from its having been visited and examined by Mr. Layard, they were impressed with the idea that it must have been. The buildings round the court forming the apartments of the bishops, the cells for the monks, the storehouses, bakeries, &c., were of a most wretched and miserable description, of the same character as the huts in the villages we had passed through, to which they were by no means superior.

The Kurds, until within the last few years, were often in the habit of plundering the monastery, carrying away and destroying whatever the unhappy monks were unable to conceal. Of church plate, furniture, and other usual appointments, it was thus completely destitute, the apartments being stripped of everything to the bare walls. We were told that forty monks and eight bishops belonged to the monastery, in which, properly speaking, they ought to live, but as at this time there was only room in the shattered and dilapidated buildings we had seen for a fourth of that number, the remainder, if indeed they really existed, must have been scattered about in the different villages.

We saw while at Akthamar only two bishops and four monks. Among the books in the very small collection belonging to the monastery, hardly exceeding a dozen volumes, was one really in English, about the contents of which, as well as of the others in different languages, chiefly Eastern, we were eagerly questioned, when it appeared we could read them. The English book was "Tales from the German," the story of the fairy Nip, published by Murray. How it came into the monastery, or when, no one could tell, but it was supposed that some one had given it to one of the monks, who had afterwards gone away, or died, and left it in the convent.

In the graveyard belonging to the monastery are the tombs of some of the patriarchs covered with carvings and ornaments in bas-relief. One in particular of an early patriarch who lived in the fourteenth century, and was, according to Mr. Layard, called Zachariah, was distinguished from the others by the superior decoration bestowed upon it. The cemetery is very extensive. Occupying a large portion of the broken and irregular surface of the rock of which the island consists, it is difficult sometimes to find soil deep enough for a grave near the convent.

There are two small springs of fresh water on the island.

Formerly a village existed, of which the ruins now alone remain, strewn about over the surface of the rocks, from which, as they resemble them in colour, it is difficult to distinguish the fragments of walls.

According to tradition, the first founder of the monastery was a prince or king of Armenia, Theodore, who lived in the seventh century; but a fortress belonging to the ancient Armenian kings is said to have existed here from a very distant period. The patriarchate was founded in the twelfth century by the archbishop resident in the monastery, who declared himself independent of the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, with whom his successors have maintained an unequal contest. Its authority is acknowledged only in the immediate neighbourhood of Van. The clergy under its jurisdiction are even more ignorant than their orthodox brethren, and the short interview which we had with the present occupant of the patriarchal chair did not tend to impress us with a very high idea of his intellectual attainments and culture.

We left the monastery in the afternoon, the monks assuring us that, with the exception of the Catholic priest, only a couple of European travellers had visited the convent within the memory of anyone then resident within its walls. There being a slight breeze, in a little more than an hour we reached the shore, and proceeded at once to see the patriarch, whom we found in the same house as on the preceding day. He inquired immediately about the inscription, and seemed no less surprised than disappointed when we told him that it was not in English, and that we could not assist him to any knowledge of its meaning. He did not repeat his offer to sell it, probably considering that it was too great a weight for a horse to carry away. We afterwards learned that this inscription, which was unimportant, related to Minuas, one of the kings whose name is found on the walls of the caverns in the rock of Van.

CHAPTER XVIII. 5

VILLAGE OF NARKJUGH—NOSE-RINGS—REMARKABLE RACE OF
CATS—KELESH AGA—BUTTER-MAKING—RUINS OF CARAVAN-
SERAIS—ROUTE OF XENOPHON AND THE TEN THOUSAND—
BITLIS—ENGLISH AND TURKISH ALLIANCE—CASTLE OF THE
BEYS OF BITLIS—CURIOUS TRADITION—AMERICAN MISSION-
ARIES AND THE ARMENIAN CLERGY—REMAINS OF AN
ANCIENT ROAD—DEMETRI'S PRESCRIPTION FOR HEADACHE
—ORNAMENTS WORN BY THE WOMEN OF OTAIS OR KOLNIK
—REDWAN—POVERTY OF THE INHABITANTS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HAVING thanked the patriarch for his hospitality, we took our leave, and riding along the shore, in a couple of hours reached the village of Narkjugh, where the strange-looking dome-shaped roofs of the houses, covered with clay, and having somewhat the appearance of enormous mole-hills, presented a very strange scene, being so different from the flat tops which were universal all through the country we had passed over since landing at Poti. The interior of these dwellings consists of one large room, with a row of massive wooden posts standing about eight feet from the walls all round the apartment, which is generally about forty feet square. On these posts are placed cross-beams, from whence the roof is built up with timbers crossing each other in precisely the same manner as those of a crib made by boys for catching small birds. The dome thus formed is covered first with a layer of reeds, over which is piled up a coating of clay a couple of feet in thickness. In the centre of the roof a small hole is left to admit light and allow the escape of smoke. The space between the posts and the walls is appropriated to the cattle; the centre of the room, which is generally a platform raised a foot or two from the ground, being occupied by the family, who squat round the fire under the hole serving as a chimney. These semi-subterranean houses, warmed as they are by the cattle as well as by the fire in the centre, form a very efficient protection to the inhabitants against the intense cold of the long winters at an

elevation of 5500 feet above the sea. Two or three of these rooms are joined together, each with its separate dome of clay and timber, as the family or wealth of the owner becomes greater, and he requires increased accommodation.

At Narkjugh we first saw rings in the noses of the women, the left nostril being generally selected for the ornament, which is commonly of silver. It is sometimes decorated with a small turquoise or one of the more ordinary kinds of precious stones, which, about the size of a button, glitters conspicuously on the left side of the nose of its fair owner. After all, it requires only custom and habit to make a jewel worn in the nose appear as ornamental as one pendent from the ear. The village is also celebrated for the handsomest specimens of the white cats, with long, bushy tails, for which the district around the Lake of Van is famous, and of which but very few ever find their way to Europe, though in Persia and in the more immediate neighbourhood of their native country they are highly prized. Of a large size, much exceeding that of the common cat, they are all of a snow-white colour, and their fur is very thick and long, enabling them to resist the cold. They abound in this particular district, where no other kind is to be met with.

In one of these primitive cavern-like rooms we passed the night, the owner dispossessing his small family from their platform to make room for us. The ladies were very discontented at the inconvenience thereby occasioned to them, and grumbled audibly at their expulsion, their ill-humour, however, vanishing at the usual promise of back-sheesh the next morning.

Our road the next day led us across a spur of the mountains which here form a kind of broad peninsula running out for some miles into the lake. We descended into valleys and passed through ravines whose sides were clothed with dwarf trees and brushwood, their picturesque appearance striking us the more, accustomed as we were since we had

left Georgia only to the bare plains and sterile mountains over which we had been travelling. A number of lofty cypresses towered up among the dwarf oaks, and in the more sheltered parts of the valleys the plane and walnut-trees grew to a large size. The path lay along the mountain side, sometimes receding from the lake, at others winding along the face of the cliffs, and presenting continually varying changes of scenery.

We passed a small church with a few mud buildings around it, forming a monastery called Aintag. The whole was very dilapidated and decayed, one or two monks being the only inhabitants. A solitary sail appeared on the blue surface of the lake, coming from Van to a small village at the water's edge, where a supply of brushwood for fuel had been piled up in readiness for it to return with.

Continuing for seven hours to ride through scenery of this description, we at last descended into a small plain at the other side of which was a good-sized village, where we were received by Kelesh Aga, the Kurdish chief of a small district around, who brought us to his own house, built on one side of the hamlet. It was of the same kind as those at Narkjugh, but it seemed to be inhabited only by himself and his male retainers; that for his harem, which, to judge by the number of women we saw standing around the door to look at the strangers, contained a goodly company, being built on the side of the hill, at a little distance above. It was a square fort-like edifice with towers at the angles, and could have stood a siege for some time against a small force.

As our host's dignity was too great to permit our relying upon our own resources for a dinner, we were obliged to trust solely to his hospitality, and after some time food consisting of a pilau and bread was placed before us, the Aga apologizing for the absence of any kind of meat by saying that the zabchi whom we had sent on had only arrived a few minutes in advance of us, and that, although he had

killed a sheep, yet too long a time would elapse before any of it could be got ready for us. He promised us, however, a good breakfast next morning, and although we were well aware that the sheep was altogether a visionary animal, we thanked him beforehand for the favours which were to come. Our host's insignificance had served as his protection at the late general subjection of the country after the fall of the great chiefs Beder Khan Bey and Mahmoud Khan, and he was allowed to remain undisturbed in his village, though shorn of all substantial power to do any mischief or create any disturbance in his petty district. He seemed a very cunning, keen-eyed old fellow, and asked a good many questions about Stamboul, the Sultan, and the Turkish and Russian armies.

The place in which we spent the night was not the usual cow-house, our host being able to set one of his rooms apart for the reception of travellers and guests, whom he assured us it was a great pleasure to him to receive. In the morning, he fulfilled the promise of the preceding evening, by giving us on the top of a pilau a few mutton bones from which the meat had been nearly all removed, a proceeding which excited the intense disgust of our zabchis and the men who took care of our horses, who when we left were loud in their reproaches of the Aga's meanness and niggardly behaviour.

The next day our road lay through much the same kind of country as on the preceding one, the path winding in and out among the rocks along the shore, at one time rising to cross a promontory, and at another descending to the edge of the water. The hills remained covered with dwarf oak, among which were some scattered cypresses, and the cliffs, from time to time receding from the shore, left small level plains or recesses between them and the water, which, well irrigated and cultivated, were studded over with trees of great age and size, chiefly walnut and chestnut, beneath which,

on stone seats, the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages were accustomed to congregate. ●

We saw both on this and on the preceding day large flocks of wild fowl, but as we were ourselves unprovided with guns, and Demetri's "fucile" still obstinately maintained its original practice of refusing to go off at anything larger than its usual prey—the sparrows on the housetops—we were unable to shoot any of them, though they were far from being wild or difficult to approach. We crossed a few streams, one of which, the Kizdeer, was of some size, and after a ride of eight hours reached the Armenian village of Ortab, where we were to pass the night. During the day we saw at some distance off, on the western shore of the lake, the town of Akhlat, the former seat of the sultans of the Ak-Kouyunlou or Tatars of the "white sheep," who had emigrated from Persia three hundred years previously, and formed a settlement there. Our guides told us that remains of their palaces and some of their tombs still exist, which Mr. Layard also mentions having seen.

Ortab was a miserable hamlet, containing a couple of dozen wretched huts, in one of which we witnessed the process employed to make butter in these regions. A goatskin, half filled with milk, is suspended by a cord to a beam, and, with all the power that the wretched old crone who acts as dairymaid can exercise, shaken violently to and fro until the butter comes. We spent the night in a stable, and in the morning started for Bitlis, from which we were distant only ten or twelve miles. We passed by Tadwan, a village at the bottom of a deep inlet at the south-western corner of the lake, and which had once been a place of importance, and then striking into the main road leading from Erzeroum through Moush to Bitlis, entered a small rocky valley or ravine running in a southerly direction, at the bottom of which flowed a petty stream, increasing in volume as we advanced.

This was the Bitlis Sou, one of the many sources of the Tigris, whose appearance showed us that we had crossed the high range in the centre of this part of Asia Minor, and were now commencing our descent into the southern plains, the rivers we had hitherto seen, discharging their waters into the Black and Caspian Seas, with the exception of the insignificant rivulets falling into the Lake of Van. Here also we entered upon the road traversed, according to most authorities, by Xenophon and the Ten Thousand in their famous retreat. The route we had struck out would take us for some distance over this road, until below the town of Bitlis, when, on turning into the road to Sert, we should leave it on our right hand.

Taking our last look at the immense sheet of blue water stretched out before us, and the snowy summits of the mountains around, we began to descend the ravine. The ruins of a number of large caravanserais, at short distances from each other, showed how important had been the trade in former times on this great highway from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf. Built some of them very handsomely, and containing accommodation for a large number of persons, they were now deserted; in only a few instances being made use of as sheepfolds by wandering shepherds tending their flocks.

The valley at its commencement was stony, the sides were rugged and bare, but in a little time signs of cultivation began to appear, gardens and trees being seen scattered among the rocks. Several rivulets, falling into the Bitlis Sou from lateral ravines, augmented the stream into a boiling river, and the valley becoming wider and more open, the castle and houses of Bitlis, perched on high among the crags overhanging the waters which foamed below, came into view.

Having as usual sent on to the mudir, or governor, the letter with which we had been furnished by the Pasha of

Van, we were met on approaching Bitlis by his secretary, accompanied by a few zabchis. The rain, which had been threatening for some hours, had commenced to fall a short time before we arrived at the town, and we entered it in the middle of a down-pour which had the most pitiful effect upon the dandy secretary, who had got himself up very gaudily to meet the Frank strangers. The efforts of the poor man to appear pleased and polite, under the streams of falling water, were most ludicrous.

We clambered up some steep and narrow streets, paved with large square blocks of stone, and lined with substantial houses built of hewn stone, some of them having large windows with pointed arches and balconies, solidly constructed. In every little courtyard, or small garden, trees were planted, sometimes having the appearance of a grove, when in sufficient numbers. Both houses and streets were cleaner by far than any we had seen as yet in a Turkish town, most probably from the rains having swept away all the impurities from the smooth surface of the pavement.

We rode to a large house inhabited by Halit Effendi, the mudir, who, on hearing that we intended remaining in Bitlis only for a couple of days, invited us to stay with him, and we shortly found ourselves the fortunate occupants of a room with a door, by shutting which we could exclude the inquisitive household, and enjoy the luxury of being alone when we chose. In a little time appeared the usual Turkish dinner, the "pièce de résistance" of which seemed always to consist of balls composed of rice, mutton fat, and cabbage, stewed in rancid butter, and covered with thick sour milk; a compound which, to judge from the fact that it forms a principal portion of every meal, must be highly appreciated by the Mussulman *bons vivants*. The rain continued for the whole evening, and we could hear the roaring of the stream below, which the quantity of water that had fallen had swollen into a torrent.

The next day, being fine, we spent in seeing the town, which contains many remains of buildings, showing that it must once have been far larger and of much greater importance than at present. It is built partly on the sides of the main valley and partly in ravines which run into it, and while the large khans and bazaars are generally placed on the low ground at the bottom, the best houses stand high among the rocks, surrounded by their tiny gardens. Each dwelling seemed to form a petty fortress capable of defence for some time against a small force, and probably, in the disturbed state of affairs which had lately existed, had been used as such. They were flat-roofed, with large windows, a peculiarity remarkable in an Eastern city, and some of them possessed some pretensions to regular architecture. The bazaars were large and generally arched over with stone, and they seemed very crowded and busy. A quantity of oak galls, which appeared to be the principal commodity, were exposed for sale; these, with dyes made in the neighbourhood, which are celebrated for their clearness and bright colour, together with the omnipresent English cottons and cutlery, forming the chief articles of trade. There was also a considerable show of carpets, some of the best and brightest-coloured of what are called Turkey carpets being made by the Kurdish women in this neighbourhood.

The appearance of Europeans created much curiosity among the shopkeepers, and one old fellow, who was more than usually inquisitive, expressed his ideas of the close alliance between England and Turkey by interlacing his fingers and clasping his hands together, exclaiming at the same time, "The English, and the Osmanli are together."

A number of bridges span the main river and the streams falling into it; some of these are of ancient date and solidly built, others are in a ruinous condition. Upon an isolated and precipitous crag rising among the rocks in the centre of

the town, stand the ruins of the castle of the ancient hereditary beys of Bitlis, who, sometimes acknowledging a formal allegiance to the sultan, and at others defying his authority, and maintaining a lawless and savage independence, plundered and oppressed the unfortunate inhabitants of the country in their neighbourhood, and were the dread and terror of this part of Kurdistan. Halit Effendi informed us that the castle had been originally constructed by Sultan Murad in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and related at the same time the following tradition concerning it.

It was built in its present position by the advice of a slave, a prisoner of war, contrary to the opinions of the military engineers in the army which the great sultan was then leading to battle against the Persians, and who all expressed very slighting ideas as to the strength and defensibility of the fortress erected by the captive architect. The latter, however, on finding his work thus contemned and ridiculed, contrived to procure his own nomination as governor, and having established himself firmly, and engaged a garrison on whom he could depend, put the vexed question as to the strength of the castle to the proof, by revolting against the sultan himself, and setting his authority at defiance. A large body of troops were sent against him, who for some time besieged the stronghold, but to no purpose, their assaults being repulsed and their utmost efforts set at nought by the impregnable character of the defences. At last, when the sultan's troops had acknowledged their defeat by withdrawing from before the walls, and abandoning the siege, the governor himself repaired alone and unattended to the sultan, and obtaining audience, under a feigned name and pretext, threw himself at his feet, and declaring that he had acted as he had done only to prove the correctness of his own idea as to the position selected for the fortress, was pardoned and advanced to further honours.

The town of Bitlis is amply supplied with water. The snow on the surrounding hills, melting late in the spring, meets the large demand during the summer heats. The water is brought by aqueducts and watercourses to all the gardens and houses, and the small patches of land thus irrigated are of marvellous fertility, producing enormous crops of vegetables. The population was represented to us as amounting to fourteen or fifteen thousand, a large proportion of whom are Armenians, with a few Nestorians. Until of late years the town had been governed by its hereditary chiefs, but Sheriff Bey,*the last ruler, having rebelled against the supreme authority at Stamboul, and after a struggle which lasted some time with varying success, been forced to succumb to superior force, was sent prisoner to Constantinople, and the district which he had long ruled and oppressed, converted into a Turkish government subject to the pashalic of Diarbekir. Thus, after the fall of Beder Khan Bey, the most powerful of the semi-independent chiefs of Kurdistan had at last been brought under subjection, and a country which for a long time had professed only a nominal allegiance to Constantinople, was reduced to a state of obedience and tranquillity.

We called upon Mr. Knapp and Mr. Berbank, the American missionaries resident at Bitlis. The former had been established there for two years, having been, before coming thither, for some time at Diarbekir, one of the principal missionary stations. The latter had only lately arrived from the United States, together with his wife, who, pretty, young, and graceful, seemed far better suited to a drawing-room than to the rough and dreary existence which lay before her in the place to which she had been brought. We dined with them, and found that, even in the rude district to which they had been appointed, they had contrived to surround themselves with most of the simpler comforts of civilization,

their house, though not large, being neatly furnished and clean, and also boasting of a small library.

We had a good deal of conversation about the future prospects of the missions, which are supported by voluntary contributions from the United States. Commencing from small beginnings, they are now widely dispersed over Asia Minor and Persia, the chief station being at Ooroomiyah (on the shores of the lake of that name, not far distant from Tabreez), where extensive establishments and numerous schools are kept up. Although from the commencement of their labours they had to encounter great difficulties, not from the Mussulman authorities, who, regarding all sects of Christians as alike infidels, offered no opposition to their plans, but from the native Armenian clergy, who placed various obstacles in their way, yet they had slowly and successively surmounted them all, and in most cases they represented their establishments and schools to be in a thriving condition. There is no doubt whatever that, although in a somewhat different sense from that contemplated by the founders and supporters of this movement, originated more, seemingly, with a view to conversion to Protestantism than to the education of the native Christians, much good has resulted from the zealous labours of the missionaries.

The higher and more educated classes of the Armenians and the superior clergy, alarmed at the influence daily gained over the minds of their flocks by men whose intellectual attainments were of a far higher standard than those of the native priests, steeped as they are almost universally in the most profound ignorance, and, save in a few instances, unable to write, have opened schools also in many places, at the head of which have been placed men of some cultivation. Thus a wish for improvement and a desire for knowledge have sprung up among the native population, many of the younger members of which are far in advance of their fathers; and the clergy, though lamenting the loss of the power with

which a people who had so long remained in ignorance had invested them, are obliged, in order to retain any influence whatever, to follow, and endeavour as best they may to guide, the movement they cannot restrain.

They have also established printing presses in Constanti-nople and other large towns; the resources of the convent at Etchmiadzin are largely taxed, and a number of young men are selected and educated for the purpose of taking charge of the schools established in opposition to those of the Americans in the different cities of the empire. Thus, the spirit of oppo-sition and emulation being excited, beneficial results must ensue, and it is to be hoped that this people, whose acuteness and enterprise have monopolized the present rapidly-increasing trade of the East, may awake from the state of lifeless torpor and profound ignorance in which they have for ages been plunged.

We left Bitlis for Sert on the 12th of November, the mudir having provided us with horses at the rate of thirty piastres, or five shillings, per day each. We afterwards learnt that this was double the usual tariff, but that the horses belonged to an unfortunate man whom he kept in prison for a debt owing to himself, in the meantime letting the animals out for hire, as he said, to repay himself the cost of their owner's maintenance. The old fellow himself received their hire from us, and in the evening we dis-covered, on being applied to by the men in charge of the animals for money to purchase barley and chaff, that he had retained the trifling sum which their food for a couple of days would cost. Yet of such stuff as this it is but too often the case that Turkish officials are fashioned.

Winding through a number of steep and tortuous streets, we descended into the valley of the Bitlis Tschai, taking a last view of the town, which, with its numerous bridges, its ruined fortress, and picturesque houses perched amid the crags and precipices, presented scenes that would amply repay

the visit of a painter to this out of the way and little-known district.

Our road, which lay down the bottom of the valley, keeping in general close to the level of the river, consisted, in many places, of a causeway composed of large stones very roughly-put together, and evidently, from its appearance, of very remote antiquity. Tradition asserts, with what truth we cannot say, that this causeway, as well as the city of Van and the many other large works of public utility of which traces still remain, were constructed by Semiramis to facilitate communication with the countries and cities bordering on the lake. In some places hewn through the rock, all of it that still exists appears to testify to its completion at an epoch far anterior to the Turkish conquest, the Osmanlis, moreover, never having been known to make roads of such solidity even in the most flourishing period of their empire. It would seem not improbable that it was the work of some of the earlier Armenian kings, possibly those whose names are inscribed on the rock caverns at Van, who, having so far advanced in civilization, would naturally wish to facilitate communication with the prosperous empire of the plains.

A few miles from Bitlis the road passed through a tunnel a few feet in length, the excavation of which is also attributed to Semiramis. In a couple of hours we reached the Kurdish village of Chaimertshur, in a ravine a short distance off the main road, where we were to stay for the night. The valley from Bitlis downwards was of the same character as above the town, steep and rocky, with trees of different kinds, walnut, ash, chestnut, and cypress, growing among the crags. We took up our abode as usual among the cattle, and found reason to congratulate ourselves on our relief from dependence on Turkish hospitality. The benefits, however, conferred on the country from coming under the rule of even such a government as the Turkish, were here very apparent.

The cattle and sheep were numerous, the houses large and in good order, while the men and women seemed well dressed and contented.

We made as early a start as we could the next morning, being informed that the road was indifferent from the point where it branched off from the main route in the direction of Sert, and continued for about four hours to ride down the valley, here and there coming upon traces of the causeway. We then took a by-path to the left up the steep side of the valley, and ascending by a break-neck track, on which our horses had enough to do to keep their footing, emerged upon a hilly country, thickly wooded with oak in some places. We had crossed over in the valley some two or three bridges of one or two arches, and had seen great quantities of partridges of the red-legged kind.

We had now left behind us the track of the Ten Thousand, from which we were going at right angles, our route lying over the hills to the south-east, while that pursued by the soldiers of Xenophon lay down the course of the valley to the south-west. We rode for some hours longer through a jumble of hills, all of which were nearly equal in height. The greater number were thinly covered with oak-trees of small size, among which stood some miserably poor and poverty-stricken villages inhabited by Kurds, as wild and savage-looking as the dogs which guarded their scanty flocks of sheep. On the left hand, in the direction of the Lake of Van, a few snowy peaks were visible towering over the surrounding mountains. The inhabitants, some of whom we were told had never seen a European, gazed at us with astonishment, the appearance of strangers belonging to the country, not to speak of Franks, being exceedingly rare in this secluded region.

We stopped at a village called Warchan. Somewhat larger than the others through which we had passed, it was surrounded by vineyards, the grapes of which were only

eaten, no raki being manufactured by these mountaineers, who observe the commands of the Koran with much greater strictness than their co-religionists in the towns. We were lodged in a loft, among the winter provision of onions, raisins, corn, &c.—a great improvement, as we with sufficient reason thought, upon the hitherto inevitable cow-house. Here Demetri was addressed, to our surprise, by the title of “Hakim Bashi,” or chief physician, and on inquiring the reason, we were told by him, with a grin, that having been repeatedly requested by the villagers for cures for their different disorders—they fully believing that every Frank is more or less a doctor—he had at last, in order to get rid of one who, suffering from headache, was more pertinacious in seeking for advice than the rest, advised him gravely to cut a hole in the top of his cap, and make his wife pour water over his head till he was well. The poor man went away overjoyed at the simple remedy, and whether killed or cured by the prescription we did not hear.

Our next day's ride brought us to Sert. The road at first lay among the same low wooded hills as on the preceding day, but gradually descended, and after crossing a few insignificant streams, which fell into the Sert river, we at last found ourselves in an open country, and in a short time reached our journey's end. The town could be seen for some distance before arriving at it, and seemed to have fallen into its position, nothing being visible to break the abruptness with which its lofty walls and houses covered with snow-white plaster rose from the sloping hill-side on which they stood.

On hearing of our arrival the caimacam invited us to stay in his house, which he had just finished, and we were soon squatted around a tray heaped with all sorts of native dainties. We were joined at this repast by a fellow-guest, a young artillery officer, who had arrived from Erzeroum to collect the revenue of the province. He was loud in his

encomiums of that city, which he assured us was quite European, with hotels, cafés, billiard-rooms, "as good, some of them," said the little man, rising into enthusiasm, "as those at Pera," this being his extreme idea of luxury. After dinner, we had the usual conversation upon the accustomed topics with the friends of our host, who came in numbers to visit the strangers, and stayed till late in the evening.

As we intended to leave Sert the following day, we rose with the light and walked over the town and bazaars. The houses were all of stone, solidly-built and lofty, plastered over with a pure white mortar, the lime for which is procured from marble of the same colour, found in large quantities near the town. They were generally two stories high. The windows—some of which were ornamented with designs carved in stone—looked occasionally into the streets, a trellis-work enabling the inmates to see without being seen. The streets were narrow, the bazaars poor and badly furnished, and the shops few and small. The apartments in the houses were generally large, the roofs flat and covered with the same dazzlingly white cement as the walls. A cistern was usually constructed under each dwelling, in which the water is kept cool during the summer heats.

We found we had descended considerably during the last two days, the town being upwards of 2000 feet lower than Bitlis, which is 5000 feet above the sea-level, while Sert is but 2600 feet.

Founded by Tigranes the famous king of Armenia, who named it after himself Tigranocerta, from whence its modern name, it was a prosperous town until the conquest of Armenia by the Arabs, since which period it has lost its former importance. Since the reduction of Kurdistan, however, it has recovered somewhat from its former depression, and at present seems in a thriving condition.

We engaged horses to take us on to Diarbekir, a journey of four days in a caravan, for seventy piastres, or about twelve shillings each, and started from Sert at noon on the 15th November. Riding for some miles through an undulating country, in some places cultivated and in others desert, we arrived at the village of Otai or Kolnik, a wretched place built of wattles and mud, where the women, however, carried such quantities of silver coins on their breasts and heads as to make them appear as if they wore breastplates and helmets. By a little negotiation we were allowed to examine some of these, and found that they were nearly all Spanish half and quarter dollars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a few Roman coins being scattered among them. The weight of all this mass of silver borne by these Kurdish women is very great, and the value of the metal alone must be of importance to people apparently so poor; yet they were reluctant to part with any of their cherished old money, the pieces of which in some cases were stitched on to the fez which they wore on their heads as close as they could be put to each other.

We were now rapidly descending to the level of the plains of Mesopotamia, having left the high plateau to which we had ascended on our route from Tiflis to Gumri, and which extended, though varying considerably in level, from the head waters of the Kur and its tributaries to the southern shore of Lake Van. The change of climate was very sensible, great cold being no longer felt, and the days being oppressively hot. We rode the next day in six hours to Redwan, crossing again the river which ran through the Bitlis valley, but which here flowed through an open country, and then, passing over a rugged range of low and broken hills, uncultivated and sterile, running east and west, descended into a plain. On the opposite margin of this rose

another low range of mountains, on the southern side of which we were told was the main stream of the Tigris.

We rode along this plain through the parallel ranges of hills till we arrived at Redwan, where the mudir, a fat little man, to whom we had sent on a letter, received us in a most affectionate manner, grasping our hands with great fervour, and leading us like children through the streets to his house, expressing all the way the extreme delight he felt at seeing us, and stumbling in the intensity of his joy over the stones which lay about. The village, for such it now is, consisted of some five hundred houses, inhabited by Yezeedis, and Armenian, Chaldean, and Nestorian Christians; the Armenians possessing a small church built for them by the last independent Yezeedi chief.

On an overhanging rock were the ruins of a fortress which belonged to the independent Yezeedi chiefs of the district around, but is now deserted and dilapidated, the descendants of its ancient proprietors having been subjected and reduced to insignificance by the Turkish power. Formerly a place of importance, Redwan is now fallen into decay; a few miserable shops are dignified by being called a bazaar; and the poverty and squalor of the inhabitants prove the truth of the stories told of the oppression exercised by the Mussulmans upon the persecuted sect of the Yezeedis. The Jezeed Hani, a considerable stream, which runs through the town, falls into the Tigris some few miles farther down its course. The mudir had only lately arrived from Diarbekir, and his first care had been to build himself a house, which he had just completed, and on the mud-plastered walls of which he gazed with much complacency. He gave us a very abundant meal, adding a fresh delicacy to the many Turkish dainties we were already acquainted with, a kind of pie, or hot sandwich, made of chopped mutton and pomegranates, baked between layers of the wafer bread.

We regretted much that owing to our being with the mudir we could not see any of the Yezedis, the mutual antipathy existing between them and the Turks being so intense as to prevent them coming to see us at his house. Having gone through the inevitable visits from the friends of our host, we were at last left alone.

CHAPTER XIX.

AL FRESCO BATH—THE HAREM OF THE KIAYAH OF BISMIL—
RAVAGES OF OPHTHALMIA—DIARBEKIR—ANCIENT CAUSEWAY
—KHODJA BEDOUL'S HOSPITALITY—A JOINT INHERITANCE—
THREATENED OUTBREAK AT DIARBEKIR PREVENTED—CURIOUS
DISEASE—MR. WALKER AND THE AMERICAN MISSION—THE
DAMASCUS MASSACRES — RAPHAEL'S IDEA OF THE ENGLISH
IN INDIA—RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGES—MERCIN—AN ITALIAN
DOCTOR — THE PLAIN OF MESOPOTAMIA — ANCIENT CATA-
COMBS—THE RUINS OF DARA.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next day we left later than was our usual habit, the hospitality of the mudir not permitting us to depart before we had breakfasted, after partaking of which meal he himself accompanied us for a short distance beyond the town. Our road for a few hours wound about through a range of low hills, and then descended to a plain extending, as we found, the whole way to Diarbekir. In seven hours we reached the village of Tilmin, which was to be our halting-place, near which we witnessed an *al fresco* bath of a peculiar character. A number of women, standing in a shallow pool not far from the road, who were no way disconcerted by our passage at a few yards' distance, were pouring hot water over each others' heads and bodies, which had been previously well rubbed with soap, the water being heated in kettles over a fire which had been lighted for the purpose. The village of Tilmin is small and wretched, inhabited chiefly by Armenians; the only thing remarkable in it being the size and vigour of the fleas.

Our road the succeeding day still lay over a plain, on which were scattered large villages, at some distance from each other. We passed some very large tumuli, the largest of which was of greater size than any we had before seen, being apparently, for we did not measure it, from forty to fifty yards in height, and one hundred and fifty in diameter. The whole surface of the plain was strewn with these sepul-

chral mounds, at no great distances from each other, of unequal size, but all of the same form.

We skirted some pools of water deep in the ground, from one to two hundred yards in diameter, the steep banks of which presented a very strange appearance, being natural depressions in the soil, and not artificial excavations. The neighbourhood of one of these pools was always selected as a site for a village, and owing to the absence of fire-arms among the Christian population, the wild fowl fed around the edges in fearless security, the "fucile" obstinately refusing to awaken them to a sense of danger. As we drew near the village, where we were to halt, the ground became marshy, and on every little pool were to be seen immense flocks of wild duck and teal, who scarcely took any notice of us as we passed. About an hour before arriving at Bismil, we obtained our first view of the main branch of the Tigris, here, at this season of the year, a river about the size of the Thames at Richmond, with a gentle current and clear water, on which also were a number of water-fowl.

In the evening we arrived at Bismil, having been nine hours on the road, and were received by the kiayah, or chief of the village, who, being a wealthy man and a Turk, gave us quarters in his own house. A dinner was shortly got ready for us by Demetri, who was admitted into the harem of our host for the purpose of preparing it, an honour and confidence which he seemed to treat with profound indifference, merely gaining the knowledge which he imparted to us, that our entertainer, an old gentleman of venerable appearance, who had seen probably sixty summers, had no fewer than five sharers of his joys and sorrows, of whom the youngest was only fifteen years of age. Demetri described this youthful matron as "sufficiently clean;" an expression which, however meritorious may be the habit which it designates, certainly conveyed but an obscure description of her

personal charms. This hospitable patriarch had a guest room, which he placed at our disposal, and in which we passed the night very comfortably.

The next morning we were surprised to find our doors besieged by men and women suffering from the dreadful effects of ophthalmia, the plague of the desert and its borders. This painful and distressing disease, occasioned by the bright sun and minute particles of sand inflaming the tissues of the eye, is the scourge of these countries, it being within the truth to say that one out of five or six of the population is suffering, or has suffered, from it. In many instances the results are total blindness, and the eye disappearing from its socket, leaves the unfortunate sufferer a ghastly object, helpless, and dependent upon charity, or his relations, for existence for the remainder of his days. In every one of the villages we had passed through, we had seen a number of these unfortunate people, whose eyesight, then gone for ever, the possession of the means of treating the disease in its earlier stage would have saved. It was with a feeling of melancholy we assured these poor people, some of whom had brought their children, also suffering from the tormentor, from a distance, that we were unable to do anything to alleviate their distress. The anguish that some of the little creatures held up to us by their mothers, in the hope that we could save them, were enduring, must have been fearful. It was in vain to tell them that we were not doctors; the belief that every Frank is a physician was rooted in their minds, and we could see that many refused to credit our repeated assurances of inability to help them, attributing our not doing so to other motives.

Leaving this sad scene, we rode on over the plain in eight hours to Diarbekir, the first view of which we obtained about an hour before we arrived; the latter part of the route being an ascent to the eminence upon which the

city is built, and which is composed chiefly of black basalt. The right bank of the river, on which the town is situated, is here much higher than the left; the one rising abruptly from the stream to the level of the plateau on which the city stands, while the other is but a few feet above the water. The town is of an oblong shape, and surrounded by a lofty and massive wall, with towers at equal distances, built of the black basalt with which the neighbourhood abounds. This was the work of Constantius II., son of Constantine the Great, who, finding the city, then called Amida, decayed and in a languishing condition, repaired the ruined buildings, and erected this wall.

We forded the Tigris a short distance below the town; the water, low at that season of the year, reaching only to the saddle-girths. A bridge of many arches spans the river still lower down the stream, but whenever the ford is passable the caravans prefer it, as the road thence to the town is shorter than the circuit by the bridge. The newly erected telegraph wire from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf crosses the river at the ford, having passed through Diarbekir, where a station has been established.

After fording the Tigris we rode for some time through a kind of marsh in which reeds, alders, and other aquatic plants and trees grew luxuriantly, and then striking upon a causeway, apparently of ancient date in some places, and composed of large blocks of stone, commenced the ascent up the steep side of the hill to the town above. The causeway was dreadfully out of order, seeming as if it never had been repaired or restored since first laid down in bygone ages. In some places it was all but impassable, the horses and mules keeping their footing with much difficulty. After scrambling and clambering over it for some time, we at last reached the southern gate of the city, passing by on the left hand during our ascent a number of corn mills, of small size, the

motive power of which was the surplus water remaining after the wants of the inhabitants had been supplied, a copious stream being brought into the town from the hills at some distance. It was very dirty, and we found that what we had been told about the bad quality of the water at Diarbekir, and the consequent fevers for which the town enjoys an evil reputation, was only too true.

The gate through which we entered had a small guard of Turkish regular soldiers, and we there met a messenger from the Pasha, to whom we had sent intimation of our approach, with directions to bring us to the house of Khodja Bedoul, a rich Armenian merchant, who prided himself on the hospitality which he always exercised towards European travellers. We were very warmly received by him, and installed in a large room furnished with divans and carpets, where in a short time we sat down to an excellent dinner. Living in the same house with our host, and part owner of it, was an Armenian Catholic priest named Raphael, who had but lately returned from Paris and Rome, whither he had travelled for his own pleasure. He belonged to the order of Lazarists, and wore the dress of the fraternity. He appeared a man of some education, speaking French tolerably. The house we were in had belonged to his uncle Bedash, who was the richest merchant in Diarbekir, and on his death two years previously, he and our host—who had first married the granddaughter and on her death the widow (a second wife) of the old man, to whom he had been chief clerk—shared the inheritance and divided the house between them; the priest being unable to marry, one great reason for quarrelling was avoided, and they seemed to reside together very comfortably and happily.

Before dinner liqueurs were handed round, to which the most ample justice was done by our host, who drank fifteen glasses of ratafia before we sat down, which, however, did

not seem to have any effect upon him. In the evening, one or two of his friends came in, and we talked and chatted—the priest acting as interpreter—till a late hour.

The next morning we walked through the narrow streets, narrower even than the usual lanes of an ordinary Turkish city, to the palace of the Pasha, whom we found an agreeable, chatty old man. He talked for some time about the Damascus massacres, and said that he had no doubt that a tragedy of the same kind would have been enacted at Diarbekir, which is renowned for the fanaticism of its Mussulman inhabitants, had it not been for the precautions which, on hearing what had occurred, he had at once adopted. For some days the small garrison were kept in barracks, ready to move at a moment's notice. Guns of small calibre and light weight were loaded with grape, for the purpose of sweeping the streets should a disturbance arise. A dozen of the most fanatic Mollahs were arrested, and by such timely and vigorous measures the crisis passed away without the dreaded rising taking place. It was not an easy matter for a long time to allay the too well-grounded fears of the Christian population; but as time passed away, and the retribution which fell upon the Damascus assassins became known, their terrors gradually subsided, and affairs rolled on in their accustomed channel.

Like nearly every other town in the Turkish empire Diarbekir seemed in a state of decay. Its houses, which are dark and gloomy, faced the street, the solid walls being pierced with an occasional tiny window, not much larger than a loophole; and the modern city covers only a third of the space contained within the Roman walls. The lower part of these fortress-like dwellings was of black basalt, with which also the streets, some of which were no more than three or four feet in width, were paved; the upper story was generally of sun-dried brick. A few trees grew in the open spaces and public courts of the city, and we remarked one large plane-tree in the court of the Pasha's palace. Some

of the empty waste spots were also cultivated as gardens. We were told that at one time, two centuries ago, there had been no fewer than 150,000 inhabitants in the city; but so rapidly had its population declined, that it was now supposed to contain only one-fifth part of that number, which was still decreasing. About 5000 of the inhabitants were Christians, Armenians, Nestorians, and Chaldeans, whose condition formerly, and even until very recent times, was very sad, ground down as they were by the bigoted and fanatic Moslem population.

Until a very late date no Christian dared ride through the streets. A few years ago, after the publishing of the Hatti Houmayoun by the sultan, conferring equal rights upon his subjects of all religious persuasions, an Armenian who ventured to do so narrowly escaped with his life. For the same reason, the doors of the outer courts in which stood the few Christian churches were so low, that one had to stoop considerably to pass through them, this being insisted on by the Mussulman inhabitants.

We spent the afternoon in walking about the bazaars and in wandering through the tortuous lanes of sullen-looking houses and masses of ruins which, with some small gardens, constitute what was the once important and prosperous city of Diarbekir. The Roman walls were in a perfect state of preservation, contrasting strongly with the decay within. Numerous massive towers rose at equal distances, and such was the thickness of the rampart—not less than nine or ten feet—that a series of galleries and chambers were constructed within it. The edges of the large blocks of basalt, of which the walls were built, were yet, after so many centuries, sharp and well defined. At the north-east angle of the town, a citadel now in ruins had been erected by the Turks. The city was of oblong shape, the greater length being north and south, and the circuit of the walls about three miles.

In Diarbekir our attention was first drawn to the traces

left on the features of many of the inhabitants by the boil which, called sometimes the "Aleppo button," and at others the "Bagdad date-mark," afflicts, with rare exceptions, not only the inhabitants of the countries drained by the Tigris and Euphrates, but even those who visit them. Attacking the natives when children in arms, it quickly passes away, leaving but very faint traces of its visits; but when an adult stranger is the sufferer, it often lasts from twelve to eighteen months, and, strange to say, while attacking the feet and hands of men, selects, when women are the victims, the face for its ravages. Horrible to look at, but painless and harmless to the general health, it is more or less virulent with different people. With some, the eruption or excrescence is of moderate size, with others it assumes enormous dimensions. In Babylonia we saw a Turkish official with one, among others, extending from his wrist to his elbow. The consuls, and other European officials, who have to remain in the district, though sometimes escaping for a little time, are invariably attacked in the end, and we afterwards saw ladies, who after flattering themselves with the hope of immunity, because they had been spared for two years, were suffering from its ravages on their faces. Its cause and cure alike unknown, it remains an enigma to the medical profession; as in other diseases of a different nature, those who have once been attacked, and have borne the infliction for the usual time, are never again exposed to the same disease.

In the evening, Dr. Nutting, of the American Mission established at Diarbekir, called on us, and gave us a good deal of information about the town and neighbourhood. We tried to find anything in it worth buying to take away, but in vain. The bazaars were small, and chiefly filled with Manchester products.

There was an immense quantity of fruit of all kinds ex-

posed for sale, the melons particularly, for which Diarbekir is famous, being in great profusion, and some of large size. On our approach to the city we had passed several donkeys engaged in bringing a supply of them to its population, and in some instances they were of such a size that two formed the load, one being slung on either side in a pannier. We saw a few upwards of three feet in circumference, measuring lengthways, and these were good and well flavoured, though not equal to the hothouse fruit of Europe. Huge baskets of delicious grapes lay about everywhere, and heaps of water-melons were piled up against the walls like turnips in an English farm-yard.

Some of the mosques were handsome, and though not of any great size, very richly ornamented and decorated, their slender and graceful minarets towering to a considerable height. In the courtyard of one of the principal mosques, into which we dared not enter, were two screens richly and delicately carved in stone, the design being the usual lines interlacing and crossing each other in all directions. They were supported by pillars composed of portions of ancient columns, one being at either side of the square, and their height apparently about twenty-five feet.

We remained at Diarbekir for a few days, on the 22nd dining with Mr. Walker, the American missionary, who expressed himself quite satisfied with the progress of his schools, which had been lately attended by as many as one hundred children, and this in spite of the opposition he continually encountered from the Armenian priesthood, who, fortunately without success, used the most strenuous exertions to induce the parents of the children to cease sending them. Some of the most advanced pupils had recently gone to America, one of whom he mentioned was likely to return to and remain in his native country. There were a number of native preachers and teachers attached to the mission, with one of whom we had a short interview. He

seemed an intelligent man, of good address, who not only read and wrote English, but also spoke it fluently. Mr. Walker had been accompanied from the United States by his wife, who laboured hard to assist him in the arduous duties he had to perform. We were assured both by him and Dr. Nutting, that but for the firmness shown by the Pasha, and the precautions which he promptly took, the awful scenes enacted at Damascus would have been without any doubt repeated at Diarbekir, where the populace were even more bigoted and fanatic than at the former city. Numerous stories of the tyranny which the Moslems exercised over the Christians, whenever they dared, were related to us.

When the news reached Diarbekir of the Damascus tragedy, everything was at once prepared for a repetition of it at Diarbekir, as soon as the intelligence of an outbreak, which was expected momentarily to take place at Aleppo, should arrive. The Moslems openly and savagely boasted of their intention to massacre every Christian, and for some weeks of fearful suspense no Armenian or Nestorian dared appear in the streets, a state of things which continued until the news of the European intervention, and the execution of the murderers, had damped the religious ardour of the Osmanlis, and once more inspired the Christian population with confidence. Yet at any moment circumstances might arise to occasion an outbreak of Mohammedan frenzy, and it is an awful thing to contemplate the position of a defenceless and unarmed body thus living in the midst of a ferocious populace, whose passions, when at any time excited and goaded to fury by designing agitators, might lead them to excess. Unable themselves to offer the slightest resistance, enslaved as they are by centuries of oppression, the Christians cannot place any sure reliance on the authorities, who have frequently connived at the crimes of the furious and blood-thirsty rabble, eager for the slaughter and plunder of their victims.

Our next halting-place for any time being Mosul, we began to make preparations for our departure thither. The usual way of travelling when the river is high, is by a kelek or raft made of a platform of reeds placed over inflated goat skins. This mode is preferred by the merchants as both quicker and safer than by caravan. But the water being at that season of the year very low, the frost in these high regions of Armenia binding up the usual sources of the stream, we decided on going by land, and agreed with a charvadar or proprietor of a caravan of mules to convey us, the distance being by road about three hundred miles. We paid him for each horse according to the general tariff given by the native merchants, viz., one hundred and thirty-five piastres, or one and a half piastre per hour, in English money about £1 3s., as the distance is reckoned by the natives at ninety hours.

Our journey was to take thirteen days, we had six horses, and we were to start when we chose in the morning, an important stipulation, as in order to arrive early at the next khan or caravanserai, the caravans generally leave in the middle of the night. A Turkish post, or chappar, exists between Diarbekir and Mosul, but it is much used by couriers, who have the preference in obtaining horses, of which very few are kept always ready at the stations. Extra animals, it is true, can be obtained at the nearest village, but travellers, especially when the party is large, have often to submit to much delay before their wants are supplied, and they are again able to take the road. Thus very little time is gained over the slow but sure caravan, save by a man who, travelling with no more luggage than can be contained in a pair of saddle-bags, requires only one horse for himself and another for the Tatar who has to return with the animal from the next post, in which case the ground can be got over very rapidly, the nags, though lean and wretched-looking, being tough. The caravan was to

take a somewhat zigzag course, passing through Merdin, Nisibin, Djezireh, and Zachu, a road which it followed on account of the halting-places being more convenient.

We bade farewell to our friends the American missionaries, and to our own cheery host and his relation Raphael, the latter of whom, in our last conversation with him, expressed a great wish to go to India, but said he hesitated about it, as he feared he should have to go naked like the other Europeans there! Having assured him that his feelings of delicacy need not be alarmed on that score, we left him, apparently, however, only half convinced of the truth of our assertions as to the amount of raiment worn by our countrymen in the East.

We left Diarbekir on the 23rd of November, and descending the same breakneck causeway by which we had entered the town, passed through the marsh and again forded the river in the same place at which we had before crossed it. Then riding for a couple of hours across the wide circle or bend which the Tigris here takes, we repassed the stream by another ford to the right bank.

We then struck upon a track lying over a plain composed of a stratum of black basalt with a layer of rich clay on the top, through which large blocks constantly appeared, and passing by an immense tumulus just before we arrived, in a few hours reached the village of Altukar, where we were to halt for the night, putting up in a clean room allotted to us by the kiayah of the village, who seemed unusually anxious to make himself useful, bringing us fruit, &c. His reasons for this unaccustomed civility were not very long in appearing. He desired to obtain from us a favour, although he by no means seemed to think it a remarkable one, namely, the loan of about £100 sterling, promising to repay us when we returned to Diarbekir. As he had pressed his suit in the most insinuating manner, and we did not wish to be outdone in politeness, we made our refusal as graceful as we

could by promising that when we returned the request would be complied with, an answer with which he was bound to be content, though evidently by no means satisfied.

Our next day's journey brought us over a plain in parts undulating, the flat outline being broken with small hills. Over its surface were strewn a few villages, in the vicinity of which the soil was cultivated, the remainder, though rich and fertile, lying waste.

Shortly after leaving Altukar we passed a huge mound or tumulus, similar to that we had seen the preceding evening, which, although continually diminishing in size from the soil being washed down by the winter rains, was still of gigantic dimensions. After the first three hours the road began gradually to ascend, and, for the remainder of the day, lay over hills and through valleys, the sides of which were covered with dwarf oak, and with a prickly shrub which grew in small patches, and afforded an impenetrable cover to red-legged partridges, of which we beheld great numbers, frequently seeing two or three coveys quietly feeding in the open spaces between the woodlands.

The hills over which we had been passing were the north-western slopes of the Karadagh range of mountains, the ancient Masius, which, rising isolated from the plain, extend east and west a distance of eighty or ninety miles. In the evening we halted at Birkeh, a village of small size, and presenting no features worthy of remark. The next day our road continued over the same kind of country we had traversed on the preceding, the telegraph wire from which we had separated near Diarbekir, rejoining and accompanying us for the remainder of the day, taking a straight line over the hills where our course was devious in order to avoid them.

This wonder of science attracted naturally the most intense curiosity on the part of some Kurds who were on their way from their mountains on some business to Merdin, and who eagerly questioned Demetri on the subject, stopping

by his directions near the posts to listen to the buzzing sound caused by the vibration of the wires in the breeze. Remarking our surprise at their seeming immediately contented with the explanation afforded them by that worthy, whose knowledge of science was on a par with their own, he carelessly informed us that he had told them it was done by the assistance of Sheitan or the devil, who, at the command of the Franks, would do what they chose, a reason that at once satisfied his questioners, who, he added, would believe anything.

Suddenly, and without any previous intimation by descent or dip of ground, we came to the verge of a precipitous ridge of rocks, from the sides of which a mass of stones had been detached by the decay of ages, and now formed an enormous mass of débris and shingle far below. From a height of probably 2000 feet perpendicular we looked out upon the great desert stretching away to the south, an immense number of tumuli dotting its level and otherwise unbroken surface.

We stopped for some time to gaze upon this wonderful scene, which struck us the more from its being so unexpected. A red burning haze covered the whole vast expanse, through which, at a great distance to the south-east, could be faintly discerned the outlines of the Sinjar Mountains, which seemed like the opposite coast of this immense sea of sand.

A few miles to the eastward, projecting for some distance from the range of stupendous crags, was the rock on the summit of which the fortress of Merdin is built, the town lying on the craggy slope which descends from it to the plain on the eastern side, the opposite to that on which we were. The plateau on which the castle stood was flat, but the rocky sides were perpendicular, and from a dizzy height the stronghold commanded all around. The face of the precipice was bare and desolate. Opposed as it was to

the burning rays of the sun, no moisture could be retained by the heated rocks, and the bright grey colour of the naked cliff was unbroken by the sign of a particle of verdure. Below us eagles and vultures winged their flight lazily to and fro among the crags in which were their eyries and nightly roosting places, and a multitude of hawks skimmed the air rapidly backwards and forwards, screaming loudly all the time. Between us and Merdin the cliffs receded, forming a deep bay, the bottom of which was rugged and broken, the ground being covered with masses rent from the surrounding precipices at some remote period. Jagged, confused, and heaped shapelessly one over the other, rocks and clay lay mingled together, the latter produced by the decay of the former.

Descending from our towering height, we passed over this wilderness of débris, and then ascended the opposite crags by a winding path. Having reached the summit, we passed through a small door in a wall, which we found was that of the town. On entering it we again descended a little, the vast ruins of the fortress on our left hand looming over the city from a height of 700 or 800 feet, and after winding about through some steep and slippery streets, which were paved with rugged and uneven blocks of stone, arrived at the house of a rich Armenian, who received us very well. This Eastern gentleman's house was large and clean, the apartments were of good size, and the stairs, as well as everything else that could be constructed of stone, were formed of this material, which in this city of rocks was the cheapest.

After the usual visit of ceremony to the caimacam or governor, whom we found a sharp-eyed, inquisitive old Turk, and who seemed scarcely to credit our having no motive save curiosity for travelling, we returned to our house, taking a roundabout course in order to see the town. The houses, which, like our host's, were all solidly built of a cream-

coloured limestone, were handsome and large, with flat roofs, that, owing to the steep incline on which the city was built, overlooked each other in all directions. The site was most striking, hanging as it were over the desert. The bazaars were small and mean, there being seemingly no native manufactures, and the district to which it was a centre of trade being very small. After dinner we received a visit from a Signor Gandori, an Italian who had been long settled in Merdin, where he was established as a doctor, to which profession he also joined that of a dealer in coins. He showed us a great many, for some of which, professing that they were of the greatest rarity, he asked large prices, saying at the same time that he could always obtain for such valuable coins anything he chose to ask from the Austrian Internuncio at Constantinople. We took impressions of what he represented were the rarest, and none of them afterwards turned out to be of any great value. The signor was of immense corpulence; his reason for coming to such a secluded spot as Merdin he did not disclose, but one could easily guess from his size why he did not like to leave it. We were told he was very rich, reaping by his profession a harvest from the townspeople and the Kurds of the neighbourhood, the medical being here, as elsewhere in the East, the most highly valued and respected of all professions.

We rose early the next morning and walked up to the ruins of the citadel, once of great extent, and doubtless impregnable, but now rent and shattered, a few buildings alone remaining as evidence of its former strength. From this elevation we obtained an excellent view of the town on the slope below, surrounded by a stone wall, which, resting at either end upon the castle behind, was carried round the front in a half circle. The Sinjar mountains, although at a great distance, appeared in the clear morning air much nearer than they really were, the outlines of the range showing distinctly against the blue sky. Among the tumuli on the surface of

the desert below, a few scattered encampments of nomad Kurds were to be seen, the black tents being visible from a great distance. Nothing else broke the monotony of this once fertile and well-cultivated plain of Mesopotamia.

Our route on departing from Merdin lay for some distance down the rocky slope, winding backwards and forwards among the huge stones with which its face was encumbered. On gaining the level of the plain, we rode in a south-easterly direction along the foot of the hills towards Dara. For some distance the soil was cultivated, and being well supplied with water from the neighbouring mountains, was very fertile, immense crops of grain being, we were told, produced. At the foot of the slope below Merdin, we passed a small village, from whence the native Christians are of opinion that Elijah ascended to heaven. On approaching Dara, we descended a little, and then entering a hollow in the hills, saw on all sides, excavated in the solid rock, a number of catacombs, the openings or entrances to which were of different sizes and various shapes. Many sarcophagi which had been removed from these lay strewn about, some broken in pieces; while others were used by the villagers for different purposes. On nearly all were inscriptions, in some instances still legible.

The ruins of the great Roman frontier fortress of Dara, erected by Anastasius, and restored and enlarged by Justinian, as a check upon a Persian invasion, lay before us, the miserable village called still by the same name being situated in the midst, and built of the massive stones obtained from the remains of the once famous city which had for so long defied the utmost power of the Sassanian kings.

We spent some hours in wandering about the ruins. The dilapidated walls which once surrounded the town were still to be seen, built of large hewn stones, but without mortar or cement of any kind. They seemed to have crossed the hills above the town, and thence descending into the

plain, to have surrounded the city in a semicircular form on the side next the desert. The entrance gate on the southern side was still standing, built in the form of a massive and lofty tower with three archways, from which a causeway whose remains yet exist, led into the interior of the city. The ground was covered with innumerable broken columns and capitals, mostly of the Corinthian order, and skilfully carved. Near the gateway was a handsome bridge of three arches, spanning the small stream which runs through the town, and which, higher up, was crossed by a second bridge, similar to the first in size and appearance.

In the centre of the ruins, still in an almost perfect state, was a large building, the roof of which, vaulted over with huge stones, was only about eight feet above the level of the surrounding soil. Of a square or slightly oblong form, a massive cornice encircled it near the top, deeply and boldly carved, and handsomely ornamented. The entrance was by a low door at the south-east corner, whence a passage or gallery extended along the whole southern side of the building, on reaching the termination of which a flight of stone steps led down into a vast chamber, the floor of which was nearly forty feet below the level of the ground. The arched roof was supported by two rows of square pillars, built of hewn stone without cement. An arched window of small size admitted a limited amount of light to the strange vault, at one corner of which was a small room, some five feet square, partitioned off by a wall from the main chamber, which rose to the same level as the remainder of the building, having somewhat the appearance of a shaft. Whether this huge semi-subterranean building was a cistern or granary, remains uncertain.

The great cisterns were excavated about halfway up the slope on which the ruins stand. Somewhat similar in size and form to those of Carthage, they were of great extent, eight of them lying parallel to each other; and being dug out of the mountain, their sides were lined with masonry

and vaulted over. The roofs of three of them having been broken, their interiors were visible, and from what could be seen of them, they appeared to be each from 80 to 100 feet in length, and 20 or 25 in width. The remains of a great number of other buildings exist to bear witness to the ancient splendour and magnificence of Dara.

The walls of a palace underneath which are many vaulted rooms stand in the centre of the town. The quarries whence the stone used in the construction of the city was taken, are in the hill-side to the west and north-west; and the places where the blocks were excavated are of a square form, looking like chambers hewn out of the mountain. The circumference of the walls is said to be one hour, or about three miles; the situation seems at first sight a strange one to have been selected; but the supply of water afforded by the small river or stream was a consideration of the first importance in this arid country. The village is inhabited by a few Kurdish families, whose flocks and herds are folded at night in the deserted courts and ruined chambers of the ancient city.

Having inquired from the scheikh at whose house we had put up, whether any old coins had been lately found, he told us that Omar Pasha, who had not long before passed through the village on his way to Constantinople, had bought all that had been picked up for some time previously, but that at Djezireh, through which we were to pass, an "infidel" lived who sold "old money" to any one who would buy it. The scheikh had lately finished his house, which of course was built out of the materials lying around in such profusion.

In the morning we rode out to a large building about a mile and a half distant to the south of the town. It appeared to be of the same date as the remainder of the ruins. The rooms in the interior, which were large and lofty, built of hewn stone, and vaulted over, were used as granaries by

the inhabitants of a small village built around it. It seemed difficult to assign a use to this edifice; from the natives no more could be obtained than that it had always been used for the same purpose it then was, but this appeared very improbable.

CHAPTER XX.

TRAIN OF THE PASHA OF BASSORA—BLACK MAIL—RUINS OF NISIBIN—KURDISH DANCES AND SONGS—POVERTY-STRICKEN VILLAGES — THE RUINS OF DJEZIREH—INTERVIEW WITH A SYRIAN ARCHBISHOP — THE CAIMACAM OF DJEZIREH — PASSAGE OF THE TIGRIS—ARRIVAL AT ZACHU—NIGHT IN THE HOVEL OF A KURD—JOURNEY TO MOSUL—THE WALLS OF NINEVEH—RESIDENCE OF MR. RASSAM, BRITISH VICE-CONSUL — MR. LAYARD'S EXCAVATIONS AT KOUYUNJIK — THE PATRIARCH OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHALDEES.

CHAPTER XX.

LEAVING behind us the vast and noble ruins of Dara, we rode over a rich but uncultivated plain to Nisibin in five hours, passing by and halting for an hour at Kasr Jan, the ruins of a castle built on an eminence which rose to some height above the surrounding country. Some towers and buildings still remained, inhabited by a few Kurds, who gave us coffee and pipes. Near Nisibin we met the Pasha of Bassora returning to Constantinople from his pashalic, his term of office having expired. His train of servants, baggage, and harem formed quite a caravan, the ladies, two in number, travelling in a box placed on a horse which seemed scarcely able to carry such a burden. The women servants rode mules, bestriding them like men, and presenting an odd appearance with their long and thick white veils, from under which their black eyes "glowered" on the strangers. A European lady in a riding habit and low hat with feather, and two gentlemen, one of whom, a Hungarian, was her husband, and in the employment of the Pasha in some capacity, accompanied him. The other was the interpreter to the workmen who had been engaged in putting up the telegraph wires as far as Bagdad; the work being finished, he was now returning to Constantinople. The Pasha was a young, slight, and effeminate-looking man, dressed in the travestie of European costume adopted by the younger Turks. He had crossed the desert from Mosul to Nisibin, which, although the shortest route, was seldom

followed by caravans, as they were exposed on it to the depredations of the Anizeh Arabs. However, by payment of black mail to some member of the tribe the road may be safely traversed under his protection, the Bedoween respecting the persons and property of those thus placed under the guardianship of one of their number. This course had been adopted by the Pasha, who had thus passed through the dangerous territory in safety.

Putting up at Nisibin in an Armenian house, we spent the evening in examining the ruins of the ancient city of Nisibis, so famed in the wars between the Romans and the Persians. Lying along the banks of a small river, the ancient Mygdonius, they are of considerable extent, but from the town not having been built of the same solid materials as Dara, by no means in as good preservation. The ruins of a church of the Byzantine period, dedicated to St. James, are small, and being surrounded by heaps of rubbish, seem half buried in the soil. The execution of some of the ornaments and decorations surrounding the arches and architraves of the doors and windows was very delicate; bunches of grapes, foliage, and scrolls being most tastefully carved in the stone. Underneath the church were some vaults, into which, as we were told they were empty, we did not descend. At some distance were four columns yet standing, the ground round which had evidently, from the shortness of the portion of the shafts left visible, risen considerably. There are no remains to be seen of the building to which these columns appear to have been the portico. The remainder of the ground once covered by the city is strewn over with heaps of rubbish and broken stones, amongst which a few half-starved sheep and goats find a scanty sustenance.

In the evening we were entertained with Kurdish dances and songs, by a strolling company of rope-dancers and mountebanks, whose performances afforded the villagers the most

intense delight. The dances consisted of a series of quick jumps from side to side. The performers, who were two in number, sometimes advanced and sometimes retreated, the vigour more than the grace of their movements being admired by the bystanders. The music consisted of two small drums or tomtoms, beaten with strips of horseskin instead of sticks, a small flute, and a tambourine, by means of which a deafening noise was maintained for hours without cessation.

The village of Nisibin, on the site of the city whose name it preserves, is a miserable hamlet of mud huts, the inhabitants, mostly Christian, appearing to be in a state of poverty and wretchedness. No other remains of antiquity were to be found, and it seemed surprising how so complete an obliteration of an extensive town could have been effected. The country being somewhat disturbed near Djezireh, we were advised, by a Turkish officer whom we met at Nisibin, to take a few Bashi Bazouks, of whom there were posts at a few miles' distance from each other, for the purpose of guarding the road, along with us to that place. He told us that he had been for some time at Bagdad, that he knew the commander of the English steamer that sometimes ascended the Tigris to that city, and that he had eaten pork and drunk wine, by which he meant to indicate the advance he had made in civilization over his fellow-countrymen in general.

On leaving Nisibin we crossed the stream by a small bridge, and rode along the plain, the Karadagh range of hills being on our left hand as we pursued our course to the east. We passed numerous villages, both Kurd and Christian, around which the soil seemed fertile and well cultivated, the plain being intersected by many small streams descending from the hills. Far away in the dim distance to the right were the Sinjar mountains, their outlines but faintly dis-

cernible through the hazy atmosphere. The black tents of some nomad Kurds alone broke the monotony of the desert between us and them, and, save for some vultures wheeling their lofty flight in the air high above our heads, there was no sign of animal life to be seen.

In seven hours we halted at Kunik, a miserable village, where we passed the night. The next day we continued our route in the same direction. Villages were still seen scattered over the plain at the foot of the hills, with wide intervals between. The whole day's journey was most monotonous, there not being a single object of any degree of interest to be seen. In eight hours we arrived at the village of Scheikh Hassan, where we slept. These villages were all built of mud; and the inhabitants, both Moslem and Christian, were miserably poor.

Our next stage was to Djezireh. Our road still continued over the plain, which in places presented a most extraordinary appearance. An immense number of rugged and rough-looking stones, from one to two feet in diameter, lay strewn about over the surface, covering a wide extent, sometimes touching each other, but in no instance lying one above another. This layer of detached blocks of stone extended for miles, the narrow path constituting the road winding its sinuous course in and out between them. On approaching Djezireh, which lay on the bank of the Tigris, at the foot of some low hills, the road ascended slightly, and then suddenly descended to the water's edge, by which it continued till we entered the town, which seemed to be a mass of ruins, encircled by a wall of dark-coloured stone. We entered by a dilapidated gateway. On both sides of the street appeared empty and roofless houses, the walls of which were alone standing. As we rode on signs of human habitation were visible here and there among the general devastation, and we passed through the tottering ruins of a bazaar which still contained a few shops.

This was the state to which Djezireh, the residence of Beder Khan Bey, for a long time the independent ruler of the greater part of Kurdistan, had been reduced by the fall of the once powerful chief, the Turks seeming in this instance to have surpassed themselves in the work of destruction. On an eminence overlooking the town stood the shattered remains of his fortress-palace, built of white and black stone, and not far removed from the walls on the river-side of the town. We had, as usual, sent forward to the governor to request him to provide us with a house, which he did in the most literal sense of the term, allotting us an empty dwelling, from which the owner—for some reason or other—had lately fled, leaving nothing but the bare walls behind him. However, we looked upon this as a fortunate circumstance, as we were thereby saved from the visiting and conversation which we should have had to endure had he received us himself. So, having ascertained that the roof was still waterproof, we took up our quarters in one of the empty rooms, and sending our Bashi Bazouks into the town for provisions and fuel, they shortly returned with a huge supply of meat and wood, and we soon had a roaring fire burning in the deserted chamber. The Bashi Bazouks, attracted by the sight of the good cheer in preparation, volunteered to spend the night with us, alleging, as an excuse, that the people of the town were all robbers, and they sat up carousing till a late hour.

In the evening, while dinner was preparing, a man, shabbily dressed, entered the court of the house. After standing for some time patiently in the doorway, he at last sat down on a stone near the entrance. Observing that he evidently had some other object in view than mere curiosity, Demetri inquired what he wanted. His reply was that he desired to speak to us, and on being admitted, he at once asked whether we were come for the purpose of establishing or inspecting missions. On our asking Demetri who and what

he was, he answered carelessly that he was a Jew, as seemed apparent from his dress and general appearance. We questioned our visitor further with particular reference to his race; but to every allusion to Jews he seemed indifferent, again leading the conversation to missions, and talking about his travels, which he said had extended to India and England. At last, thinking that he might be a converted Jew, we asked him whether he belonged to the Church of England, and his reply in the affirmative at once convinced us of the correctness of our supposition. Remembering, after a few moments' conversation, what we had been told at Dara about "an infidel" who lived at Djezireh, and who sold "old money," we imagined that this might be the individual thus designated, and a hint which we threw out with the view of ascertaining the fact, elicited the information that he was indeed the man. Calling to a half-naked little boy, who, during our interview, had been standing in the gateway of the courtyard, he desired him to return to his house and bring him back a small box which he described.

In a few moments the little fellow, who, he told us, was his nephew, returned with the box, which the seeming Jew at once opened, displaying to us the copper and silver coins with which it was filled. Ceasing now to talk about missions or missionaries, he offered to dispose of all or any of the antiques before us. After some time, a few purchases having been made, he rose to take leave, and putting the coins carefully away, recommenced his inquiries about the missions to the East and missionary societies, mentioning particularly Mr. Skinner, of St. Barnabas, whom he said he had known while in England. Before departing, he asked in the most anxious manner whether we were acquainted with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Oxford, and Lord Shaftesbury; and presenting us with his card (!) on which was engraved in English, "Mar Athanasius, Syrian Archbishop," requested us to make known widely in

England, when we returned, how much he wished that a missionary should be sent out to Djezireh, who, under his own direction and supervision, could not fail to do an infinity of good to the inhabitants. Thus to our no slight surprise, the "infidel" of Dara, and Jew dealer in antiquities, as we had supposed him, turned out to be a real archbishop who had actually been in England, where, I believe, his name was known in connexion with the efforts of the Missionary Society in the Diarbekir district. On returning from Europe, whence he had brought some money, he speculated, we were afterwards told, in corn, and being unsuccessful, was reduced to a state of indigence, from which he strove to emerge by selling antiques and coins in Mosul and elsewhere.

We spent the night in our deserted house more comfortably than we had done for some time, being free from the smells and close atmosphere of the mud huts which had lately been our shelter. No remains of antiquity that we could hear of are to be found in the neighbourhood of Djezireh, which stands on the site of the ancient Roman fortress of Bezabda.

The next morning we sent Demetri to the caimacam to ask for the escort of a few Bashi Bazouks to Zachu. With some difficulty he was induced to accede to our request, and a few were ordered to accompany us. Demetri's account of the miserable and squalid state of the apartment in the ruined castle occupied by that functionary made us congratulate ourselves upon having been so fortunate as to be left to our own resources.

Issuing from Djezireh by a gate opposite to that by which we had entered, we crossed the Tigris by a bridge of boats, the roadway of which was composed of branches, many of them not thicker than a man's arm, and half rotten. Altogether a more crazy and frail concern could not be imagined—large holes being broken through everywhere. Our horses avoided these with wonderful instinct, picking their way

among the gaping crevices as if they were possessed with the power of distinguishing the sound from the decayed portions of the woodwork. The river was here much larger and more rapid than at Diarbekir, having in addition to many smaller streams been augmented by the Bitlis and Sert rivers, which, combining about ten miles' distance from the main stream, pour their united waters into it some forty miles above Djezirch.

We were now journeying on the left bank of the Tigris, and had struck again on the route supposed to have been taken by the Ten Thousand, from which we had departed in the Bitlis valley, when we took the road to Sert, and which we had crossed over in the neighbourhood of Redwan, in going westwards from Sert to Diarbekir.

We rode along the hill-side above the river for some miles, again descending to its banks when at some distance from our starting-place. After we had been four hours on the road we left the Tigris, and, striking east, reached in two more the Chaldaean village of Nahr Van, the hills and plains round which seemed carefully cultivated and well watered. On our way we passed a few gazelles, which allowed us to approach rather near before they scampered off, getting in a few bounds behind some low hills, where they were concealed from our sight. The Christians of this part of Mesopotamia consider that the Ararat of Scripture is one of the peaks of the Yuda Dagh, a lofty range of mountains running nearly parallel to the Tigris at some distance from the river.

Resuming our journey next day, we arrived at Zachu in six hours, our route lying chiefly over some low hills with small plains at intervals. We approached the town by the bank of the Khabour, which we crossed before entering. The river was narrow and winding, but deep, rapid, and clear, and in the pools of pellucid water were to be seen swimming about, close to the surface, shoals of large fish, which we

were surprised to learn the natives never attempted to catch.

We found Zachu, which until recently had been the residence of an independent Kurdish chief, but is now governed by a Turkish mudir, a town of much the same size as Djezireh, but more flourishing and prosperous. The signs of devastation and depopulation were not quite so apparent, and the number of ruined and deserted houses not so great as at the stronghold of Beder Khan Bey, on which the utmost fury of the Turks had been wreaked. The dilapidated remains of the castle of the last bey of Zachu were at the eastern side of the town, and, already out of repair, it was rapidly falling to ruin. The town was built upon a very uneven site, the steep and narrow streets running up and down the inequalities of the ground, and winding in and out among the houses, which seemed built wherever their owners chose, without any regard to mutual convenience. The bazaars were small and tumble-down; the goods exposed for sale were chiefly dyes and Manchester cottons; and the population seemed composed of Kurds, Chaldæans, and Armenians, the latter generally shopkeepers.

We put up at the house of a Chaldæan, of whom, as he appeared much put out by our invasion of his privacy, we saw but little, and of his wife and family nothing at all, the natural curiosity of the women to see the strangers being so sternly repressed by the angry husband and father, that it could be gratified only by furtive peeps when they supposed themselves unobserved. However, they sent us freshly-baked bread and a pilau, and by degrees the master of the house seemed to regain his good temper.

There being nothing of any interest to induce us to prolong our stay at Zachu, we left it the next day, and turning to the south, passed, through a defile in a range of mountains called the Zachu Dagh, to the rolling plains on the other side, which we found continued for the remainder of the way to

Mosul. The Zachu Dagh were not very lofty, their summits not appearing to be more than two thousand or two thousand five hundred feet above the plains, but very broken and rugged.

On entering the plains we took a south-easterly direction, following the route supposed to have been pursued by the Ten Thousand, along which we were to continue for the remainder of our journey to Mosul. The fine and sunshiny weather we had hitherto enjoyed had at last ceased, and changed into cold and rainy, the wet season having arrived. It rained heavily the whole day; the rich and soft soil was turned into mud, through which we trudged drearily and wearily along. The plain was scattered over with small villages, which were generally built of wattles or reeds woven together, and plastered thickly over with mud. In some hours we arrived at one of these called Blesmit, at which our guides left us, going themselves to another village at a little distance. Our shelter for the night was in the most wretched hovel we had hitherto seen, the cattle lying pell-mell on the floor with the inhabitants. The walls and roof consisted of bundles of reeds, procured on the banks of the Tigris, not far distant, and covered with a thin coating of mud. Our wild and squalid-looking host refused to give anything without payment beforehand; and when he had thus secured himself against any loss by the wood and bread with which he provided us, he hid some leather straps, which he refused to give up until paid a backsheesh for the night's shelter. His wife was a worthy mate for this specimen of the more untamed Kûrd, being so grimy and filthy that her features could scarcely be distinguished through the dirt that covered them.

In the evening, after our own dinner, our host begged a little meat for himself and his family. Having obtained it, he thrust some pieces into the fire, which, when they were cooked to his satisfaction, he devoured, handing the half-

picked bones to his wife behind him, who, having nearly completed the operation, passed them on to a child, from whom they finally descended to the dogs.

Leaving this wretched spot as early as we could get away next morning, we started in the midst of the heavy rain which had continued to fall during the whole night, and continuing to ride in the same direction, and over the same kind of rolling plain as on the preceding day, reached, after twelve long hours, the village of Tel Eskof, inhabited by Chaldæans. We had ridden on in advance of our caravan during the day, and had lost Demetri at some cross roads, where he had parted company with us for the purpose, as we supposed, of stalking an irresistible flock of starlings not far distant from the track. However he did not rejoin us; and having passed by the village where the caravan intended to halt, we continued our journey, and not until it had been dark for some hours did we arrive at Tel Eskof, where, after some futile efforts at explanation, we were at last received and housed by a kind old Chaldæan, who did his best to welcome us.

We waited at Tel Eskof the arrival of a caravan next day (Dec. 5th), and rode on with it to Mosul, there being still no signs of Demetri. The rain had ceased to fall, and the weather was very pleasant, the dry air of the plains having been refreshed by the moisture. Crossing over some gentle slopes, on which the grass had already begun to appear, we passed the large Chaldæan villages of Batnaia and Tel Kiff, and caught sight of the domes, minarets, and towers of Mosul, rising from the opposite bank of the river, our first view being obtained from a distance of about three miles. We soon passed by, on the left hand, the remains of the walls of Nineveh, and turned our backs on the huge mounds of Kouyunjik and Nebbi Yunus. On the summit of the latter the white walls of a structure supposed to be the tomb of Jonah, were, with the other

buildings by which it was surrounded, seen glittering in the sun. At this point the river was spanned by a rotten bridge of boats, over which we rode.

Entering the town through a gateway in the river wall facing the bridge, and piloting our way with some difficulty through the crowd of donkeys, camels, and goats which filled the streets, we rode to the house of Mr. Rassam, the British vice-consul, whose name is so well known to the public in connexion with the discoveries and excavations of Mr. Layard. He very kindly invited us to remain with him while we stayed at Mosul, and in his comfortable and hospitable house we shortly found ourselves enjoying luxuries to which we had long been strangers. It was one of the largest houses in Mosul, and certainly the handsomest. Built some years before the promulgation of the Tanzimat, which may be almost called the Magna Charta of the Turkish empire, by the then Aga of the Janizaries, the Pasha of Mosul, envious of his wealth, contrived on some pretext to have him seized and decapitated, appropriating to himself at the same time all his moveable property. The family of the unfortunate Aga, thus reduced to comparative indigence, were forced to sell the remainder of their possessions, and thus a house which had cost some £6000 was sold to Mr. Rassam for £300.

The walls of the spacious court were of the alabaster found in such abundance near Mosul, of which material the slabs and statues discovered in the ruins of Nineveh and Nimrūd also consist. Low arches round the court gave light and air to the serdaubs, or half-underground cellars, in which, as well as at Bagdad, the inhabitants remain during the great heat of the day in summer. These cellars are, in fact, subterranean rooms, handsomely furnished, and differing in no respect from the other apartments, save that they are a little darker and much cooler. The court was paved with large flags, many of which had been brought

from the ruins of Nineveh, and in the centre was a small plot of ground filled with orange and lemon trees.

The night passed over without any tidings of the missing Demetri, but during breakfast the next morning he made his appearance, bringing with him as a present to Mr. Rassam, in whose service we discovered he had been some years previously, a large supply of a vile, sticky sweetmeat made at Diarbekir, which he had carried thence in his saddle-bags. Whatever its former consistence might have been, it then looked and tasted like dried horseskin, but he nevertheless evidently regarded his offering with much complacency. It seemed, by the account which he gave of himself, that shortly after parting from us, in attempting to ride through some marshy ground, his horse had fallen under him, rolling into the water with his rider, who was so thoroughly saturated that he had considered it necessary to ride to the first village he saw, where, having dried his clothes, he spent the night. The next afternoon he had ridden to Tel Eskof, and there having heard that we had passed through, had gone on to Tel Kiff, where he had stayed the night, and whence he had come on that morning. We afterwards by chance made the discovery that the priest at Tel Kiff was an old friend and companion of his while before in this country, a circumstance which accounted sufficiently for his detention, without any of the adventures by which he had considered it necessary to explain it.

The day after our arrival at Mosul we rode over to Kouyunjik. The tunnels and galleries pierced by Mr. Layard through the bowels of the enormous mound are still perfect as when he ceased his excavations in 1852, the hardness of the sun-baked bricks through which they were cut preventing the sides from falling in. They cross and recross each other, diving at one time deep into the recesses of the mass, at another ascending, when least expected, to the surface. A number of slabs, the inscriptions and bas-reliefs on which

were not of sufficient interest to induce their removal, still line many of the passages in their original position, traces of fire being observable distinctly on most. One corner of the great mound, some 2500 yards in circumference, was perforated like a honeycomb with the numerous shafts that had been driven through it. The exterior surface of the soil was bare and arid, parched up by the summer sun and want of moisture.

A number of the townspeople were idling and loitering about on the flat summit, and a crowd of small boys, who had been playing at hide and seek through the passages of the buried palace of Senacherib, volunteered eagerly to be our guides through the gloomy galleries. At some distance to the north-east of the great mound was another much smaller, on the line of the embankment, into which the ancient wall had crumbled. In this two eagle-headed figures and two winged bulls yet remained, having been seemingly not judged worthy of removal. The embankment enclosed a space of an oblong form, running parallel, or nearly so, with the river, and which appeared to be a mile and a half in length by half a mile in width. On the side of this enclosure, next the Tigris, and at the corner nearest to Mosul, was the mound of Kouyunjik, and about the centre of the same side that of Nebbi Yunus.

On the opposite side, that furthest from the river, were several smaller mounds, also following the line of towers and gateways, the remains of which they covered. Wherever these embankments chanced by accident or design to be pierced, the sun-dried bricks composing the ancient wall, and from the decay of which, by exposure to the constant washing of the winter rains, the present embankment had been formed, were laid bare, being usually about five inches in thickness and fifteen square. No excavations have been permitted by the Turks in the mound of Nebbi Yunus, which doubtless covers some of the most important remains of the

ancient city, the fanaticism of the Mohammedans resisting any attempt to invade the sanctity of the soil in which they believe the prophet to be interred. The edifice buried under this enormous heap of rubbish is now ascertained to have been erected by Esarhaddon, but all attempts at further investigation had for the above reason to be abandoned.

We rode to the summit, and were brought by the mollah, who acted as guardian of the building, to the exterior of the chamber in the mosque which contained the tomb, but were not permitted to enter, as none but true believers are allowed to gaze upon the grave of the prophet. Notwithstanding this prohibition, however, some curious Christians have, for the purpose of gratifying their curiosity, penetrated into the forbidden chamber, and describe the sepulchre as being merely a square table-shaped platform in the centre of the room, covered with carpets.

The city of Mespila, passed in their retreat by the Ten Thousand, and whose walls are described by Xenophon as being of enormous height and strength, built at the base of hewn stone and the upper part of sun-dried brick, is now identified with what then remained of Nineveh. We spent a long day in rambling over the many mounds and among the remains of the great city, whose circuit, however, cannot be prolonged to a distance of three days' journey, unless Mr. Layard's hypothesis be accepted, that Kouyunjik and Nebbi Yunus, with the large enclosure surrounded by the walls, were only the fortified angle of a mighty city, which contained within its bounds a space of ground, of which Khorsabad, Karamles, and Nimrud were the other corners, in which case the desired dimensions of three ordinary days' journey, or sixty miles, might be obtained. The circumference of the yet preserved walls at present enclosing the great mounds, and the ground on which it is generally supposed that the city of Nineveh stood, cannot be more than five miles.

We returned to Mosul in the evening, and met at dinner

Dr. Haskill, of the American Mission, who with his wife were on the eve of their departure from the city, where they had been long resident, he having been appointed to another missionary station. In charge of the schools, until the new missionary should arrive, he had left a monk who had been converted to the Reformed Church, and who, being a man of good education and attainments, was quite capable of filling the office temporarily resigned to him. The poor lady had a long and dreary journey to accomplish before they could reach either of the two nearest stations—Bitlis or Diarbekir—the more so as the weather could no longer be depended on, the winter rains having commenced. They would consequently be forced to travel without tents, and be dependent for shelter on the wretched villages of which we knew the resources but too well.

The town of Mosul was formerly much larger than it now is, there being many vacant spaces within the walls on which houses had formerly stood, but which are now used as receptacles for rubbish. The walls were high and solid, flanked by numerous towers and built of large stones. They are still in good preservation, and would offer a stout defence to a besieging force unprovided with a regular train of heavy artillery. A great number of mosques are in the city, but inside their walls no unbeliever is allowed to enter. There are also Chaldæan and Armenian churches. The streets are of a better description than generally met with. They are of some width, in most instances paved, and not so dirty as those of Diarbekir. The lower part of the houses is built of stone, the upper of mud, in which small, jealously-latticed windows look down into the lane below. Inside, the construction of all, at least of the better sort, is the same—a courtyard in the centre, with orange-trees or shrubs, and around its walls the low, arched openings that admit air and light to the serdaubs, or summer subterranean apartments. The bazaars are large,

but badly kept and very dirty; they are generally greatly crowded, Mosul being the mart where the mountain Kurds and desert Arabs meet to make their bargains and conclude their exchanges. Many savage-looking specimens of the former, and equally wild but more dignified and tranquil Bedoween, were to be met with, engaged in purchasing, with the produce of their flocks, handkerchiefs and gaudy cloths, chiefly from Manchester.

Equally lawless and unscrupulous with regard to plundering any who might fall in their way, the difference of character of the two races might be perceived at a glance—the calm countenance of the Arab wanting completely the ferocity and cruelty depicted on that of the Kurd. The shopkeepers were in many instances Christians, mostly Armenians, whose turn and capacity for trade would seem to have spread them as merchants all over the East, even into the most remote and inaccessible villages. Cotton and dyes seem to be the chief native productions besides the provisions required for the consumption of the townspeople. As usual, Manchester and Sheffield were represented largely.

A number of coffee-houses, where the guests sat cross-legged on divans, in rows around the walls smoking their long-stemmed pipes, whose bowls rested on little brass saucers placed on the floor, were scattered here and there amongst the shops, and the active cafedgis were constantly on the move, bringing tiny cups full of the fragrant liquid to those who were unwilling even for a short time to leave their places of business. The usual smells were not absent, and there were numbers of the disgusting cook-shops with their revolting messes of chopped flesh plastered upon skewers, and ready for frying over the charcoal fire always kept prepared for the purpose; their neighbourhood more thickly infested than any other part of the town with troops of lean and mangy dogs.

The only communication at present between both banks

of the river is by the rotten and narrow bridge of boats, which is generally so crowded, particularly during the forenoon, that it is sometimes a matter of difficulty to force a passage through the mob. Formerly a stone bridge existed, but, after it had been destroyed, no attempt was made to rebuild it; the Turks, however thoroughly they may understand the science of destruction, not, at least of late years, appearing to comprehend that of restoration.

On the 9th we went with Mr. Rassam to visit the patriarch of that portion of the Chaldæans whose fathers, having in 1681 adopted the Roman Catholic faith, have since acknowledged the authority of the See of Rome, in communication with which they remain. At that time the then Archbishop of Diarbekir, having yielded to the representations of the Romish missionaries, submitted to the pope, and was consecrated by him Patriarch of the Chaldæans, the remainder who refused to join their bishop in his conversion being stigmatized as a term of reproach with the name of Nestorians. This name, however, they reject, asserting that, if Nestorius entertained the same belief with them, it was merely as one of their number, and not as their founder or doctor, they deriving their faith from the teachings of the apostles. Nestorius, they say, was patriarch of Constantinople, and never lived with them, or taught among them.

The Chaldæans, at the head of whose church is the lineal descendant of the ancient patriarch, withdrew from the main body of the Eastern Church towards the close of the fifth century, since which time they have formed a separate body, and have been the most important Christian community in Persia and Mesopotamia. They spread far over Asia, extending into India and China, in which latter country they seem, during the seventh and eighth centuries, to have been in such numbers as to have had no fewer than nine bishops, one of whom was Metropolitan. An inscription of that date, in

both Syriac and Chinese, found at Siganfoo by some Jesuit missionaries in the year 1625, relates various circumstances with regard to the reception by the reigning emperor of Chaldæan missionaries in the early part of the seventh century of our era. In the time of Mohammed they were powerful and numerous even in Arabia, and an ancient tradition asserts that the prophet himself was assisted in the composition of the Koran by a Chaldæan monk called Sergius. Under the Khalifs they continued to flourish, and the patriarchate was removed from Ctesiphon, where it had hitherto been, to Bagdad, where it remained until the Tâtar invasion. In the seventh century also St. Thomas, a Chaldæan bishop, visited India, and making numerous converts among the natives, founded there a church, which, although it has lost all its former importance, from the conversion of many of its followers to the Roman Catholic faith, by the Portuguese missionaries, is said still to exist as a body. So famous had these successes of the Chaldee missionaries among the Indians become, as early as the ninth century, that it is reported that ambassadors from Alfred the Great were sent to those distant regions to visit the shrine of St. Thomas, which is supposed to have been near Madras. The ferocious persecutions of the fanatic Timùr reduced the Chaldæan church in its ancient seats to its lowest ebb. Massacring all whom he could reach, the remnant took refuge in the remote and secluded valleys of the Kurdistan mountains, and on the shores of the Lake of Ooroomyah, where a few yet remain. They maintain no communication with their brethren who have submitted to Rome, whom, together with the false and renegade archbishop who has accepted a dignity from a source unqualified to grant it, they regard as schismatic and untrue to the tenets of their ancient creed.

The remains of this once powerful and wide-spread race, a considerable people as early as Abraham, who, their

countryman, came from "Ur of the Chaldees," have preserved through all their persecutions and sufferings their ancient language, forms, and ceremonies, although in general steeped in ignorance and poverty, and confined to a narrow district on the frontiers of the two great Mohammedan empires.

We found the patriarch of the Roman Catholic Chaldees a venerable-looking old man, who, with his long white beard hanging down over his breast, and his loose and flowing robes, had a most dignified appearance. One of his suffragan bishops had been for some time studying at Rome, and spoke Italian very well, as did also a young priest who had lately returned from the same place. Our conversation chiefly turned upon the prospects of the Christians in the East, which the patriarch looked upon as very hopeful, if they continued to be protected from the oppression and rapacity of the Turks. Their numbers of late years have rapidly increased, and in intelligence and enterprise they are much superior to the Moslems.

At that time the patriarch himself was in a mess of troubles with the monks of the Dominican mission then at Mosul. While acknowledging the authority of Rome, he yet possesses many important privileges; claiming, among the rest, that of being supreme ruler of the Chaldæan church. In the exercise of this power he had recently consecrated and sent to India a bishop from Mosul, without referring to or obtaining permission from the chief of the mission, whom the pope had appointed his vicar apostolic. The latter in consequence had brought into play the thunders of the Church, and had gone the length of excommunicating the patriarch, who, however, finding that the bishops and clergy warmly espoused his side of the question, only laughed at the vicar apostolic, and sent to Rome to represent his conduct to the pope as a violent and unseemly attempt to infringe upon the ancient independence and privileges of the Chaldæan Church. Two eccle-

siastics, who had been sent previously to India, were most mysteriously poisoned on the road, and from a few expressions let drop, it would seem that the Latin monks got the credit, however undeserved it might have been, of having instigated the crime.

After the usual pipes and coffee, we took our leave of the benevolent and mild-looking old man, whose mind evidently was sadly distracted at the quarrel which he had got into with his active and wary opponents, the Dominicans, who would probably in the end get the better of him, unless assisted by advisers equally skilled in intrigue. The bishop accompanied us to see the church, which was not far from the house of the patriarch, and was a large and handsomely-built stone edifice of modern erection. Another church of still larger dimensions stood in another and more distant part of the town.

CHAPTER XXI.

VISIT TO SCHEIKH ADI—THE YEZEEDIS, AND THEIR TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL CHIEF — ASSYRIAN ANTIQUITIES — HALT IN THE VILLAGE OF AIN SEFNI—INTERVIEW WITH THE BEY—FAITH, DOCTRINE, AND MYSTERIES OF THE YEZEEDIS—SCHEIKH ADI—THE PRINCIPLES OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION — MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE YEZEEDIS—RECEPTION BY HUSSEIN BEY—INTERVIEW WITH SCHEIKHS AND ELDERS—TRAVELLING ON A KELEK—OUR PARTY DOWN THE RIVER TIGRIS — HAMMAM ALI—RUINS OF NIMRŪD.

CHAPTER XXI.

WE left Mosul on the 10th December, with the intention of visiting Scheikh Adi, the sacred place of the Yezcedis, which lay in a north-easterly direction in the hills, about forty miles from the town. We rode the first day across the plains to the village of Ain Sefni, where Hussein Bey, the hereditary chief, and proper high priest of the sect, at present resides. Although combining thus both temporal and spiritual authority over his fellow-believers, yet, in consequence of various shortcomings as to morals and conduct, he was not permitted to assume the latter character, having forfeited much of the respect which would otherwise have been paid to him by his followers, through an unfortunate propensity to indulge largely in strong waters. Being the high priest as well as chief of the Yezeedis, he is called the Kalifa, and his office is hereditary. But for his unsatisfactory behaviour he would officiate at all the sacred ceremonies of the secret worship, and being himself first initiated, should afterwards admit the other cawals or priests into the mysteries of their faith. Meanwhile, the duties of pontiff were fulfilled by Scheikh Nazr, one of the most venerated and respected of the Yezeedis.

To this dissipated chief we brought a letter from Mr. Rassam, written in Arabic, so as to be read by the secretary or scribe, always a member of every well-to-do Eastern household. Our road lay past the mound of Kouyunjik, and at a short distance from Mosul we passed by one of the large

human-headed winged bulls found at Khorsabad by Mons. Botta, formerly the French vice-consul at Mosul. It was lying on its side, exposed not only to the effects of the weather, but also to the injuries which anyone prompted by mischievous propensities might inflict upon it. Thus far it had been brought on its way to the river bank, whence it was to have been floated down to Bassora, and thence transported to France, but from some reason or accident it had been abandoned, and was now lying neglected by the roadside. Our road to Ain Sefni passed through Khorsabad, and we soon came within sight of the large mound, which together with several smaller ones, and some embankments, or remains of walls, built of sun-dried brick, cover and surround the remains of the ancient palace of Sargon. By the side of the road lay another colossal human-headed bull, apparently a companion to the other, which, unfortunately, had already been willfully injured.

The village of Khorsabad, which once stood upon the mound, had been removed down to the plain to facilitate the excavations that had been carried on by Botta, who was the first discoverer of the Assyrian antiquities so long buried. Some broken slabs, more or less injured, lay about; the trenches that had been cut into the sides of the mound seemed to have been quite lately dug, and fragments of alabaster and bricks strewed the soil.

The ruins were at a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles from Mosul; the plain being cultivated over the whole of that extent. In the evening we reached the village of Ain Sefni, where, having sent our letter to Hussein Bey, we were lodged by his directions in a house which, in size and quality, was no better than those in the worst kind of Armenian villages through which we had passed in Kurdistan. The walls, which were low, were of mud; the roof, as testified by the wet floor, let in the water; and one half of the solitary chamber of which the hut consisted was filled with the

winter supply of fuel for the family to which it belonged. With this, however, we made a fire. After some time a half-starved fowl made its appearance on the summit of a pile of grain pilau; and dividing the miserable bird into tiny portions we shared it between us, washing down the meal with the pure element, so little used, according to report, by the bey himself. •

In the morning this dignitary arrived with one or two of his chief cawals, and sitting down on the ground paid us a short visit. He was quite a young man, with a countenance indicative of cunning and acuteness, and which bore a very sullen and sulky expression during our interview with him, the reason for which we could not understand. From his sleepy, heavy, and luring look, he seemed to have but just recovered from the effects of a night's debauch, in which mode of whiling away the hours that should have been devoted to the cares of Church and State we were told he passed most of his time. While he sat with us he was very silent and reserved, inquired once for Mr. Layard, and asked whether we had come to continue his excavations. On rising to leave he promised to send us a guide to Scheikh Adi, which was about ten miles distant among the mountains, and then stalked sulkily and gloomily away, followed by his companions. However, he was as good as his word, and in a short time a mounted Yezeedi appeared, dressed wholly in white, in which colour Hussein Bey and the cawals were also clothed.

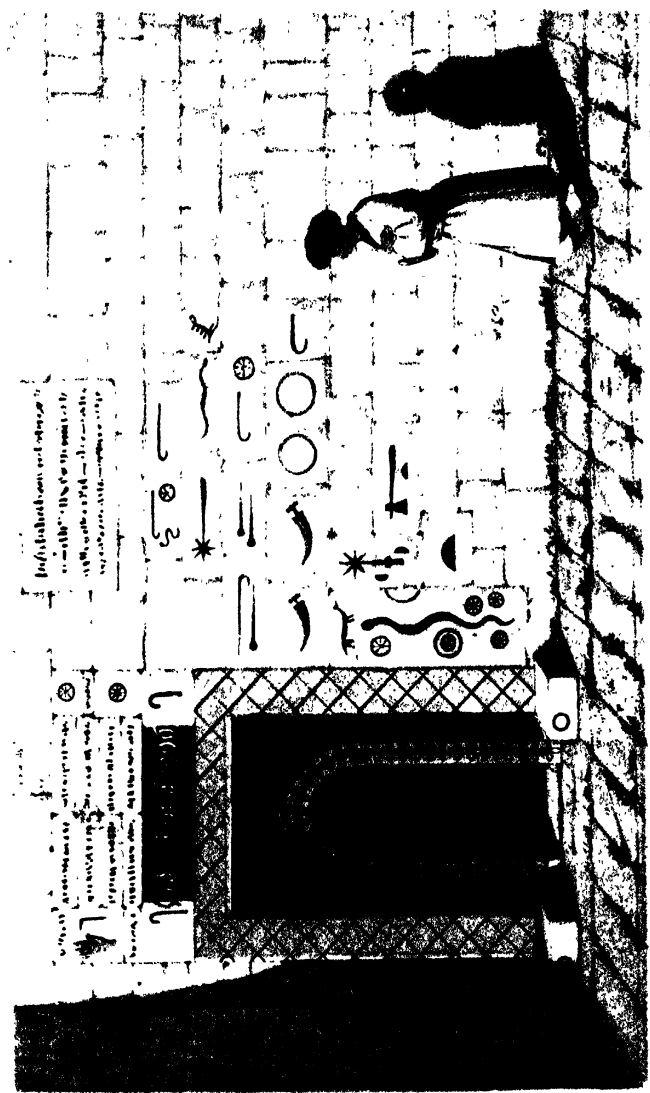
We followed our guide for some time across the hills at the foot of which lay the village, and, after winding about through a number of tortuous paths, arrived at the entrance of a rocky valley running into the hills, and at the bottom of which flowed a small stream. On both banks of this brook grew a belt of luxuriant oleanders, which contrasted vividly with the sterile and naked sides of the valley. At this point our guide suddenly stopped, and positively

refused to go on further, telling us at the same time that we had only to continue our course up the defile, and that we must arrive at Scheikh Adi, there being no possibility of mistaking the road. To our threats of informing the bey he was indifferent, taking care to keep out of reach. Then, telling us that we could not lose ourselves, he turned his back and cantered off.

So, with many misgivings, we continued our route up the valley, and, after following its windings for some time, had the pleasure of seeing in the distance, high up on the mountain side, at the end of the ravine, the white spires of the tomb or shrine rising above the tops of a dark grove of olive-trees around them. The sombre-coloured green foliage stood out in dark relief from the rugged side of the valley, on which, at some distance from the olives, were a few scattered forest trees, plane and sycamore, rising out of an undergrowth of dwarf oaks. In a short time we had ascended the side of the ravine to the grove, and, having penetrated it for a little distance, we came to a kind of arched tunnel of masonry, through which we rode.

From the time our guide left us till we arrived at the temple we had not met any one, and it seemed, from the silence and stillness around, that the whole place was deserted. Having passed through the tunnel, we found ourselves in a large flagged court, on one side of which were two large stone troughs, into and out of which trickled a stream of water. The troughs were covered with rudely-executed carvings of circles, sticks, &c., in bas-relief. At the side opposite to the tunnel was a gate or doorway, to which a couple of steps led up. The court was surrounded by a wall twelve or fourteen feet high, built of hewn stones, over the top of which was seen the foliage of the olive-trees around.

Having dismounted, we knocked for some time at the door, which was at last opened by two priests with black turbans, who under the usual white dress of the Yezedis



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wore black shirts cut in a peculiar fashion low round the throat, and fastened with a button on the left shoulder. They seemed much surprised at seeing us, and were apparently more astounded at the appearance of Franks followed by a Circassian armed to the teeth, than we were at their costume and the singularity of the place.

Having inquired whence, and with what object, we came, they asked us whether we were alone, and, on learning the odd behaviour of the man given us as a guide, smiled, and said that on that day no Yezeedi was permitted to look on the sacred place, save the priests engaged at and living near it, and of course their families. Having invited us to enter, we passed from the first into a second court, similar to the former in size and appearance. The sides of the door between the two were covered with symbolic signs and figures—circles, battle-axes, &c.—all carved rudely in bas-relief on the stone. In the second court were more troughs of running water, also bearing these mysterious emblems.

Passing out of this court, we entered a third one, much larger than the former two in the centre of which was a tree of great age, the trunk being of considerable size, and the branches so shattered and decayed that they were propped up. At the opposite side of the court was the gate of the temple itself, over the side of which towered one of the spires we had seen from the valley below. The gateway, which was in the corner of the court, was nine or ten feet in height by six or seven in width, and the sides and arch were carved in tracery, which was painted in different colours, among which no blue could be discerned. On the large blocks of stone round the archway, and for some distance beyond on the wall, were cut various strange figures of circles, birds, sticks with carved handles, axes, snakes, men on horseback with lances, battle-maces, &c., coloured black, red, yellow, and green—no blue, as usual, being seen.

Over the archway was a large entablature in different compartments, on some of which were more symbolic emblems, and on others Arabic inscriptions. On entering the inner court we had taken off our boots, and the priests also being barefooted, not even the sound of a footfall broke the deep silence that prevailed. One of the cawals unlocked the massive oak door, and descending a couple of steps we found ourselves, as well as we could see through the gloom, in a long, low building, the arches composing the vaulted roof of which were supported by a row of five pillars running down the centre of the aisle. On the right of the doorway was a large stone basin filled with running water, which was supplied by a spring issuing from the rocks above the sanctuary. In this we were afterwards told the children of the Yezedis, seven days after birth, went through a kind of ceremony analogous to baptism. The water in it is regarded as holy, and is set apart for sacred uses. As of course many lived too far distant from Scheikh Adi to bring their children thither at such an early age, vessels of the water are taken home by the numerous pilgrims, to be used for the purpose of baptism by those dwelling in the remoter districts. A few lamps hung from the ceiling, but they were not lighted, at least no glimmer was to be perceived proceeding from them.

No ornaments of any kind could be seen on the plain surface of the walls in the interior, but about half-way down the left side a curtain hung from the roof and concealed a portion of it. Removing this we found an opening about five feet square pierced through the wall into a small apartment exactly underneath the spire, the hollow cone of which formed its roof. In the centre of this room was a platform covered with carpets; the floor was also spread over with fine matting. Light was admitted through one or two small openings at the base of the spire. Underneath the platform we were told was the body of Scheikh Adi.

At the lower side of the recess opening into the room in which was the tomb, a low wall, some three feet in height, ran half way across the temple, below which were carpets for those who came to pray. At the end of the body of the temple was another building, similar to it in style and architecture, a doorway being between. Nothing else was to be remarked in the interior; the solid massive columns supporting the circular arches that formed the low roof were somewhat in the style of the early Norman architecture.

On leaving the temple, we saw above us, among the rocks, some other spires, bright and shining with whitewash, and their points decorated with brass or gilt ornaments. Underneath these were so many sanctuaries, or holy places, one in particular dedicated to Scheikh Shems, a name we were afterwards told by which the sun is known among the Yezeedis. The walls of this shrine, if so it can be called, were whitewashed, and its interior was empty.

Above and around the sanctuaries were some ancient houses and buildings, inhabited by the priests and guardians of the holy place, and their families. Many large sycamore and plane trees grew among them, affording a grateful shade during the summer heats. The sides of the large ravine, at the head of which we stood, formed a huge amphitheatre; the slopes were thickly covered with dwarf oak, among which stood a few forest trees; and the whole scene was very beautiful even at the advanced time of the year at which we visited it. The waters of the rivulet, at the sources of which the sanctuary stands, ultimately find their way into the Zab, falling into a stream, one of its confluent, a few miles down the valley.

As the language commonly spoken by all the Yezeedis is a dialect of the Kurdish, which Demetri did not understand, we were obliged to call in to our assistance, as interpreter,

the man to whom our horses belonged, and who had accompanied us from Mosul to look after them. In this round-about manner, even supposing the priests to have been more communicative than they apparently wished to be, it would not have been easy to keep up a conversation, and the utmost we could do was to make various inquiries, the answers to which were generally evasive.

From Mr. Rassam, who, owing to his vicinity to the Yezedis, and his frequent communications with them, has had more opportunities of studying their peculiarities, and forming some idea of the real nature of their mysterious faith, than probably any other person, we afterwards learnt many particulars concerning them. Of an origin so obscure that no tradition of it even exists, they have for ages inhabited the countries and districts where they are at present found, and where formerly they were much more numerous and powerful than they now are. They claim for themselves the most remote antiquity, and assert that the fire-worshippers of Persia formed their belief in the two principles of Good and Evil from a misapprehension of a portion of their own mysteries, which in some manner had been revealed. They have preserved through the most savage persecutions their doctrines and religious observances. Not being "people of a book," or, in other words, not being of any faith recognised by the Mohammedan law, no treaties with them are considered of any effect, no oaths binding, and unlike the Jews or Christians, to whom a promise must be kept, they have no security or safeguard from the cruelty and oppression of the Kurds and Turks, save their own bravery. All kinds of stories are told concerning them, to inflame still more the passions of the fanatic Moslems; they are represented as following the practices and customs imputed to the Ansyri of Syria, and were asserted for a long time to hold various midnight orgies, at which the lights

were extinguished, and scenes of debauchery took place. In common with the latter, they are to this day believed by the Turks to practise these abominations, and one of the terms of opprobrium by which they are called is "Cheragh Soon-deraun," or "putters out of light."

Worshipping the devil is the least reproach addressed to them; they are represented by the Moslems as of the most lawless and ferocious disposition, and numerous stories are told of cruelties practised by them upon those who have fallen into their power. Yet it would seem, from the testimony borne by unprejudiced observers, that they are an industrious, honest, and brave race, living peaceably among themselves, and, where permitted to do so, in amity with their neighbours.

Those Christians with whom they have had relations prefer them for integrity and truthfulness to the Moslems—their pledged word being seldom broken; and, while so oppressed and downtrodden themselves, they have never attempted to take revenge upon any others than the authors of their distresses. They have always maintained their faith, even when most cruelly tortured for its sake; and in numberless instances have yielded up life in preference to abandoning it. It would seem difficult, even with the assistance of recent admissions and revelations, to form any correct or adequate idea of the mysterious tenets of their secret creed. Their sacred book, if such a volume, as some allege, really exists, has never been beheld by other eyes than their own; and the meaning of the few chants and hymns, used in their prayers or invocations, which have been procured, is doubtful and obscure. From what, however, has been ascertained, it would seem that the Yezeedis recognise a Supreme Deity, who governs the universe by two attributes, one of Creation, the other of Destruction, through which, under the names of Scheikh Adi and Melek Taous, he is worshipped. The existence

of the former, his alleged tomb, and the mausoleum erected over it, may be regarded as only so many means employed for the better mystification of the barbarous people among whom they dwell, and who are well known to dislike interfering with or disturbing the grave of any personage of ancient days whose life was of reputed holiness. Thus their central temple, or place of assembly for practising their rites and ceremonies, would be protected from desecration by the sanctity which the tomb of the presumed saint would invest it with.

In one of the hymns of the mysterious Scheikh Adi, he is made to say of himself: "I am the ruling power preceding all that exists; . . . I am he who caused Adam to dwell in Paradise;" and "I am he who made the springs to give water." These distinct claims to supernatural power would seem to confirm the theory that Scheikh Adi, far from having been, as is commonly supposed, merely a prophet and saint, is, in the true Yezeedi belief, that attribute of the Supreme by which all things have been created and renewed, and by which they exist; and which, although they call it by the name of a person, they endeavour as much as they can to avoid personifying. In order, however, to mystify their rulers, they have been forced to overcome their reluctance to such a view of their faith; and while with them Scheikh Adi is merely a name given to one of the attributes of the Supreme, by the surrounding people it is supposed to be the name of a prophet whose memory they reverence.

On one occasion Mr. Rassam asked a scheikh when Scheikh Adi died? The scheikh, apparently much shocked, at once replied, "Istaffir Allah!" (God forbid!) "Scheikh Adi never died." On being asked when he was born, the answer was, "Who knows?" and more than this could not be got from him. An annual festival at which hymns are

sung, and various ceremonies practised, is held in October at Scheikh Adi, of which Mr. Layard in his second work gives a graphic and vivid description.

From all that has as yet been revealed to the world of the long-sealed mysteries of this ancient sect, it would seem that the Yezeedis fall little, if at all, short of assigning to Scheikh Adi qualities which would identify him with the Deity himself. As the Supreme with one attribute creates, so with another He destroys, both being necessary in order to keep the universe in a constant state of renovation and decay. But, inasmuch as destruction is equally necessary with creation, so the one attribute of the Supreme is to be held in equal honour with the other—through both alike the Almighty is to be worshipped and held in reverence and awe. Nothing which the Supreme has ordained as part of the system He has created can be evil; and although the Yezeedis are vulgarly supposed to worship a Spirit personifying the latter quality, yet from this view of their faith it would appear that they do not even admit the possibility of its existence. Believing that nothing undesigned and unordained by Providence can be accomplished, they assert that whatever takes place is by His express will, and as everything that proceeds from such a source must be good, it naturally follows that no sin can exist, as it is impossible to act contrary to the will of the Deity. But if no one can commit sin before God—whose permission, in allowing the perpetrator to commit the crime, makes the act itself lawful—yet the laws of the community can be transgressed, and for this disobedience to the rules passed for the common weal the criminal is punished. Thus it actually appears, if these ideas of their worship and religion be correct, that, while refusing to admit the very existence of evil, they are accused of worshipping a Principle from which it proceeds, and are supposed to appease the malignity of their god by the

reverence with which they adore him. The attribute of Destruction, under which, equally with that of Creation, they worship the Deity, is in their view beneficent and benevolent; both are alike necessary, both are manifestations of his goodwill. By this is explained at once the horror which they feel at hearing the name of Satan. Cursing him is considered by them as directly cursing the Almighty in one of his attributes; and as the word is a term of opprobrium, they carefully avoid using it.

The words they use for expressing the attribute of Destruction are Melek Taous, or "King Peacock," and Melek el Koot, or "King Angel." They believe that at various times the Deity has called forth prophets for the purpose of instructing mankind, among whom were not only all those mentioned in the Old Testament, but also our Saviour, his apostles, and Mohammed. They pay also great respect to the Old Testament, and expect that Christ will a second time come to judge the world, followed by a personage called Imam Mehdi, one of their prophets, whom they hold in great veneration. They believe in a future state, a paradise, into which not even Yezeedis can be admitted until they have undergone a certain ordeal, but from which Christians, Mohammedans, and Pagans are excluded, all of these perishing for ever on the day of judgment, when they arise to receive their doom.

The emblems carved round the lintels of the gate and on the reservoirs of running water Mr. Rassam said he had been told had some allusion to the state of the soul after death. Armed immediately with the crooked stick, lance, sword, and battle-axe, it at once proceeds over a bridge of immense span across a fathomless abyss. On passing this it finds itself in a thick wood, through which lies the way to Paradise, by a path that has to be hewn out with the axe, the crooked stick being employed to remove the brushwood. All the time it

is employed in this hard task, the soul of the true believer is harassed by the reiterated attacks of active opponents, whose inveterate hostility puts his constancy and endurance to a last test. When he has finally surmounted all obstacles, he is admitted to Paradise, where he remains with the Deity himself. They receive no converts to their faith. Those alone who are born of Yezeedi parents are considered of the sect, and only such as by their lives and behaviour have attained general respect are admitted among the initiated.

They have four orders or degrees of priesthood. The first two, the priests of which are fully initiated, are indiscriminately called scheikhs, though there is some difference between them. They are dressed entirely in white, with tassels hanging from their turbans. The third order consists of the cawals or priests, who travel at stated times to visit the whole community and teach the young a certain portion of the doctrines of the sect. They seem to be the officiating priesthood, and wear with the usual white dress a black turban. The fourth includes the fakirs, of whom we saw many while at Scheikh Adi. They are apparently what in a monastery would be called lay-brothers, performing all the necessary duties of servants. They differ from the other orders of the priesthood in being clothed in black or brown, which sombre garments distinguish them at once from the other members of the sect.

The customs of the Yezeedis are generally very simple. They keep certain fasts. Their marriages are celebrated with very little ceremony, and only one wife is allowed. Circumcision is occasionally practised. Their dead are interred with the head towards the Polar star, to which they also turn when at prayer.

They pay much reverence to the sun, known by the name of Scheikh Shems, and fire is regarded with a certain degree of veneration. They will not defile it, nor extinguish it save in a proper and clean manner. They often pass their

hands through it, stroking their faces afterwards, and it is said that they will not use it for any unclean purposes. Why it is that they have such an abhorrence of the colour blue is not known. They never wear or admit into their houses anything with even a portion of it woven into the texture, and one of their chief objections to the conscription is the blue uniform of the Turkish soldier. The origin of their name is also a mystery, the Turks tracing it to Yezid, the khalif under whose rule the Imam Hosein was put to death; but their statements on this point are worthy of no more credit than the numerous other stories that are told concerning the Yezedis. In short, the name and origin of this people are alike unknown. History, generally so particular in recording all that pertains to the religions of nations, is silent concerning theirs, and a full and clear account of the hidden creed of this mysterious and long-suffering sect yet remains to be written by some one fortunate enough to attain an exact knowledge of their faith.

We remained at Scheikh Adi for some hours, talking as well as we could with the cavals through the medium of Demetri and the owner of our horses; and as neither of these interpreters well understood the other, it may be supposed we did not make much way. The former at first seemed surprised that a people whom, from his own experience, as he had always told us, he knew to be honest and trustworthy, should really—as the horse-dealer told him was undoubtedly the case—worship the devil; but at last a sudden light broke in upon him, and by the adoption of a singular theological argument he solved the problem that perplexed him. The Yezedis, he concluded, must be much better than the surrounding Mussulmans, for whom he entertained a supreme contempt, because “the God of the Turks was worse than the Devil of the Christians.” This idea seemed at once to set his mind at rest, and he considered it unnecessary to seek for any other solution of a problem which had so much perplexed him.

In the afternoon we took our leave, and, descending the steep path among the rocks to the bottom of the valley, rode back in a few hours to Ain Sefni, where we stayed a second night. We found that a somewhat better meal than the last had been got ready for us, and the reason of our cool reception the day before also incidentally transpired. It seemed that the agent of Mr. Rassam in the district had unfortunately hit upon that day to make a very pressing demand for the payment of a debt due to him by Hussein Bey, a circumstance which had put the Yezeedi chief into a very indifferent humour, by no means calculated to secure us a favourable reception.

However, the second evening, the Bey's anger having been somewhat allayed, we were more graciously looked upon. The scheikhs and elders came in to talk over past and present times, and the politics of the day. They seemed well acquainted with the prosperous state of those of their faith in the Russian territory, so much better hitherto than their own, although they were now looking forward to some improvement in their condition; for, as latterly they had been unmolested, it was hoped that the evil times had passed away. They were all venerable-looking old men, their flowing robes and capacious turbans of a snowy whiteness, and much respect seemed to be paid to them by the other Yezeedis. The women went about freely, generally unveiled. The faces of those that were married, however, were enveloped in a handkerchief or wrapper, which each one tied around her head, while the girls wore a kind of apron slung over the shoulder, their necks being bare. The evening was fine, and the whole population enjoyed until a late hour the fresh breeze upon the house-tops, each house furnishing its own little family circle. We found ourselves lodged in a better dwelling than that in which we had spent the preceding night, and enjoyed the luxury of a divan to sleep on, our companions being two or three cawals who did

not apparently belong to the village. In the morning we bade farewell to Hussein Bey, who seemed still very despondent. Having a good road, and knowing the way, in a few hours we had retraced our route past Khorsabad, and arrived again in Mosul.

Some days previously we had given directions for the building of the kelek or raft on which we were to descend the river to Baghdad, and we found on our return that it had been completed, and that everything was ready for our departure. These keleks are made of all sizes; ours was about 25 feet in length by 18 in width. It was formed of 160 goatskins inflated with air, on which was placed a platform of slight timbers and stout reeds, to which the skins were fastened in such a manner, that, should any of them in time collapse in any degree, they could be again blown up. Over this platform, and fastened to it by ropes and twigs, were laid thin boards, and in the centre stood two light wooden bedsteads covered with awnings of thick felt, which formed a covering equally impervious to the sun and rain. Two huge oars, the blades of which were made of split cane, projected from the sides, and were fastened firmly in their places. By these the machine was to be steered, and in some degree propelled, when the current was sluggish. This mode of travelling on inflated skins is very ancient, representations of men swimming by their assistance being found on the bas-reliefs disinterred by Mr. Layard, which are now in the British Museum. The inhabitants still use keleks everywhere on the river; a man often undertaking a long journey upon four or five skins tied together, over which some bundles of rushes are placed to sit on. From its source in the high mountains of Armenia being then frozen up, the Tigris is lowest in winter, while the thaws in spring and early summer cause the river to increase enormously in volume in April and May. At that time of the year a kelek floats down the stream to Baghdad in three and a half or four

days, while in winter it generally takes from eight to ten to accomplish the same distance.

Our party was somewhat large, consisting of an Arab of the Shammar, under whose potent guardianship we were to be secured from the attacks of any of his powerful and plundering tribe; of two other Arabs, who, by their courage and bravery, were to protect the raft and our property from any petty outlying marauders who might seek to rob it when tied to the bank at night; and of two raftsmen to whom the skins belonged, and who were to return with them on donkeys to Mosul, after selling the framework of the raft at Baghdad. A Turkish merchant of Diarbekir, with his servant, for whom Mr. Rassam had asked a passage, with Demetri and ourselves, completed a party of ten. The luggage was piled under and around the bedsteads in the centre, leaving a passage of three feet wide all round the raft. In one corner stones were arranged so as to form a fireplace, and a store of a week's provisions was laid in. Our fellow-travellers and crew slept rolled up in felts and rugs on the clear space round the edge, leaning against the pile in the centre. A watch was always kept at night. A heap of brushwood for fuel was piled up in another corner, to replenish which we landed from time to time. We started from Mosul on the 14th of December, a parting volley being fired as a salute by those warlike members of our party, including Demetri, who could get their rusty old guns to go off.

We were soon directed by our oars into the centre of the river, and dropped slowly down the stream. The banks for some distance after leaving Mosul were laid out in cucumber and melon gardens, at this time of the year waste and bare. The current being so slight, and the wind blowing from the south, we only got the first day as far as Hammam Ali, or the Baths of Ali, where some sulphur springs issued from the soil, near the river. The vapour which rose from these was very pungent, and borne by the wind was perceptible long

before we reached our halting-place. Our raft was tied to the bank for the night, and we also had to remain stationary the greater part of the next day; the wind, by which the kelek, that floated so lightly on the water, was more influenced than by the feeble current, continuing high. However, during the evening we made some way, and the next morning found ourselves approaching the ruins of Nimrūd, where we shortly afterwards landed; the raft, on which the two raftsmen alone remained, passing with a plunge and a dive over the dam which here crosses the river, but soon recovering itself.

This dyke, which is formed of huge stones, was, according to tradition, built by Nimrod, and was undoubtedly constructed by the ancient Assyrian kings, most probably to raise the water of the Tigris to a sufficient height to supply the canals used for irrigation. Here and there a fragment of it was visible, a few stones sticking up out of the river, which rushes over it with great impetuosity and noise, forming a waterfall of three feet in height. It is called by the Arabs Sukr el Nimrūd.

Leaving the raft to continue its course round a bend or reach of the river which would bring it to the opposite side of the ruins, we walked across the plain to the foot of the mounds in half an hour, the conical pyramid at the north-west angle towering high above the rest of the great platform formed by the remains. On ascending to the top of these mounds, we found a number of slabs covered with bas-reliefs lying about more or less uncovered, and in various positions, some standing upright, and others being prostrate on the ground. Some that were arranged side by side as in a wall, appeared to be in their original positions, and were much nearer the surface of the soil than those discovered at Kouyunjik.

We entered the galleries that were excavated by Mr. Layard in the base of the great pyramidal mound, the

huge stones forming the lower course of the once great tower being on one side of the shaft which he had cut. A number of Arabs from the adjacent village accompanied us, and most anxiously inquired whether there was any chance of the excavations being renewed, and numerous were the questions put as to when Mr. Layard would return. The surface of the mounds was uneven and broken, bare and water-worn, numerous little ravines formed by the rains furrowing their naked sides. A small stream called the Seik Dereh ran through a ravine at a little distance, and, with the exception of some small patches of ground near the village, the plain was desert and waste as far as the eye could reach over its dreary surface.

This mass of mounds was all that remained of the once mighty city and gorgeous palaces of a series of Assyrian kings, among whom are to be counted, if the inscriptions found in the ruins be correctly deciphered, the biblical Esarhaddon and the historic Sardanapalus. The better educated of the Turks and Arabs say that the city was built by Athur or Ashur, the lieutenant of Nimrod, and that from the latter name, which it long bore, the whole country took its denomination. Assimilating the ancient name as he best could to his native Greek, Xenophon, who describes the city in his history of the retreat of the Ten Thousand, calls it Larissa, and not far from it fought a battle with the Persians under Mithridates, whom he signally defeated.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREATER ZAB—RUINS OF KALEH SHERGHAT—A HOWLING WILDERNESS—ARABS OF THE DESERT—AN OLD ARAB ON A JOURNEY—THE TOWN OF TEKRIT—IMAUM DUR—THE GREAT CANAL OF NAHRWAN—RUINS OF ISKI, OR OLD BAGHDAD—SAMARA—RUINS OF KADESIA—INTERMENT OF PERSIANS AT KERBELAH—APPROACH TO BAGHDAD—ENGLISH CONGREGATION AT BAGHDAD—INTERVIEW WITH THE PASHA—BAZAARS—SCENES IN THE STREETS—COMMERCIAL ASPECT OF BAGHDAD—ITS PAST SPLENDOUR AND PRESENT DECLINE.

CHAPTER XXII.

HAVING satisfied a numerous and clamorous crowd who eagerly demanded backsheesh on the ground of their labour in uncovering and covering again a few of the slabs, we returned to our kelek, which we met a few miles down from the place where we had left it, and embarking again, in a little time came to another dam, called Sukr Ismail, which we passed over without accident, all the loose packages being first secured, and anything that could spoil by wet being placed in safety. These precautions having been taken, we slowly neared the dyke, and shot over it, a descent of two or three feet, with a plunge, the fore part of the raft going under water. Such, however, was its buoyancy, that it soon recovered its position, and we were again floating tranquilly down the stream.

We had seen since we left Mosul a considerable quantity of wild fowl, immense flocks of wild geese and ducks were constantly passing over our heads, and at every fresh bend in the river our raft disturbed numbers feeding by the banks. After leaving Nimrûd, in a few hours we reached the mouths of the greater Zab, a considerable stream, the clearer water issuing from which refuses for a long time to mingle with the muddy current of the Tigris. The river had been for a little time getting broader and more shallow, and the stream was divided by numerous islands. In the evening we passed several wild boars that had come down to drink in the river, at which our crew kept up an incessant though harmless

cannonade. The navigation of the river, in consequence of the numerous channels, becoming rather intricate, our raft was tied up for the night to the bank, and next morning, leaving our anchorage with daylight, we arrived at Kaleh Sherghat late in the evening, having passed a rapid just before.

During this and the previous day we passed, on the left bank, a few scattered villages and encampments of Arabs of small and broken tribes. The pastures on the right bank of the river belong to the great tribe of the Shanmar, who are constantly in the habit of making plundering expeditions across, carrying off the flocks of their weaker opponents. Having landed occasionally to provide fuel, we found the country on both banks an open and level plain, the right bank deserted, and no signs of tents or other habitations to be seen. The islands in the river, its banks, and other places for some distance inland were covered with a thorny shrub, which grew close together and afforded a dense cover to the herds of wild boar whose tracks crossed and recrossed each other in all directions.

Before leaving the next morning, we landed, and went over the ruins. The most remarkable, which is not more than a couple of hundred yards from the river bank, consists of a large square platform built partly of sun-dried bricks, and faced with a wall of hewn stone, in some places appearing like battlements. In the centre of the northern side of this platform rose a conical mound of no great height, and a number of smaller mounds were also scattered over its extensive surface. A quantity of broken bricks and some large stones were lying about, the remains of the excavations which seemed to have been made into nearly every one of the huge heaps of clay. In all were traces of the use of the pickaxe and shovel; but it did not seem that any fixed plan, as at Kouyunjik and Nimrûd, had been followed, holes merely having been dug into the sides of the mounds.

We ascended to the summit of the conical or pyramid-shaped mound, and from it had an extensive view of the surrounding country. At no great distance in the interior were the Khaunkah hills, which were not very high, and of arid, bare, and desolate appearance. The plain to the north and south was covered with dense patches of thorn, through the open glades in which we saw numbers of wild boars roaming about. The surface of the desert seemed to consist of yellow sandy mud, traversed in every direction by deep sun-cracks. The winter and spring rains swell this retentive soil, which then becomes impervious to moisture, and, the water lodging on the surface, the plain becomes for some time a marsh, until dried again by the summer sun. The whole scene was one of utter devastation, solitude, and loneliness; no signs of human beings were to be seen on any side, and it would be difficult to find a landscape so completely answering to the description of a howling wilderness, the very abomination of desolation. The great platform appeared to be, and really is, of far greater circumference than the large mound of Kouyunjik. Mr. Layard says it is upwards of two miles in circuit. It has not as yet been satisfactorily determined what was the ancient name of the city whose ruins are called at present by that of Kaleh Sherghat. The bricks and inscriptions found have the names of kings which are also met with on the monuments found at Nimrûd, a place identified by most antiquaries with Caleh or Haleh, one of the four cities mentioned in Genesis as having been built by Nimrod. "He went out into Assyria and builded Nineveh, the city Rehoboth, and Caleh, and Resen between Nineveh and Caleh; the same is a great city."

Our raftsmen and companions soon became very importunate in their requests that we should return to the kelek, asserting that at any moment a party of Bedoween might appear from behind some of the ruins, which were a constant

lurking-place and camping-ground for small marauding parties. We returned to the river by a different path from that by which we had approached the ruins, passing by and sometimes over a great number of small mounds, that seemed to have been so many buildings, the sides of which the winter rains had deeply furrowed, and embarking, were again borne slowly onwards by the current. The bank at this spot was high, the upper portion appearing artificial; and the river having considerably encroached upon the land, and washed away large masses of soil, portions of ancient edifices and tombs had become exposed in the clay.

The day being calm, we drifted along smoothly, the current running about three miles an hour. The left bank was low and flat, the right high and broken. We passed a rapid shortly after leaving Kaleh Sherghat, and in some time another, near which on the right bank were some ruins called Kaleh Mukol.

At this spot we came upon a large party of Bedoween returning from a predatory expedition to the other side of the river, which, to judge by the quantity of sheep, goats, and donkeys they had assembled on the left bank preparatory to crossing over, must have been very successful. The scheikh or leader of the party stood beside his horse on the top of an eminence on the right bank, having already swum over to his own side, his venerable look giving him anything but the appearance of an old robber as he was. Holding his long lance upright in his hand, and enveioped in his ample striped abba, with his kefia, a gaily coloured cloth worn by the Arabs, tied with a band of camel's hair round their heads, flowing over his shoulders, the aged rascal formed a most picturesque object. The party when we came upon them were busily occupied in transporting their booty from one bank to the other. They were nearly all naked. Each man, to aid him in crossing the river, carried an inflated goat-skin, which, having first secured a sheep, he



placed under his chest, and, urging the animal before him till near the opposite bank, would then return for another. The horses and donkeys were driven into the stream, over which they swam to the opposite side. The whole scene was very strange. We had before us in actual operation a specimen of the wholesale robbery which has been from the earliest times practised by these desert dwellers.

The appearance of our kelek floating down upon them seemed to cause no little excitement. Those who had already crossed over drew together round their chief, and appeared to hold an animated conversation. The remainder ceased their efforts to urge the refractory sheep and goats into the water, and stood still to gaze upon the approaching raft. Our crew, who until then had been noisy and talkative, from the instant they perceived the Arabs maintained a deathlike silence. The Shammar Arab, who was to have been our security against any attacks on the part of his tribe, lay down among the baggage; the watchmen or guards, who on leaving Mosul had invested themselves with the cast-off coats of Turkish soldiers, made with Demetri and the old Turk a grand show of artillery, displaying their long rusty barrels as much as possible. The raftsmen, who had nothing to lose but their clothes, and they were few, seemed alone unconcerned.

On coming close to the party, some of whom were swimming about in the water near to the spot we were to pass, we desired our Shammar friend to speak to them; but he disclaimed at once any knowledge of them, although the raftsmen, by some means, knew them to belong to the tribe of which he said he was a member. While our guards and allies were making a great display of their means of defence, behind which never beat more terrified hearts, we arrived opposite the old scheikh, whom we hailed, and putting a few questions to him about his recent exploits, received in reply only demands to know who were the motley party of Franks, Turks,

Arabs, and soldiers, as he supposed our valiant watchmen to be? In a few seconds we had glided past him; the few men in the water, as it seemed, feared to approach. The prospect of danger once gone by, the spirits of our heroes revived, and they commenced a running fire of ridicule upon the old scheikh, who still retained his statue-like position and composure. As he had asked whither we were going, our valiant defenders, when at a distance which they considered safe, facetiously replied that we were a party going down with money to pay the troops at Baghdad a year's pay, that we had it all on board in specie, together with some very valuable presents from the Sultan to the Pasha. He was also told that he was an ass, and the son and grandson of asses, to allow such a prize to pass under his nose without seizing it. But all to no purpose; the old gentleman maintained his calm dignity throughout, and, apparently troubling himself little about us, soon turned his attention again to getting over the spoil he had taken to his own side of the river as quickly as possible.

We landed during the day on the left bank to procure fuel. The soil on this side was everywhere trodden down by the herds of wild boar which seemed to infest the neighbourhood of the river all the way down. In the evening we passed the mouth of the lesser Zab, surrounded by jungle. Near it were some low hills, on one of which was a tomb erected to the memory of an Arab saint called Mohammed Ouali. Just below the mouth of the Zab there is a dangerous rapid, which, whirling, boiling, and eddying over its rugged bed, is much dreaded by the raftsmen, particularly when the river is swollen. At such a time, on approaching the perilous spot, many and loud are the prayers addressed to the saint, in honour of whose memory sacrifices of sheep, fowls, &c., are liberally promised, if, by his powerful protection, those who so loudly implore his aid may be enabled to pass the dangerous whirlpool in safety. But once the object attained, and all

is changed—the saint and his good-nature become subjects for ridicule, and the raftsmen, snapping their fingers, say, “Now then, Mohammed Ouali, we are safe, and we will not give you as much as the paring of a cucumber.”

They assert that this trick can with impunity be repeatedly practised on the holy man, inasmuch as his credulity is only equalled by his good-nature; and, although constantly deceived, yet he is always ready to believe anew the faithless promises of those who invoke his protection, and who, not satisfied with breaking their vows, add insult to injury by ridiculing his too easy and confiding disposition.

At this spot we came to an end of the hills, which, commencing a little above Kaleh Sherghat, run, under the name of Djebel Khaunkah and Djebel Makol, nearly parallel with the river to a little below the mouth of the lesser Zab. The right bank was here steep and broken, the hills sloping down to the water's edge. We tied our raft to the shore a short distance below the rapid, and remained there for the night; our crew relating various anecdotes of the robberies and murders committed by the Arabs, whom they represented as the most wicked race on earth.

The next morning, shortly after we had resumed our journey, we saw at some distance before us a nondescript-looking object floating on the water, which turned out, on nearing it, to be a white-bearded old gentleman taking a voyage down the river to Tekrit, to which place he said he was going on business. His mode of travelling was exceedingly primitive, and doubtless much less fatiguing than either walking or riding. He was seated astride upon a heap of rushes secured upon half a dozen inflated sheep skins, and thus, tranquilly smoking a pipe, was proceeding, without any exertion on his own part, to his destination. His naked legs hung down on each side into the water, serving as paddles, three or four vigorous kicks sufficing to give his conveyance an inclination either to the right

or the left. We offered him a place on our kelek, which he accepted, and taking his frail raft in tow, we continued our course.

The river had now become broader, and in those places where the channel was not divided by islands, seemed to be a couple of hundred yards in width. We passed numerous small islands, generally covered with thorns and jungle, and not far from Tekrit signs of cultivation began to appear on the left bank. Some machines for raising the water stood on the river bank, and several flocks of sheep and goats were grazing on the plain. Ruins and mounds were visible in the distance on the right bank, which continued desert. The river still increased in width, and the banks on either side were flat and level. We arrived in the evening at Tekrit, where we tied our raft to the shore and remained for the night.

Tekrit, which is reckoned by the raftsmen as halfway between Mosul and Baghdad, is now a small town of a few hundred houses, but was once a place of considerable size. It was the birthplace of the celebrated Saladin, whose father, a Kurdish chief, governor of the town, inhabited the castle. This fortress is built on the summit of an enormous rock of sandstone rising from the water to a height of nearly two hundred feet, and is surrounded on three sides by a broad and deep ditch, formerly filled, according to the inhabitants, from the Tigris. The town is surrounded by walls, now dilapidated and decayed, within which were heaps of rubbish, interspersed with ruined mosques and other large edifices. The huts of which the modern town is composed are of the most wretched description. We were told that the remains of some Christian churches still exist.

The only celebrity which Tekrit at present enjoys is the loquacity of the inhabitants, a man of Tekrit being commonly reported to talk more than two women of any other place. We were not informed whether the powers of the women

were in due proportion to those of their lords. We here saw the first date-palm-tree, and also the first of the circular, tub-shaped boats, made of wicker and covered with a coating of pitch and bitumen, which are the common craft at Baghdad, where they are called *kufas*. Here also we changed our raftsmen. The two who had accompanied us from Mosul returned thither by land, handing us over to others who were to accompany us to Baghdad.

Resuming our journey next morning, in a few hours we arrived at a place on the left bank called Imam Dur, where stand a village and the tomb of a Mussulman saint. It was here that the Emperor Julian, called the Apostate, died, and that his successor Jovian preserved the remnant of his army by surrendering to Sapor, as the price of a humiliating peace, all the Roman possessions to the east of the Tigris. He subsequently, according to Gibbon, crossed the river on "a floating bridge of the inflated skins of sheep, oxen, and goats, covered with a floor of earth and fascines," and from hence commenced his retreat. On this now waste and desert spot, which still continues to bear the name of Dura, it is supposed that the image was erected by Nebuchadnezzar, before which all the people of the land were to bow down. "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits and the breadth thereof six cubits; he set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon."

It blew hard from the south during the whole day, and consequently we made but very little way, the waves being sometimes so strong as to break against and wash over the raft. We passed the mouth of the great canal called Nahrwan, of which Captain Jones, the Resident at Bushire, subsequently gave us a detailed account. By his description, it must have been of great size and length. Branching from the main channel, it spread out over the face of the country around. The remains of innumerable villages and towns, whose

inhabitants must have lived on the produce of the soil, attest the fertility created by its waters. Its high banks can still be traced for a great distance across the plain. Its bed, however, as is generally the case with the remains of ancient canals, is filled up with sand, and along its course the extensive ruins of large towns which stood in the vicinity still exist.

In the evening we arrived opposite the ruins of Iski, or old Baghdad, which are of considerable extent. The remains of this late Persian or early Arab town, which was built of small stones and mud, have obtained the name which they now bear from the Arabs. The high wind still continuing, we remained here for the night, and towards morning it began to rain, and the weather became more boisterous. We made, nevertheless, a little way, and passed, on some high ground on the right bank, shortly after leaving Iski Baghdad, a heap of ruins called Ashck.

We next passed Samara, a town seemingly of some size and population, on the left bank. A tower of great height, it is said two hundred feet, is the most remarkable of the ruins. Of considerable diameter at the base, it narrows by degrees towards the top, a spiral ascent winding round its exterior to the summit, which is flat. Great heaps of rubbish, which covered the remains of the ancient town, are strewn about. It was here that the Roman army under Jovian, on their retreat from Ctesiphon, after the death of Julian, took refuge, after fighting with the Persians for a long and weary day. It was afterwards chosen as a residence by Motassem, the eighth Abbasside Khalif, when he left Baghdad, with whose inhabitants he was displeased. It is now much venerated by the Persians, as the burial-place of some of the Imams of the blood of Ali, the twelfth and last of whom, the Imam Mehdi, is to come forth at the end of the world, and take to Paradise those who have called on him through life.

Drifting slowly in the teeth of the wind past Samara, we continued to make a little way in spite of the gale, and in the evening arrived in the vicinity of some ruins called Establat, where our raft was tied to the bank for the night. The next day continued squally and wet, but we nevertheless persevered, and in some hours arrived at a mass of ruins of a different description from those we had hitherto seen. Walls and arches of brick on which were some traces of ornament, the remains of a number of towers, and other ruins, covered for a considerable extent the plain on the left bank. These were the ruins of Kadesia, a great city in the time of the last Persian kings and early khalifs. Near it was fought, during three days, the decisive battle between the Arabs under Saad, the general of the Khalif Omar, and the Persians under Rustum, the general of Yezdigird, the last of the Sassanian kings. The former ultimately obtained a complete victory, overthrowing the Persian monarchy and establishing Islamism as the religion of the East.

Towards evening the wind freshened, and after some time became so strong that we were unable to contend against it. We accordingly tied up the kelek near a village on the right bank, which now began to be peopled and cultivated in the neighbourhood of the huts. A number of machines for raising water from the river to the level of the bank, some 20 feet above, were at work. The power employed was horses, which dragged up the water in huge bullock-skins, from which cords passed over rollers placed above the recess in the bank, into which the water was admitted from the river. When raised to the required height, the man who guided the horse, by a simple contrivance, upset the skin into a trough, whence the water flowed along tiny channels to the spot which it was desired to irrigate. The soil on both sides was alluvial, the steep and yellow banks being continually undermined by and falling into the sluggish river.

In the morning, finding the wind too high to allow us to continue our journey, we remained tied to the bank for the whole of that weary day. Nothing of more interest than an Arab village was in sight. Some heavy showers having fallen during the night, the ground was sticky and turned into mud, through which it was anything but agreeable to walk. The villagers were preparing to sow their melons, cucumbers, and barley, for which crops they were irrigating and getting ready the soil, to which, even, in the parts devoted to the growth of melons, they did not add any manure. Late in the evening the wind ceased, and the raftsmen saying that there were no rapids or any other obstacle to interrupt our progress to Baghdad, we continued our voyage during the night, wearied as we were with a nine days' occupation of our kelek. In the morning we found ourselves gliding on the calm surface of the river, flowing in a gentle current through the date groves which line the banks for some distance above Baghdad.

At short intervals from each other the machines for raising water were busily employed; in some not less than ten horses hoisted up as many bullock-skins full of the yellow and turgid liquid. There was not a breath of air to fan the branches of the palms, and the only sound which broke the silence was the creaking of these engines. The banks were not very high, the river had latterly widened considerably, and as far as the eye could reach the palm groves extended into the interior. The Tigris near Baghdad takes three or four abrupt bends, which form so many reaches, beyond which nothing can be seen but the forest of date-trees. A number of orange and lemon-trees are planted in rows under the date-palms, and form a kind of underwood of the most beautiful description, the red fruit glowing out from among the dark-green foliage.

We passed a large ferry-boat, made, like the kufa we had seen at Tekrit, of wicker-work covered with a coating of

bitumen, and perfectly round, conveying across the river a number of mules from Persia laden with dead bodies for interment at Kerbelah or Meshed Hosein. Each mule carried two, some as many as six coffins, which were nothing more than long, narrow boxes made of thin deal and covered with felt, in which the bodies—after having been first buried for a year or two and then disinterred—were placed. The rich Persians send their dead for interment immediately after death; but the poorer classes, who are forced to club together to pay the expenses of a mule for the long journey, bury the bodies until they have amassed the necessary means; by which time nothing but the bones remain, which they pack into these long boxes and despatch, as many as six on one mule, to their last resting-place, near the grave of the martyred Imam.

Borne round an abrupt turn, at the point of which was a wall that seemed to have been built to prevent the further encroachments of the river, we saw a few small houses on the bank. A number of men and women, nearly all mounted on white donkeys, were passing to and fro; and at some distance, towering over the forest of palms, in the centre of which we seemed to be, appeared the golden domes and slender minarets of the great mosque of Kathimain, where are interred the bodies of two most holy Imams of the Sheah sect of the Mussulman religion. This is a great place of resort for the populace of Baghdad.

We passed a mosque, which seemed exactly as if it had been cut in two. One half of the dome and the building around, on the side next the river, having been undermined, had fallen into the stream. We now came to another reach, on entering which the city lay before us. Large, but straggling, and in many instances half-ruinous brick houses lined the banks on both sides, their bases often washed by the river. The windows seemed to have been pierced wherever wanted, there being no uniformity of level between

those of the same dwelling ; they were small, and, an unusual thing in the East, without lattice-work outside, probably no danger or temptation for the fair inmates being apprehended from the river-side. We glided by a large, gloomy, and dilapidated-looking building on the left bank, from one of the windows of which we were hailed by some officers desirous of knowing who we were and whence we had come.

This was the palace of the Pasha, the second dignitary in the Turkish empire after the Grand Vizier. Next to it was another house, rivalling the palace in its dirty and mean-looking appearance. At last we neared the bridge of boats, and having hailed the bridge-keepers, in a little time three of the boats were swung round, and we passed through the opening thus formed. Again we floated on, and having descended the stream for a quarter of a mile further through the town, suddenly approached the shore, and landed at the foot of a terrace covered with orange-trees, behind which stood a handsome and solid-looking brick house. Our raft journey on the Tigris had now come to an end.

The Resident and Consul-General, Colonel Kemball, being absent on leave, the acting Resident, Dr. Hyslop, kindly invited us to remain at the Residency during our stay in Baghdad. We found a packet of letters from Europe awaiting our arrival, the more welcome as we had not received any for upwards of six months. The Residency is a large and roomy building, some of the apartments looking out upon the Tigris being lofty and handsomely furnished, in the Persian style, with a profusion of mirrors. It is the property of the uncle of the late King of Oude, who resides at Baglidad, where he possesses many houses and much wealth of other descriptions, and is let by him to the British government. He himself was a king for a few hours after the death of the father of the late monarch ; but the Resident at Oude having quietly told him that the English government would not permit him to assume the sovereignty, he gave up his claim to the

dignity, and shortly after retired to Baghdad, where he seems to pass a very agreeable existence. A detachment of a dozen sepoy's from the Bombay army act as a guard over the Residency, before which they mount sentry. The whole establishment, indeed, is kept up in a semi-Indian fashion, the servants being chiefly Hindoos.

A small iron steamer belonging to the then Indian navy, called the "Comet," lay at anchor in front of the windows, having but just returned from the monthly trip which, more for the purpose of keeping up political influence among the Arab tribes on the river banks than for postal uses, she was in the habit of making to Bassora. She had been built with some other steam-vessels for exploring purposes, had been used by Colonel Chesney in his expedition on the Euphrates, and had for some years been employed in her present service. The Turks, jealous of the influence which our possession of the only steamer on the river gave us among the Arabs, had lately put on a craft of their own, which lay side by side with the "Comet," and contrasted most unfavourably with her in appearance, looking dirty and slovenly beside the trim English boat.

We dismissed and backsheeshed our gallant guard, our useful protector against the Shammar, and also our raftsmen, the latter proceeding at once to break up and sell the few timbers which composed the slender framework of our kelek, in order to return the next morning to Tekrit.

The day following our arrival being Christmas-day, we accompanied Dr. Hyslop to an apartment in the house occupied by the missionaries from the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, which had been fitted up as a church. There were two missionaries, Messrs. Bruhl and Hepstein, resident at Baghdad for a great portion of the year. They were both married, and one of the ladies had not long before come out from England to take up her abode in the city of the Khalifs. Our congregation consisted of the officers

of the steamer, those of them who were married having their families with them, a few English residents, and two converts, one an old, the other a young man, who, on this festival day, appeared to represent the result of the labours of the missionaries among the Israelites. In the evening Dr. Hyslop assembled at dinner all the English residents and employés at Baghdad, and we sat down a party of twenty, including the Nawaub of Oude, who, being flanked on either side by a companion speaking his own language, talked continually, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy himself and his dinner. The usual Christmas fare of Old England was not wanting, and the orthodox roast-beef and plum-pudding was placed before us in the heart of the city of Haroun al Raschid.

Next day we went, accompanied by Dr. Hyslop, to wait on the Pasha. The palace, round which loitered a number of Bashi Bazouks, or irregular horsemen, is a huge building of brick; like almost all the other houses in Baghdad, dilapidated, and in a semi-ruinous condition. Half-rotten long wooden galleries run round the courts, which were thronged with idlers and Arabs from the villages on the left bank and the marshes of the Hindiyah, the Bedoween never, if they can avoid it, entering within the walls. A few sentries belonging to the regular troops, of whom there was a small body in the city, were posted about, their appearance and the state of their clothing not speaking much for the regularity of their pay. The Pasha received us in a large and not over-clean apartment, with windows overlooking the river, the walls of which were naked and bare, and the only furniture the usual divan and a few cane chairs, on one of which he himself sat. After the usual coffee, pipes, and inquiries after his Excellency's health, he desired to know our reasons for coming to Baghdad. He commended our intention of going to Kerbelah and Meshed Ali, on our way to the ruins of Babylon; a journey which, he said, could be performed in safety, as the plun-

dering parties of the Aneyza had not been out for some time.

The dignitary who lived in this rather plain manner, divested of the state which is so dear to the mind of an Oriental, was a man of some fifty-five or sixty years, with an exceedingly sharp and cunning expression of countenance. He was surrounded by a few of his secretaries and employés, who seemed also to have all their wits about them. Yet this was a personage whose pashalic extended, in former days, from that of Diarbekir to the Persian Gulf, thus comprehending the ancient Assyria and Babylonia, and whose authority yet reached from the Zab to Bassora, and from the Persian frontier to the desert, as far as the Bedoween tribes find it convenient or beneficial for the moment to acknowledge it. The salary and allowances of this frugal individual equalled those of the Governor-General of India, not to mention the enormous sums which by the most oppressive means he wrung from the Arabs and villagers of the great province over which he ruled.

Having been promised letters to the Governors of Kerbelah, Meshed Ali, and Hilleh, we took our leave, the numerous and odoriferous crowd filling the halls and galleries making room for us to pass through their ragged ranks. This Pasha has most likely ere now returned to Constantinople with the spoils of his short tenure of office, which, if a portion only of the stories we afterwards heard of his exactions be correct, must have been enormous. His name is indifferent. Individual dignitaries of this description are remembered only by those who have suffered some act of spoliation more than usually severe. Pashas, as Captain Marryat remarks, are ephemeral beings, and, without particularizing any individual, it is in general enough to say with him, of any member of a class so fleeting and evanescent, "There was a Pasha."

We spent the remainder of the day in roaming about

the bazaars, which are considered the largest, after those of Constantinople, of any city in the Turkish empire. They are lofty and vaulted, being arched over with brick, the openings which admit light through the roof being covered in summer with awnings to exclude the rays of the sun. The shops are large and filled with merchandise of every kind, the whole stock of some consisting of the keffias, or handkerchiefs of gaudy colours worn on their heads by the Arabs, which form an important manufacture of Baghdad. The population is of many races and religions, Turks, Arabs, Persians, and Christians, and, strange to say, a couple of Italians had found their way to this distant city, and had established themselves in it as watchmakers and jewellers. The crowd was, particularly in the mornings, very dense, and it was often difficult, especially on horseback, to make way through it. The cries of the various itinerant pedlars, water, sherbet, and fruit sellers, were deafening. A Kurd or a Persian might sometimes be seen offering for sale his jacket, or some other portion of his clothing, that he might raise the funds necessary to enable him to purchase some article which, too tempting to be resisted, he had set his fancy on.

It was curious to observe how the different characters of the various nationalities around betrayed themselves at once. The Persian and Christian shopkeeper, the instant any one stopped for a moment in front of his goods, became excited at the prospect of a customer, and manifested his eagerness to sell by a ready obsequiousness and profuse civility; while, on the contrary, the stately and turbaned Turk seemed to consider that it was he who conferred a favour on his customers by allowing them to purchase his wares. As usual in the East, each trade has its separate bazaar. Some of the silk manufactures that were shown to us were especially fine, and the colours most vivid and brilliant. Some abbas, of thick blue silk, in which arabesque patterns of gold were

woven, were remarkably beautiful, and were intended as presents from the Sultan and Governors of provinces to such Arab chiefs as they wished to honour. The passages through the bazaars are of clay, which, from the constant traffic, is as hard as stone, and being kept moist, cool in summer. Many of the bazaars are in a half-ruinous condition, and some are altogether shut up. Though the trade of Baghdad is still so brisk, it has very much declined from its former importance, and probably the amount of commerce which enlivens its busy marts is not now the fourth of what it was when, in the palmy days of the Khalifs, the residence of the successors of the Prophet, frequented by merchants from all parts of Persia and Arabia, boasted a proud pre-eminence over the other cities of the East. Once containing, it is said, a population of 500,000, and within a recent period a fifth of that number, it is thought that the inhabitants do not now exceed 60,000, if even there are so many. The vast and empty spaces contained within the circuit of the walls, and strewn with ruined heaps of rubbish and filth, show the present decadence of the city from its past glory, which the "Thousand and One Nights," with its stories of the adventures of the Khalif Haroun al Raschid, his Grand Vizier, Giaffar, and Mesrou, has made a household word throughout Europe.

No remains whatever exist of the palace of the Khalifs. The houses that now stand bear, in their slovenly, neglected, and dilapidated appearance, signs of the comparatively languishing state of the town, and the mosques and other public edifices show but too plainly the indifference or poverty of the True Believers. In short, it would seem as if long-continued oppression and misrule had nearly done their worst. The once-thronged town, with its stately palaces and closely-built houses, formerly filled with a teeming population, now appears in a fair way to become what many once even greater cities in the same region are already—a waste and desolate wilderness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE desert comes up to the very walls of Baghdad. The town is entered by three gates ; one of which, that on the eastern side, or side furthest from the river, is bricked up, in consequence of its being that by which Sultan Murad entered the city after he had captured it from the Persians. This custom of walling up a gate through which a great personage has passed on a memorable occasion, is very widespread in the East. Boabdil, the last Moorish monarch of Granada, made it his last request of Ferdinand and Isabella, to close up for ever the gate by which he left his palace of the Alhambra. The jackals come in troops to the foot of the walls at night, and feed on the garbage and filth that is thrown over, retreating to their holes and hiding-places during the day.

On the bank of the river, a few hundred yards from the water, are melon and cucumber-gardens, well irrigated and cultivated ; but the desert extends all around the back of the town. The other gates are shut from sunset to sunrise, and are always guarded by a small party of regular troops. In the present deplorable state of the government, the Bedoween plunder and foray, almost unchecked, up to the very walls of the town, and revenge upon the unhappy inhabitants the oppressions and exactions which they undergo at the hands of their Turkish rulers.

The Residency, like all the other houses of any size in the city, is built with courts, round which are serdaubs, or

semi-subterranean apartments, inhabited only during the summer heats. The winters at Baghdad are sometimes very severe, and, although snow does not fall, there is often a smart frost, and the winds sweeping over the surface of the desert are bitterly cold. Captain Selby, the commander of the "Comet," told us that he had seen the ice an inch thick on the paddle-boxes of his vessel, during the course of one winter rather more severe than usual. In summer the heat is intense, often rising to 140° Fahrenheit in the shade. When this is the case, the inhabitants sleep in the open air, upon the housetops, which are surrounded with walls of some feet in height for the sake of privacy.

We had, from the top of a minaret which we ascended for the purpose, a fine view of both the modern and ancient towns, built respectively on the east and west banks of the river, and connected by the rotten bridge of boats. The older town existed before the time of Haroun al Raschid, who built the more recent city on the east or the left bank of the Tigris. It was also surrounded by high embattled walls and towers, beyond which suburbs seemed to extend for some distance. Graveyards occupied a large space within the walls, and there was also a large portion of ground lying waste and covered with heaps of rubbish and ruins. In the centre of one of the cemeteries stood the tomb of Zobeide, the favourite Sultana of Haroun al Raschid, a low octagon building surmounted by a cone shaped like a pine-apple, the whole kept bright with whitewash. In this mausoleum, it is said, the bodies of Zobeide and of another wife of the Khalif yet remain undisturbed in their sarcophagi.

At some miles' distance from the walls of the city on the west bank we saw a huge structure which appeared like a tower standing solitary in the desert. This was Akarkouf, a ruin composed of sun-dried bricks, and of the Babylonian era. Even in its present state—a large portion of its upper part, which has been washed down by the winter rains,

forming a mass of débris round the base—it is considerably more than one hundred feet in height. With what object this building was erected no one has been able to discover, and it has not yet been ascertained whether, as its appearance would seem to indicate, it is solid, or whether there are chambers in the interior. A number of date-trees grew within the walls of the city on both sides of the river, and gave a peculiar aspect to the scene, the delicate green of the palms contrasting with the snowy whiteness of the house-tops which they overshadowed. There were also many small gardens in which fig-trees, vines, and pomegranates were carefully cultivated, but, the season being so advanced, they looked bare and waste. The gilded cupolas of the great mosque of Kathimain, the burial-place of the two Imams of the Sheah sect of Moslems, 'Tukah and Moussa Kathim, from the latter of whom it appears to take its name, glittered in the sunbeams, towering high over the surrounding date groves. The domes of some other mosques, none of which were of any great size or celebrity, were to be seen scattered through the town. The desert stretched away on all sides into the far distance, the sight losing itself in the boundless waste.

We started from Baghdad on the 28th December, on our projected expedition, to Kerbelah, Meshed Ali, and the ruins of Babylon, taking with us a cavass from the Residency, and also some mules to carry tents, which would be necessary in the desert. We crossed the river by the bridge of boats, rode through the old town, in a short time were clear of the suburbs and palm groves, and had entered on the desert. We passed one or two canals, through which the waters of the Tigris were brought up to the city for the purpose of irrigating the numerous gardens; after which nothing broke the flat and dreary horizon save the embankments that traversed in every direction the level surface of the plain, marking the line of the ancient canals that at one time intersected it, and with their waters bore fertility to the thirsty soil.

It sometimes occurred that three of these embankments ran side by side, a circumstance for which it might be difficult to assign a reason, if it were not explained by what is still sometimes seen, though on a very much smaller scale, near some of the villages whose grounds are irrigated with water brought by canals.

The bank, originally thrown up on either side when the canal was first formed, becomes higher and higher on each occasion that the channel is cleaned out, a process which in a sandy country must be frequently repeated, so that at last it becomes less laborious to cut a new canal by the side of the old one than to bring the clay in baskets up the banks thus raised. In the course of time this second canal, also having been filled up, the three banks remain side by side, stretching away into the distance, useless, save as a shelter and lurking-place for a plundering party of Bedoween. Though a waste and wilderness for man, the desert seemed to be a resting-place for birds, covered as it was in many places with a small plant of some inches in height, resembling at a distance the camel-thorn. Hundreds of thousands of sand grouse, whose dense flocks sometimes obscured the setting sun, found apparently their sustenance in the ends of the young shoots. These birds, in size approaching that of a grouse, which, although fawn-coloured, they resemble in appearance, being feathered down to the feet, seem to exist in immense numbers all round the edges of the deserts of Arabia. In large flocks they are very wild, seldom allowing the sportsman to approach within gunshot; but when in packs of ten or twenty, they become quite tame, and sometimes remain on the ground till they are almost trodden on. They are occasionally snared by the Arabs, who seldom throw away a shot upon small game, but are not in much request among the natives, who do not seem to appreciate the excellent food within their reach. In taste, when cooked, they strongly resemble a grouse.

We passed the dry beds of two canals of much larger dimensions than any of those which we had seen in such numbers. These were the Nahr Sarsar and the Nahr Malka, the construction of which is attributed to Nebuchadnezzar. They served as a means of communication in ancient times for ships between the Tigris and Euphrates, which they connect, as well as for irrigating the adjacent country. The Emperor Trajan made use of and repaired the latter in his wars with the Parthians. At every six miles on the road to Kerbelah there is a caravanserai. Having passed two of these, we halted at the third, and pitched our tent on the high platform erected in the centre of the court, or square. A deep well sunk in the vicinity supplied water, and a number of muleteers, who, with their mules were returning from Kerbelah, where they had deposited their loathsome burdens, excited by the prospect of backsheesh, made themselves as useful as they could in pitching the tents and getting fuel.

Our next day's journey to Kerbelah by Moussaib being reckoned at nine hours, we made an early start, and reached the latter place, where we were to cross the Euphrates, in four hours, our road lying over as desert and waste a country, intersected with the remains of ancient canals, as that we had traversed the previous day. Near the Euphrates some date-palms appeared, which increased in number as we neared Moussaib. Riding through some narrow lanes, we arrived at a bridge of boats, which we crossed, and stopped for a short time on the opposite side. Owing to its being a halting-place for the caravans from Persia to Kerbelah, a small bazaar had been formed to supply the wants of the pilgrims, and yourt (or thick boiled milk), butter, and fresh cakes of bread were brought to us by the Arab women who inhabited the wigwams made of brushwood that stood around. We here dismissed the Bashi Bazouks we had brought with us from Baghdad, and obtaining a few more from a Turkish officer who seemed to exercise authority over the few inhabit-

ants in the place, we rode on over the desert to Kerbelah, which we reached in a few hours. Our road for some time before arriving there lay along the course of a deep and wide canal running at a low level between steep banks, and conveying the waters of the Euphrates to the palm groves and town of Kerbelah. On both sides of us were gardens and wide-spreading groves of date-trees. A number of water-machines lined the banks of the canal, and the neighbourhood of the burial-place of Hosein was, in cultivation and appearance, similar to that of Baghdad itself.

It was late in the evening, and the sun had set for some time, when we arrived at the gate of the town, which, after some delay, was opened to admit us, as we had taken the precaution of sending on one of our Bashi Bazouks with our letter to the Caimacam from the Pasha of Baghdad. We rode through the dark and narrow streets, dimly lighted by the lanterns which the Caimacam had sent; and, after a number of sudden turns and windings to the right and left, reached his house, where he invited us to remain while in Kerbelah.

As usual, it was a miserable, tumble-down building; at one corner of which, in a dilapidated room with a brick floor, we took up our abode. The next day we spent in seeing the town. Though of no great extent, it seemed a place of considerable stir and activity, the streets and bazaars being thronged with a dense crowd of pilgrims to the tomb of Hosein.

The circumstances attending the last moments of this martyr and saint, as he is regarded by the Sheahs, are affectingly related by Gibbon. The second son of Fatima and Ali, the daughter and nephew of Mohammed—his elder brother Hassan having, after the assassination at Cufa of his father Ali, then Khalif, refused the sovereignty—Hosein was by a large party of the faithful regarded as the true and lawful successor of the Prophet. However, the

Khalifat had been seized, at the death of Ali, by Moawiyah, the son of Abu Sophian, the head of the house of Ommiyah, long the deadly enemy, and at last the convert of the Prophet himself. This skilful and unscrupulous ruler had contrived to have the Khalifat, hitherto elective, made an hereditary dignity, and his son Yezid was recognised by a large portion of the Moslems as the successor of the Prophet of God and the lawful Commander of the Faithful. Hosein, however, refused to submit to his authority, and remained for some time at Medina, near the tomb of his grandfather, awaiting the course of events. "The primogeniture of the line of Hashem and the holy character of grandson of the Apostle, had centred in his person, and he was at liberty to prosecute his claim against Yezid, the tyrant of Damascus, whose vices he despised, and whose title he had never deigned to acknowledge. A list was secretly transmitted from Cufa to Medina of one hundred and forty thousand Moslems who professed their attachment to his cause, and who were eager to draw their swords so soon as he should appear on the banks of the Euphrates. Against the advice of his wisest friends, he resolved to trust his person and family in the hands of a perfidious people. He traversed the deserts of Arabia with a timorous retinue of women and children; but, as he approached the confines of Irak, he was alarmed by the solitary or hostile face of the country, and suspected either the defection or ruin of his party. His fears were just. Obeidollah, the Governor of Cufa, had extinguished the first sparks of an insurrection, and Hosein, in the plain of Kerbelah, was encompassed by a body of five thousand horse, who intercepted his communication with the city and with the river. He might still have escaped to a fortress in the desert that had defied the power of Cæsar and Chosroes, and confided in the fidelity of the tribe of Tai, which would have armed ten thousand warriors in his defence. In a conference with the chief of the enemy he proposed the option of three honourable

conditions—that he should be allowed to return to Medina, or be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks, or safely conducted to the presence of Yezid. But the commands of the caliph or his lieutenant were stern and absolute, and Hosein was informed that he must either submit, as a captive and a criminal, to the Commander of the Faithful, or expect the consequences of his rebellion. ‘Do you think,’ replied he, ‘to terrify me with death?’ And during the short respite of a night he prepared with calm and solemn resignation to encounter his fate. He checked the lamentations of his sister Fatima, who deplored the impending ruin of his house. ‘Our trust,’ said Hosein, ‘is in God alone. All things both in heaven and earth must perish and return to their Creator. My brother, my father, my mother were better than me, and every Moslem has an example in the Prophet.’ He pressed his friends to consult their safety by a timely flight; they unanimously refused to desert or survive their beloved master, and their courage was fortified by a fervent prayer and the assurance of Paradise. On the morning of the fatal day he mounted on horseback, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other. His generous band of martyrs consisted only of thirty-two horse and forty foot; but their flank and rear were secured by the tent-ropes and by a deep trench which they had filled with lighted fagots, according to the practice of the Arabs. The enemy advanced with reluctance, and one of their chiefs deserted with twenty followers to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close onset or single contest the despair of the Fatimites was invincible; but the surrounding multitudes galled them from a distance with a cloud of arrows, and the horses and men were successively slain: a truce was allowed on both sides for the hour of prayer, and the battle at length expired by the death of the last of the companions of Hosein. Alone, weary and wounded, he seated himself at the door of his tent. As he tasted a drop of water he

was pierced in the mouth by a dart, and his son and nephew, two beautiful youths, were killed in his arms. He lifted his hands to heaven—they were full of blood—and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair his sister issued from the tent, and adjured the general of the Cufians that he would not suffer Hosein to be murdered before his eyes. A tear trickled down his venerable beard, and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side as the dying hero threw himself among them. The remorseless Shamer, a name detested by the faithful, reproached their cowardice, and the grandson of Mohammed was slain with three-and-thirty strokes of lances and swords. After they had trampled on his body, they carried his head to the Castle of Cufa, and the inhuman Obeidollah struck it on the mouth with a cane. ‘Alas!’ exclaimed an aged Mussulman, ‘on these lips have I seen the lips of the Apostle of God.’ In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader. On the annual festival of his martyrdom, in the devout pilgrimage to his sepulchre, his Persian votaries abandon their souls to the religious frenzy of sorrow and indignation.”

No signs of the stagnation and decay which we had hitherto met with in every town we had passed through, were to be seen in Kerbelah. Every available space was covered with houses standing close together, and many were in course of erection. Some Hindoo Moslem devotees had taken up their permanent residence near the grove of the Imam, in whose suite they hoped to enter into Paradise, and others had come from their remote homes, through Afghanistan and Persia, to pray at the shrine of the saint, and thus obtain his goodwill hereafter. Being a place of such peculiar sanctity, no Christians are allowed to live within the walls of Kerbelah. It is with difficulty that they are admitted even within the gates, and many scowling and savage glances were cast on us as we walked through

the bazaars, accompanied by a couple of cavasses given us by the Caimacam.

We went as far as the gate of the court surrounding the mosque, within which is the tomb of the Imam, and took a hasty glance at the exterior of the sacred building. Our cavasses hurried us on as much as they could, fearing that a crowd of the surrounding fanatics, exasperated at the sight of Christians profaning the sepulchre with their glance, might proceed to some excesses.

They brought us, however, to the house of a merchant, who, having lived for some time at Baghdad, where he had been in some manner served by the Resident, at once, on learning we were English, invited us to go up to a window in his house which looked into the courtyard of the mosque, from whence we could have a quiet and undisturbed view of the whole building.

The lower part or body of the mosque of Hosein is of a square form, covered with enamelled tiles painted in white, blue, and gold, and with scrolls of various designs, no portion of wall or masonry being visible. The centre of this brilliantly-decorated structure is crowned by a gilded dome, about the quantity of the precious metal consumed in which various stories are related by the people of Kerbelah, who assert that it is covered with thin plates of gold. Three lofty minarets, the galleries encircling which near the summit, as well as the cupolas surmounting them, are also gilt, stand at the corners of the main building; and from them, five times every day, the faithful are called to prayer. The long and slender stems of these minarets are also covered with enamelled tiles, on which are painted some gaudily-coloured arabesques, the designs of which struck us by their extreme beauty and intricacy. The court round the mosque, being unpaved, was composed of nothing but the soil, which had been recently disturbed in many places.

In this narrow court, which is surrounded on all sides by

houses, the bodies of those whose relatives are sufficiently affectionate to bring them thither, and rich enough to pay the sums demanded by the Imams and guardians of the tomb of the saint for permission to inter them near that hallowed spot, are buried by the Persian and other Sheahs. A large price is sometimes exacted for this permission, the priests proportioning their demands according to the wealth of the deceased and his relatives. On payment of a very large sum indeed, a body may be interred in the interior of the mosque, near the tomb of Hosein himself; but such an enormous amount is asked for this privilege, that there are few whose wealth, piety, or affection can stand the ordeal. Consequently, the privilege is but seldom claimed, although he whose remains are buried near those of the Imam is entitled to the same position near the saint when on the last day he will arise and lead the faithful into Paradise.

The greater number of bodies brought to Kerbelah are simply carried into the mosque, laid down on the tomb of Hosein, and then brought out and buried anywhere in the cemeteries or in pits dug for the purpose. It is quite sufficient that a corpse be near that of the prophet to be assured that on the last day the saint will take it, reunited to the soul, under his protection, and lead it into the joys of everlasting happiness. A small tax is levied at the gate by the Turkish government upon every coffin brought into the town, and numerous are the attempts made by pious yet economical sons and brothers to defraud the revenue of the sum thus raised. A short time before the period of our visit a man who was known not to belong to the town was observed by the astute sentry bringing in a bag of barley, which the upright soldier, who suspected a trick, and whom nothing but a bribe could corrupt—(in this case the delinquent was too poor to offer one)—insisted on examining. Underneath a covering of barley was found the skeleton of the bearer's father, which he was thus placing surreptitiously, and without paying the usual tax

for such a benefit, under the guardianship of the saint. A double fee was at once demanded from the detected cheater of the Sultan, but whether his piety and affection stood such a test we were not informed. But few bodies are admitted into the town at a time, as they arrive at some periods of the year in such numbers, that, if all were permitted to enter together, disease might ensue, and in addition the streets would be too thronged for passage. A thousand sometimes arrive by a single caravan, which is also accompanied by a vast number of devotees, making a kind of minor hadj, or pilgrimage. We subsequently met one of these caravans on our return to Baghdad, whose numbers did not fall short of 5000 individuals, mounted, some on horses, others on camels, and the women in takliterawans, or litters borne by mules. The greater number of the pilgrims, however, were on foot, in which manner they had accomplished their long and weary journey.

After leaving the mosque of Hosein, we went to that of Imam Abbas, which we saw in the same manner from the roof of a house, whose owner, having travelled to more tolerant regions, gave us admittance. It was in many respects similar to that of Hosein, the walls being covered with painted tiles, as well as the dome, which in this respect differed from the former. Two minarets of coloured brick stood at the angles, from whence the muezzin was chanting forth his profession of faith and summons to the Moslems to pray. Around the mosque was a narrow unpaved court surrounded with houses, like that round the other mosque, and apparently also used as a cemetery. This was filled with a number of priests and pilgrims, the latter apparently employing the intervals between their devotions in squatting on the ground with their backs to the mosque; in which position they remained listless and idle, chatting lazily with each other.

From the elevated position we occupied on both occasions we were unable to obtain a glance into the interior of both

mosques, the gateways of which were richly decorated in colours and ornamented in various ways. Having seen as much as possible of these celebrated sanctuaries, we visited the small and narrow bazaars, which were thronged and crowded to excess, and, possibly on account of the predominance of Persians, even more dirty and filthy than those of most Turkish towns. The shops were very poor, the little merchandise for sale being such as would be likely to suit the surrounding Arab tribes, the pilgrims making their purchases in Baghdad. Kefias and abbas were the chief articles, besides provisions, which formed the bulk of the goods exposed.

A number of amulets and charms are manufactured by some native jewellers, one of which, by our directions, was purchased by a cavass, who, however, was obliged to return it to the shopkeeper. The man was furious at the idea of having sold it to a Christian, as it contained a blessing from the Koran of double virtue from having been made in the neighbourhood of the holy tomb. This slight incident may serve to show the amount of fanaticism, predominant even over the love of gain, still animating the Moslems in a place like Kerbelah, where they dare to give vent to their real feelings.

In the afternoon we rode round the town, outside the walls, through gardens and palm groves, intersected everywhere at short intervals by canals. These we crossed on frail bridges made of palm trunks, some not more than two feet wide, but over which the horses passed fearlessly and safely. The canals have to be kept open by the most continuous labour; the soft and friable soil on both sides perpetually falling into and filling up the bed. The palm groves are in summer a favourite resort of the inhabitants of Kerbelah, who come out to sit under the grateful shade and enjoy the "Kif," so dear to an Oriental, drinking coffee and sherbet.

Having no inducement to remain longer at Kerbelah, we left it next morning, and rode in a short time to Touarij, a

place composed of a few huts on the Hindiyah canal, near which there is an ancient mound. This great canal, once conferring the inestimable benefit of fertilizing an immense district, now, owing to Turkish rapacity and misgovernment, discharges its waters over what was lately a fertile plain with an industrious population, but is now a marsh on the shores of which, or on islands in its midst, a few half-starved Arabs obtain a precarious existence by cultivating rice. Issuing from the Euphrates some miles above Hillah, and thence flowing in a southerly direction for many miles, passing by Kerbelah at no great distance, and lower down intersecting the site of Cufa, close to Meshed Ali, this great canal distributed its waters through numerous channels over a vast extent of country covered with villages, which owed their existence to its stream.

About half a century ago, the then Pasha of Baghdad so exasperated, by his cruelties and exactions, a small tribe of Arabs, who, living on the spot whence the canal issued from the river, kept in order the great sluices by which the proper supply of water was regulated, that in despair they fled into the desert, and shortly after, the river rising suddenly, the barriers thus left unguarded were swept away, and a great district of well-cultivated and populous country was submerged and converted into a succession of lakes and marshes, the abodes of myriads of wild fowl and beasts of prey; and such it has to this day remained. Even if the country should ever come into the hands of a ruler anxious for improvement, it would take years before the swamps could again be brought under cultivation, so easy is it to undo the effects of centuries of industry. These lakes and marshes thus formed extend for 60 or 70 miles in length, the superfluous waters discharging themselves again into the river.

At Touarij we engaged a boat to take us down the canal and through the marshes as far as Cufa. Our boat was large and strongly built, having one mast and an ample sail, which,

however, was of no use, as the wind was dead against us, blowing steadily from the south. We were towed along the bank for some distance, but at last the gale became so high that we had to land.

It being too late to attempt reaching Kifil that night, we pitched our tent on the bank. The gale continued to blow fresh the whole night and the next morning. There being no signs of its subsiding, we decided on continuing our course on horseback, though the road was so circuitous. Accordingly, again mounting our horses, we rode to Kifil, to which place we had intended sending them to await our return from Meshed Ali, there being no bridge. The marsh, round which we proceeded, extending to near Hilleh, we passed not far from that town, leaving it on the left. We then took a south-westerly direction, and passed the Birs Nimrûd, which rose solitary from the desert at about three or four miles' distance on the right hand.

As we intended returning by the Birs Nimrûd to Baghdad, we did not delay to examine it, and arrived in the evening at Kifil, which, being the burial-place of the prophet Ezekiel, is chiefly inhabited by Jews.

We encamped for the night on the bank of the Hindiyah. Our horses and mules were, as before, picketed in front of the tents, and a careful watch was set over them, the neighbourhood enjoying the reputation of producing some very clever thieves. In the morning we went to the tomb of the Prophet, over which is a small whitewashed, pine-apple-shaped cone, similar in form to that over the tomb of Zobeide at Baghdad. It stands in the centre of the village, from among the scattered houses of which rise some lofty date-palms. Traversing a paved court, we entered a low doorway, over which was an inscription in Hebrew, and found ourselves in a small synagogue of a peculiar style of architecture, vaulted over, and both roof and walls covered with scroll-work and paintings, chiefly of flowers. A number of Hebrew

inscriptions were also written on tablets, and some paltry ornaments decorated the sides of the building.

Opposite to the entrance was another low doorway, giving admittance to the chamber in which was the tomb. The latter was a plain platform of brick, some seven feet in length by four wide and six high, and covered with a Persian shawl. Small pieces of paper, on which were inscribed prayers imploring the intercession and assistance of the Prophet, were pasted on the sides of the platform, some having only recently been affixed. Similar invocations were hung on the walls of the chamber, which were decorated much in the same style as the synagogue outside. A few Jews were loitering about. A Rabbi on whom we called, conducted us over the building. He informed us that once a year the Jews from the most distant parts of Assyria and Babylonia come on a pilgrimage to the tomb; at which time the multitude encamped round Kifil is counted by thousands, the tents stretching far and wide on every side.

From the most ancient times of which we have any knowledge the place seems to have been regarded as the veritable burial-place of Ezekiel, and the Mohammedans still look upon the spot as holy, consecrated as it is by the sepulchre of the Prophet. Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled in this country in the twelfth century, found a large number of Jews living at that time in Babylonia, and gives a description of the tomb as it existed when he visited it. He attributes the erection of the synagogue to Jeconiah, King of Judah, whose name, as well as that of Ezekiel, he says, was inscribed on the walls of the building. He also mentions that a large library of most ancient manuscripts was then contained in the synagogue, the lessons on the Day of Atonement being read out of a Pentateuch written by Ezekiel himself. The Prince of the Captivity at Baghdad, and the principal Jews, used regularly to visit the synagogue, accompanied by enormous crowds of Israelitish pilgrims from all parts of the East. These times

have now departed, and this magnificence and display permitted by the tolerant Khalifs to the subject Jews, is far from being followed by their degenerate successors. The library has disappeared, a few volumes, comparatively modern, alone remaining. The sixty synagogues which the traveller asserts to have existed as late as the twelfth century, are no more to be seen, and the wretched mud hovels of the present poverty-stricken inhabitants represent the once prosperous settlement surrounding the sepulchre of the Jewish Prophet.

The wind having veered round, we left our tents, for which we should have no further necessity for some time, behind us, with our horses, at Kifil, to wait our return, and, again embarking on the Hindiyah, dropped down to Cufa in a few hours. Of this once famous city, the seat of the Khalifat until it was transferred to Baghdad, in 763, by the Khalif Al Mansoor, hardly a trace now remains; and it certainly lessens the surprise at the total disappearance of the more ancient cities, when it is found that a comparatively modern town of such renown is, as it were, completely blotted out. Some insignificant heaps of pebbles scattered over the surface of the plain alone remain to indicate the site of a great city.

A few huts, inhabited by Arabs, stood on the bank, and among these we procured mules to take us to Meshed Ali, which was visible at six or seven miles' distance across the desert. The town, which stands on the plain, on the shore of a lake formed at the time of the overflow of the Hindiyah, is of a square form, surrounded by strong and lofty walls, and is devoid of those palm-groves and trees which form such handsome appendages to Kerbelah. It stands bare and naked, the gilded dome of the mosque of Ali glittering in the sun, and with the adjoining minarets rising high above the roofs of the surrounding houses. We entered through a dilapidated gate in the town wall, and met one of our Bashi

Bazouks whom we had sent on, returning to us with a request from the mudir that we should stay at his house.

We accordingly rode thither through the wretched streets, and found ourselves shortly after installed in the residence of the mudir. Our host was a short, fat, little man, who, different from any other Turk whom we had before met, made no secret of his grievances against the government; asserting that neither he nor his staff, his soldiers, nor any one else, were ever paid their just due, the money given out at head-quarters for the purpose being abstracted long before it should have reached the final claimants.

The mudir, having but lately come to this part of the empire, had been most savagely attacked by the Baghdad boils, with which he was covered, one of them extending from his wrist to his elbow, and depriving him of the use of one arm for so long as it should last. He seemed convinced that the European doctors knew of a remedy for this disorder, and several times asked us to request Dr. Hyslop to send him something that would at once cure him. The poor man, what between the boils, his poverty, and, worse than all, his inability to enrich himself—from the lack of opportunities of plunder at such a place as Meshed Ali—was in a sad state of depression. He was very anxious to know whether there was really treasure buried in the Birs Nimrûd, and declared that, but for fear of losing money in excavating, he would begin to dig at once himself. He asked repeatedly what was done in England with the antiquities that had been dug up at Mosul and Babylon; and when told that they were put into museums that learned men might read the writing upon them, and thus learn all about the ancient people who had sculptured the “old stones,” he seemed more puzzled than ever at the extraordinary ideas of the infidels. After some time he became very confidential, and, taking us apart from his servants into a private room, earnestly requested us to inform the Resident

at Baghdad that the greater portion of the large annual sums which had been from time to time bequeathed by divers Indian potentates for the maintenance of the mosque of Ali, the continued payment of which had been promised by the British Government when the territories of the former donors had been annexed, was abstracted and diverted to other uses by the person then the channel of communication between the Indian Government and the priests of the mosque. The only remedy he saw for this sad state of things was that he should himself become the distributor of the annuities, and that the large sum, exceeding, we were afterwards told, 50,000*l.* per annum, paid by us as the successors of the defunct princes, should pass through his hands. The poor man, in his eagerness to grasp at such a golden prize, was blind to the betrayal of his motives for making such a request; but such is often the case with an Oriental, who, to the deepest cunning and duplicity, often joins the most childish simplicity. We promised to mention his request, but gave him very little hope of its being granted. However, he himself perceived no difficulty, and already seemed cheered by the prospect of the gigantic system of speculation which he fancied he saw looming before him.

The day after our arrival at Meshed Ali we rode for seven or eight miles along the shore of the lake to a cave or excavation in some sandstone cliffs, which is supposed by the Arabs to be of great extent. The mouth, or opening, was about fifty feet above the level of the ground, whence a passage, some five feet in height, penetrated straight into the rock for a distance of twenty paces, and then turned off to the right, soon after descending abruptly, and becoming blocked up with fallen stones and rubbish. The floor was covered with bat-dung, and, from the number of these creatures that hung to the projections of the surrounding rocks, the stench was abominable. Nothing further could be done without a regular exploration, and this could only

be effected by the removal of the rubbish, which prevented further advance. It seemed, however, to have far more the appearance of a natural than an artificial cavity, as it is maintained to be by the Arabs. We saw the exterior of the mosque of Ali from an adjoining house, in the same manner that we had seen those of Hosein and Abbas at Kerbelah. The structure itself, which is in perfect repair, has a much richer appearance than the two latter, being gilded all over from base to dome. Even the bricks of which it is built are covered with a thick coating of gold, which, in this pure and dry atmosphere, still retains its original brightness. The two lofty minarets which stand near, and whose galleries are of metal beautifully and delicately worked, are also covered with gilding. The designs on the gateway, worked out in carved and gilded bricks, are exceedingly rich and gorgeous. The slightest gleam of sunshine is reflected from the burnished gold surface, which glitters dazzlingly in the rays.

Although containing the tomb of such a near relative of the Prophet, who, according to the Sheahs, should have succeeded him in the sovereignty over the faithful, yet the town is in a very decayed state, the population not exceeding 5000, or a tenth of that of Kerbelah, which is in a much more prosperous condition. It is also a place of pilgrimage, though to a much lesser extent than the burial-place of Hosein, and a number of khans are set apart for the reception and accommodation of the pious, who contribute largely to the support and embellishment of the shrine.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BIRS NIMRÛD — HILLEH — VISIT TO THE PASHA — AL
HYMER — MUJELIBÈ, OR BABEL — KASR — THE RUINS OF
BABYLON — BOWLS FOUND IN THE MOUND OF AMRAM —
CARAVAN OF PERSIAN PILGRIMS — EASTERN JUSTICE — SAIL
DOWN THE TIGRIS IN THE "COMET" — RUINS OF SELEUCIA
AND CTESIPHON — GIBBON'S ACCOUNT OF THE SACK OF THE
PALACE — TOMB OF MOHAMMED'S BARBER — TURKISH OPPRES-
SION — ARAB ENCAMPMENT — CANALS — TOMB OF THE PROPHET
EZRA — JUNCTION OF THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WE left Meshed Ali on our return to Baghdad on the 4th of January, and having crossed the desert in a couple of hours to Cufa, there embarked in a small boat, and were towed up to Kifil in eight hours by our active crew of half-naked Arabs. The wind was contrary to us on this occasion also, as it had veered round to the north, after continuing for some time southerly. The wide and deep river, for so the Hindiyah had become, from the wearing away of its banks by the current, expanded sometimes into shallow lakes, through which our craft was poled slowly along among reeds and rushes. The banks of the canal and the edges of the marsh were cultivated in some places with crops of rice, the land being tilled by some aquatic Arabs, who lived in wigwams composed of bundles of the long reeds which grew everywhere in the greatest luxuriance, sometimes concealing the villages until we had approached quite near.

This was a memorable day in the annals of the "fucile." Seeing at some distance before us a few teal feeding in a pool not far from the canal, we advanced, under cover of the bank, as near to them as we could. Demetri landed, and made the most elaborate preparations for stalking the unsuspecting birds, having first double-shotted the deadly but most uncertain weapon, for which, in spite of its numerous shortcomings and failures, he still retained a fond affection. Just as he reached a large bunch of rushes which grew a few yards from the bank, an enormous pelican rose, heavily

flapping its huge wings within five yards of his feet, and the "fucile," to the intense surprise of all, including its owner, going off, the unhappy bird fell riddled and mangled before the delighted Demetri, who at once announced his intention of cooking the spoil; a resolution which the strong fishy odour proceeding from it soon induced him to abandon. The "fucile" was again carefully loaded, the Arab crew taking a lively interest in the operation, as they had evidently conceived an exalted opinion of its powers of destruction from the shattered state of the unfortunate bird. The chief commenced cautiously to ascertain whether he could purchase such a valuable weapon, but the price set on it by the elated Demetri was evidently far beyond his means, and with a sigh he dismissed the thought of obtaining the wished-for prize.

Having landed at Kifil, the direct route to which across the desert from Meshed Ali was at the time unsafe, being exposed to the attacks of plundering parties of the Aneyza who were hovering about, we pitched our tents in the same spot that we had before encamped on, and met there our horses and muleteers, who had remained behind. The next morning we started for Hilleh, intending on our way to stop at the Birs Nimrûd, which was about halfway. On approaching it, we found the soil of the plain wet and plashy, the winter rains having softened the surface of mud caked and hardened by the summer's sun. A quantity of rushes, flags, and other aquatic plants, among which were large flocks of wild geese and ducks, grew to the north of the mound, on which side the marsh approached nearest to it.

The Birs Nimrûd has so often been described by several travellers, and its form and general appearance is so well known, that a cursory allusion to it will be sufficient. The great mound rises precipitously from the plain on the western side, and slopes downwards more gradually to the opposite, or eastern. It is of a yellowish hue, from the bricks of which it is composed being of that colour, and is bare and



devoid of any kind of vegetation, no plants or grass finding sustenance for their roots on its blasted and seared sides. The top is crowned by a pile of brickwork fused into a solid mass by the action of intense heat, and great fragments, seemingly torn off from it, strew the side of the mound. It is hard to imagine how a heat so fierce as that which has thus melted the brick into a solid mass of vitreous slag could have been produced. Lightning would seem to be the only agent capable of such powerful action, but it would be partial in its effects, while the whole of these remains are equally vitrified.

The mound itself is a huge mass of bricks, clay, and broken pottery. Some of the remains of the terraces by which it formerly rose from the plain on the east side, are of a red-coloured brick, others are of a light yellow, and the two colours are kept distinct, as if each terrace was of a different hue. Thousands of bricks on which cuneiform characters were inscribed lay about, and there were also pieces of stone scattered on the surface. The mortar used seemed to have been simply lime; a very thin coating of which, laid between the bricks, was now so hard and adhesive that it formed one body with them. The height of the whole structure from the level of the ground to the top of the brickwork at the summit is said to be 235 feet, its circumference 2286. Near the high mound is a second but lower one, evidently covering some ancient ruins; but, as there are Mussulman sanctuaries built on it, it is not allowed to make excavations for the purpose of ascertaining what may lie buried underneath.

It would seem to be still a matter of conjecture and dispute between antiquaries, what was the precise nature and purpose of the building of which Birs Nimrûd is the ruin. The bricks all bear the name of Nebuchadnezzar, who, however, Mr. Layard says, "may have merely added to or rebuilt an earlier edifice." Our supposition is that it was

the temple of Belus, which Herodotus describes as rising in terraces one above the other to the number of eight, and the height of a stadium, or 500 feet, the ascent from one terrace to the other being by flights of steps. Distinct traces and indications of stages have been observed by travellers. The Jews believe the Birs Nimrûd to be the remains of the scriptural Tower of Babel. The old traveller Benjamin of Tudela describes it as it was in his time, particularly mentioning the fact that the brick walls at the top were split and shivered to the foundation by lightning.

Sir R. K. Porter found towards the north-west extensive mounds and embankments, which in his opinion formed part of the ancient Babylon, and although of the mighty walls mentioned by Herodotus there now exist no remains which can be identified, yet it would appear that the city extended far on the western as well as the eastern bank of the river, and that the Birs Nimrûd was contained within the circumference of its boundaries. The ancient Babylon being, according to Herodotus, about 15 miles square, there is nothing absurd or contradictory in this supposition, from which, if correct, it would also appear that the far larger portion of the city stood on the western bank. At the time of its capture by Alexander, the circumference of Babylon is stated by historians to have been about 45 miles. He threw down and destroyed a large portion of the city walls, to raise the funeral pile of Hephæstion; and, wishing to restore the temple of Belus, employed for the space of two months ten thousand men in clearing away the rubbish from the ruins. In the midst of so many conflicting opinions regarding the building of which the Birs Nimrûd is the ruin, it would seem evident, from the number of bricks which have been discovered bearing the name of Nebuchadnezzar, that, if not founded by that monarch, it must at least have been restored and repaired by him. The more thorough exploration of the neighbouring mounds may perhaps throw some new light upon the long-disputed question

as to the builder and the destination of the huge edifice which now stands solitary and lonely in the midst of the desolate waste.

We arrived at Hilleh in the evening, our road, for some distance before reaching it, lying through palm groves and gardens. The town had the accustomed ruinous, deserted appearance. We rode through the half-empty and decayed streets to a house which we were conducted to by a cavass whom the Pasha had sent to us as a guide. The town is built of materials chiefly brought from the neighbouring ruins of Babylon, from which bricks are still daily extracted in quantities, it being cheaper and less troublesome to bring them on donkeys for a few miles, than to make them on the spot. Although Hilleh is said, apparently with much exaggeration, to contain 10,000 inhabitants, there are no public buildings of any note.

We crossed the bridge shortly after our arrival, and paid a visit to the Pasha, who, having only recently arrived, was suffering fearfully from the Baghdad boils. He had but lately come to his present government, which was subordinate to that of Baghdad, from Acre, where he had remained for some years, and his departure from which he bitterly regretted. His house looked out on the river, here about 200 yards in width. The current sluggish and the water dark and discoloured, it flows through the centre of the town, which is surrounded on all sides by a wide belt of palm groves, under which the inhabitants spend much of their time in summer. The wretched bazaars are half in ruins, the few articles exposed for sale being those adapted to the wants of the neighbouring Arabs. The inhabitants are supposed to be disaffected to the Turks, probably on account of successive spoliations, and, to keep them in order, a small body of troops are usually garrisoned in the town. We returned to our house, which belonged to the treasurer of the Pasha, who, by some mercantile business which he had in Baghdad,

had been brought into communication with English merchants, a circumstance of which he seemed very proud.

We devoted the next day to visiting the ruins of Babylon, and particularly the remarkable ruin called Al Hymer by the Arabs, lying about seven or eight miles to the east of Hilleh. We rode to it across the desert plain, which was intersected in every direction by the remains of great numbers of ancient canals, showing how careful had been, in former times, the cultivation of the now neglected soil.

Al Hymer is a mound of a pyramidal form, somewhat similar to that of the Birs Nimrûd. Its circumference is said to be 276 yards, and its height about 60. The lower part seems to have been constructed of sun-baked bricks, the upper of burnt, and on the top are the remains of a building wholly composed of the latter. The original edifice is supposed to have been of a square form, rising in successive terraces to the summit, in the usual shape of the sacred structures of Mesopotamia. Many of the bricks bear inscribed the name of Nebuchadnezzar, or, as Dr. Hincks reads it, Nabukudurruchur. They are bound together with mud, the remarkably adhesive and solid cement used at the Birs Nimrûd not having been employed here. The mound of Al Hymer does not bear any signs of having ever been subjected to the action of fire. The bricks are of a deep red colour, from whence its name; and it is not considered to have formed any portion of the ancient Babylon. Some recent excavations seem to have been made, one, as we were informed, by a Frenchman, whose name was not mentioned.

From Al Hymer we rode, in two hours, to the Mujelibè, or "Upturned," also called by the Arabs Babel, the desert between continuing to be covered with the remains of ancient canals and small mounds, with fragments of pottery strewn about in great quantities. The circumference of this enormous mound is said to be nearly the same as that of the Birs, viz., 2111 feet. It is of a square form, and about 500 yards'

distance from the river. The whole of the buildings are constructed of sun-dried bricks, with a layer of reeds mixed with mud between each course. These reeds are still as sound and tough as when laid in their places, more than 2400 years ago, and the straw which was used in the making of the bricks is still equally perfect.

The top of the mound, which is of unequal height, is broken and furrowed deeply by rains. Some fragments of walls are still to be seen standing on it. At the south-east and north, the points at which it is highest, it seems to be more than 100 feet in height. Numerous traces of the excavations that had been made were visible; but the holes were being rapidly filled up by the crumbling and loose soil. No discoveries of any great importance have been made at the Mujelibè. It seems to have been used as a burial-place by the people of the district after the destruction of ancient Babylon, the numerous coffins disinterred being referred by Mr. Layard to the time of the Seleucidæ. It is the largest mound on the east bank of the river, and stands detached, its sides facing the four cardinal points. At the season of the year when we visited it it was bare and arid. A few grey-coloured owls that we roused from their roosting-places among the ruins flew around, hooting angrily at being disturbed, and a hare that sprang up before us was coursed for some time by a pair of greyhounds that had followed our Bashi Bazouks, but was finally lost among the ruins of the ancient canals.

From the Mujelibè we rode to the Kasr, or palace, as it is called by the Arabs, another large mound, about a quarter of an hour to the south of the former. Although somewhat smaller than the Mujelibè, its sides are more clearly defined. The surface, which is uneven, is broken into numerous elevations and depressions. In one of these hollows lies still the lion which was excavated by Mr. Rich. It stands over the body of a man whose left knee is bent upward, while his right hand is raised touching the belly of the lion. The

figures are of black basalt, and of the rudest workmanship and design. The limbs of both, which are squared, but not rounded, seem to have been left in an unfinished state. To the north of the mound is the isolated tree called by the Arabs Athleh, which they represent to be the only specimen of the kind in existence. They say that it stood in the gardens of the ancient Babylon, and that when the rest of the city was destroyed, it was preserved by God, in order that Ali might tie his horse to its trunk and perform his devotions under its shade after the great battle of Hilleh. It is supposed to be a kind of tamarisk. Its trunk is of no great circumference, and its tapering and slender branches are furnished with leaves narrow and long like those of a willow, which tremble and rustle in the slightest breeze. By those who have examined it it is supposed to be of great age, and may possibly have witnessed, in all its glory, the mighty city of which the shapeless heaps of rubbish around are now the only remains.

About the centre of the mound of the Kasr stands a large mass of masonry, which seems as fresh in colour and, as much as remains of it, uninjured by time, as if recently completed. The bricks, which are yellow, with sharp edges, some of them having inscribed on the lower surface cuneiform characters, are bound together by a strong whitish cement. Ruins of walls composed of these solid and durable materials may be traced for some distance, but no connected form can be given to the remains of the building of which they formed a part. These fragments are considered without doubt to have been a portion of the original edifice, and to have stood in the midst of what was once one of the fortified enclosures within the walls of the mighty city.

As I have before stated, the whole town of Hilleh seems to have been built of the bricks taken for ages from these mounds. Even while we were there we saw some old men busily employed in loading their donkeys with some they

had just rooted out of the rubbish. No stones have been as yet discovered, all the masonry consisting solely of bricks, in many places so firmly cemented together, that it is impossible to separate without breaking them. A number of the bricks lying about bore traces of having been not only coloured, but also covered with enamel, which still remains quite perfect. On one brick was the impression of the foot of a dog which had trodden on it when in a soft state, and, having afterwards been burnt, had retained the mark clear and distinct.

Pieces of glass and pottery were lying about in large quantities, and occasionally small earthenware vessels are disinterred by the Arabs while seeking for bricks. In such cases they are converted at once to domestic uses and soon disappear. The remains of a large embankment, running from the Mujelibè in a south-easterly direction for a long distance (it is said upwards of two miles), and then turning at right angles to the south-west, and running in that direction towards the river, was plainly to be discerned at some hundred yards' distance.

Numerous other ramparts or banks of rubbish, but broken and disconnected, were visible within the enclosure thus formed. No traces whatever have been as yet found, on either side of the river, of the lofty walls and deep and broad ditch mentioned by Herodotus as having originally existed. The whole defences, with their towers and other works, have become completely obliterated; and although the historian also relates that the walls were pulled down and destroyed by Darius, it is, as Mr. Layard says, hard to believe that any human labour could have caused such a total disappearance of every trace, even the most minute.

The Mujelibè, or Babel, as the Arabs call it, and the Kasr, are both within what was once undoubtedly an enclosure surrounded by walls, and as Herodotus says that in each division of the city there were spaces surrounded by lofty

walls, one of which contained the palace, the other the temple of Belus, it is suggested that these mounds may be the remains of the first, and the Birs Nimrûd, on the west side of the ruins, of the second.

Mr. Layard says, in his clear and able description, "It may be inferred that Babylon was built on the same general plan as Nineveh. More than one fortified enclosure formed by lofty walls and towers, and containing the royal palaces and the temples, with their numerous dependent buildings, court-yards, and gardens, rose in different quarters of the city. They were so built and guarded as to be able to resist an enemy and stand a protracted siege. Around them were the common dwellings of the people, with their palm groves, their orchards, and their small plots of corn land. It must not be forgotten that the outer walls of Nineveh as well as those of Babylon have entirely disappeared. Are we to suppose that the historians in their descriptions confounded them with those surrounding the temples and palaces, and that these exterior fortifications were mere ramparts of mud and brushwood, such as are still raised round modern eastern cities? Such defences, when once neglected, would soon fall to dust and leave no traces behind. I confess that I can see no other way of accounting for the entire disappearance of these exterior walls."

This utter devastation, this uncertainty as to the actual limits of the great city, this desolation of the surrounding desert, fulfil to the letter the words of Isaiah, who prophesied of Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms," "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces:



and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

We returned to Hilleh, passing by the mound of Amram, not far south of the Kasr on our left hand. In this mound Mr. Layard found bowls with inscriptions in the ancient Chaldean language, which, being afterwards deciphered, were found to have been written by the Jews of the Captivity at Babylon, by whom they were used as charms and talismans against evil spirits and diseases. For some distance before we reached the town the banks of the river were covered with palm-trees, on which, in spite of many obstacles, the greatest care and attention were bestowed, the water being led up to the root of each by means of small channels everywhere intersecting the ground.

We took our departure from Hilleh, on our return to Baghdad, early on the 7th of January. Having passed once more through the mighty ruins around, we reached in some time a large canal, over which we crossed by a bridge, and soon after arrived at a village called Mahowil. Here we halted for a short time, and in the evening rode on to a large khan called Iskenderieh, where, pitching our tent upon the high platform in the centre, we passed the night. This khan was erected in performance of a religious vow by the prime minister of Fetteh Ali, Shah of Persia, for the accommodation of pilgrims to the shrine of Ali, and was a large and well-built structure of its kind.

The next day we left for Baghdad, at which we hoped to arrive early. Soon after leaving the khan, we met an immense caravan of Persian pilgrims bound to Kerbelah, many of whom, to judge by their retinue, and the quantity of luggage they carried with them, were very rich. There was also a long train of mules, bearing their usual disgusting burdens of dead bodies, which, in some instances, borne before the horses and litters of the relatives, gave to that portion of the caravan the appearance of a funeral procession. The multitude wound

their course in a continuous stream for a great distance, sometimes breaking the line for a few hundred yards, as if to preserve the separation of the encampments, that had hitherto remained apart. At the most moderate computation, there could not have been fewer than 5,000 persons in the crowd of pilgrims, whose footsteps were directed to the sacred city of Kerbelah, where next day they hoped to offer up their devotions at the shrine of Hoscin.

Having passed by the caravan, we gave our horses the rein, and leaving our muleteers behind with the tents and what baggage we had brought with us, soon came in sight of the cone of the tomb of Zobeide. Shortly after, crossing the rotten bridge of boats, we rode into the court of the Residency, having been absent twelve days.

A short time after our arrival, Demetri appeared with dismay depicted on his usually inexpressive features, and informed us, as distinctly as his excitement would permit him, that the muleteers had returned without our baggage, having been pounced upon, shortly after we left them to ride on to Baghdad, by a party of five Bedoween, of whose tribe they professed themselves ignorant, who had seized and carried off in triumph the sacks borne by the mules. The loss of his pots and pans caused sad grief to the worthy Greek, whose constantly repeated ejaculation, "Adesso dove trovare una cucina," showed how deeply he had taken the calamity to heart. By and by the muleteers reported that, from certain circumstances, they had reason to believe that a village of the settled Arabs near the Hindiyah was the home of the robbers. Orders were accordingly sent by the Pasha, after the peculiar mode of justice pursued in this country, to seize the first man belonging to the village who could be got at, and to hold him as a hostage until all the things taken were returned.

This was accordingly done in a few days; and, in spite of protestations of innocence on the part of his village and

kindred, all of which were regarded with utter indifference, one of the principal men was consigned to prison; a very different place in the East from the clean, whitewashed apartment, with its comparatively luxurious accommodation, provided for malefactors in England. And in prison he remained for some weeks; nor was it until every mode but one had been tried, that at last the children of Ishmael were induced to deliver up the spoil, or at least a portion of it. The grief of Demetri was assuaged when he was assured that, by resorting to the bazaar, he could replace his lost and dearly-loved "eucina"; and, although he still continued to regret the articles which long service had endeared to him, time, the great consoler, had its usual effect, and the worthy Greek allowed himself to be comforted.

Some wild boars having been seen in the neighbourhood of Akkerkouf, a hunt was organized, to which a number of the Europeans resident in Baghdad were invited. It was arranged that we were to ascend the river in the "Comet," to a spot some distance above Kathimain, or, as it is commonly called, Kazmain, where we should land, and, mounting horses previously sent on, look for the alleged pigs. We happened to run aground on a sandbank near Kazmain, and accordingly landed there, instead of higher up, leaving the steamer to continue its course to the spot originally fixed on, as soon as she should be got off.

We rode over the plain towards Akkerkouf. The desert in this part is composed of mud, which, dried and caked hard by the summer sun, a sufficient quantity of rain had not yet fallen to soften. It was covered in many places with dense beds of reeds, which form a favourite cover for wild boar, but it was very soon evident that the dryness and hardness of the soil had forced these animals to seek for better feeding-places.

After riding about for a few hours, in the vain hope of

finding one which might possibly still remain, we returned to the steamer, which, having got off the shoal, had ascended the river some seven or eight miles. In the evening we turned the vessel's head down the stream, working our way slowly ; but, in spite of every precaution, we again ran on a bank, and stuck fast. After remaining in that position for a couple of hours, we were at last obliged to resort to the scheme of blowing the water out of the boilers, and the ship, thus lightened, easily floated off.

We returned to Baghdad at ten p.m., and, the bridge having been opened to permit our passage, the "Comet" was once more at her old moorings opposite the Residency. Owing to the unusually dry winter, the waters of the Tigris, at this period of the year generally rather high, were unusually low, and the current very sluggish. The great rising of the river is in April ; the second, or autumn overflow, in November ; the former much the larger of the two. In some years the country around Baghdad is covered with water, and the city itself stands then like an island in the midst of a lake. The water gradually disappears, leaving the surface of the soil damp ; and the mud, then exposed to the fierce heat of the summer sun, cracks in every direction. The luxuriant growth of reeds, which in such places appears after the inundation, quickly dries up and withers away ; and in the autumn, the spot which in summer was green from the vegetation with which it was covered, becomes bare, parched, and arid. A number of fish of various kinds inhabit the waters of the Tigris. Occasionally a shark is caught in the river. Captain Selby told us that one of three feet in length had been taken opposite the Residency, in the ~~vicinity~~ fore of the town. The inhabitants generally dislike the food thus provided them. It seems, indeed, as if Mohammedans looked upon fish in much the same light as pork ; in this respect differing from the Jews, with whom it is everywhere a favourite meal.

Captain Selby having kindly offered us a passage to Bassora in the "Comet," we left Baghdad with him on the 21st of January. We bade farewell to Dr. and Mrs. Hyslop, to whom we are under many obligations for their hospitality, and whose many kindnesses lavished on us during our stay we shall not easily forget. The Turkish steamer "Baghdad" left just after us, as if her commander had waited for our departure to make his own monthly trip down the river.

After having gone about seventeen miles, we landed to walk across a peninsula formed by a sudden bend of the river. Upon this peninsula are the ruins of the renowned city of Ctesiphon, the capital of the Arsacidae, or Parthian monarchs of Persia. Built, as some suppose, from the ruins of Babylon—a statement which, considering the distance of the place from which the materials must have been brought, it seems somewhat hard to credit—Ctesiphon, originally a camp of the Parthian kings pitched on the side of the Tigris opposite to the Greek city of Seleucia, gradually grew into a large village, and thence into the proportions of a great city. Seleucia, called after Seleucus Nicator, by whom it was built, at the point where the Nahr Malka, or canal of Nebuchadnezzar, debouched into the Tigris, was, after the destruction of Babylon, long the principal city of the East, its inhabitants at one time amounting to no less a number than six hundred thousand.

Opposite to it, afterwards, arose Ctesiphon, to which it was joined by a bridge of which some traces are said to be still visible at very low water. The two cities were united and erected into one capital by the Sassanian kings, when the ancient religion of Zoroaster was established and the sceptre recovered by the line of the Persian kings; from which circumstance it was called by the Arabs *Al Madain*, or "The Cities." The Romans sacked and plundered both cities in the second century, and it is said that three hundred thousand of the inhabitants perished in the conflagration of

Seleucia. But the final blow was inflicted by the Khalif Omar, who, after the battle of Kadesia, sacked the already decayed cities, and massacred all the inhabitants. The ruins served as quarries for the building of Baghdad and Bassora; and while apparently nothing whatever remains to mark the site of Seleucia, an enormous arch 100 feet in height by 80 in width and 150 in depth, is all that now stands of the once magnificent palace of the Sassanian kings. On both sides of this arch, which is built of bricks a foot square and two inches and a half thick, firmly bound together with cement, are the few remains which still exist of the buildings by which it was flanked. Forming a great central hall facing the east, the first rays of the rising sun would penetrate into the principal apartment in the palace of the monarch of the nation that had long been the adorers of that luminary.

Gibbon, in his account of the sacking and plunder of this palace by the Moslems in 637, describes the wealth and treasures of the once magnificent pile. "The capital was taken by assault, and the tumultuous resistance of the people gave a keener edge to the sabres of the Moslems, who shouted with religious transport:—'This is the white palace of Chosroes! this is the promise of the apostle of God.' The poor robbers of the desert were suddenly enriched beyond the measure of their hope or knowledge. Each chamber revealed a new treasure secreted with art or ostentatiously displayed. The gold and silver, the various wardrobes and costly furniture, surpassed (says Abulfeda) the estimate of fancy or numbers. One of the apartments of the palace was decorated with a carpet of silk sixty cubits in length, and as many in breadth; a paradise, or garden, was depicted on the ground; the flowers, fruits, and shrubs were imitated by the figures of the gold embroidery and the colours of the precious stones; and the ample square was encircled by a variegated and verdant border. The Arabian general persuaded his soldiers to relinquish their claim, in the reasonable hope that

the eyes of the Khalif would be delighted with the splendour of the workmanship. Regardless of the merit of art and the pomp of royalty, the rigid Omar divided the prize among his brethren of Medina. The picture was destroyed; but such was the intrinsic value of the materials, that the share of Ali alone was sold for 20,000 drachmas. A mule that carried away the tiara and cuirass, the belt and bracelets, of Chosroes was overtaken by the pursuers. The gorgeous trophy was presented to the Commander of the Faithful, and the gravest of his companions condescended to smile when they beheld the white beard, the hairy arms, and uncouth figure of the veteran who was invested with the spoils of the great king. The sack of Ctesiphon was followed by its desertion and gradual decay. The Saracens disliked the air and situation of the place, and Omar was advised by his general to remove the seat of government to the western side of the Euphrates."

At some distance from this fragment of the palace of the Sassanian kings, a high embankment or mound, supposed to be the remains of a portion of the ancient walls, runs from the river in a north-easterly direction with two distinct breaks, for a distance of about a mile. This rampart or embankment appeared to be 40 feet in height, and half as much more in thickness. The whole surface of the ground between it and the Tank Kesra, as the gigantic arch is called by the Arabs, is uneven, being covered with small heaps of rubbish, which lie scattered over the plain, interspersed with patches of camel-thorn, affording shelter to wild animals of various sorts, from a lion to a partridge. Some hundred yards from the Tank Kesra stands the tomb of Selman, the barber of Mohammed, which is visited as a place of pilgrimage by the barbers of Baghdad, who suppose themselves under the immediate protection of that eminent member of their confraternity, who long shaved the beard of the Prophet. The neighbourhood of the ruins is said at certain times of the year to be greatly infested by lions, who follow thither the

herds of wild boar on which they chiefly live. Not far from the river, between it and the Tank, are two dilapidated tombs, one of which contains the body of the secretary or scribe of the Prophet, and the other that of the last Khalif, Mostasem Billah, who was put to death by Hulaku, the grandson of Genghis Khan, when the city of Baghdad was captured by the Tatar hordes.

As no traces whatever are said to exist of the still more ancient and magnificent Seleucia, we did not cross the Tigris to its site. By the time we had arrived at the opposite side of the neck of land formed by the bend of the river, the steamer made its appearance, and having embarked, we continued our course down the stream.

We had taken on board at Baghdad a number of Montifik Arabs, whom their scheikh, then there on business relating to the tribe, had begged Captain Selby to convey to their homes; a request which he very kindly granted. Some of the stories of the oppression practised on these people by the Turkish authorities represent the conduct of the latter as most ingeniously cruel. One mode by which the screw is applied was related to us. When the rice or other crops of these sedentary Arabs are nearly ripe, an impost is ordered to be at once levied; and as they are dependent on agriculture for subsistence, and cannot easily remove out of reach like their more fortunate Bedoween brethren, the demand, often exorbitant, must be satisfied. Accordingly a money-lender, generally a Jew of Baghdad, is applied to for an advance, which he grants only on condition that, in addition to the enormous interest which he stipulates for, the money shall be repaid him in wool taken at a valuation of about half what it would bring in the open market. The Montifik had been lately pillaged in this way. The sum of 30,000 Persian kerauns, or about 1500*l.*, was levied on the tribe; and the Jew bargained for the reimbursement of this amount, to them a large one, in wool at half-price, it being shrewdly suspected that

some officials very high in office went shares with him in his profits on the transaction.

The banks of the river on both sides continue all the way down a dead flat, studded over in many places with shapeless mounds and large heaps of rubbish, the remains of the former cities of the plains. A small shrub, used as fuel by the Arabs, and from which liquorice is extracted, grows in patches along the sides of the stream. A few Arab encampments were scattered over the plains, near which were grazing flocks of sheep and goats, and some buffaloes. We anchored for the first night, the navigation being intricate and difficult on account of the numerous shoals.

The whole of the second day we continued to sail through a country in all respects like that through which we had passed during the first. Mounds and heaps of rubbish were again seen scattered over the desert, and the only signs of life were few Arab encampments of black tents, near one of which we landed the Montifik Arabs we had brought with us from Baghdad. The second night, instead of anchoring, as on the first, we continued our course, and early in the morning arrived at Koote, a large Arab village, said to be half way from Baghdad to Bassora. Here we passed the "Baghdad," or Turkish steamer, at anchor, but we did not stop.

During the course of the day we saw a large encampment of Beni Lam Arabs, whose country we were then passing through, on the left or eastern bank of the river. A number of women, clad in vivid and brilliant colours, in which scarlet predominated, lined the bank to see the steamer pass; and groups of men, most of whom held lances in their hands, stood near their tents gazing at us. The encampment continued for a considerable distance, probably half a mile, along the bank, which, being low, we could overlook from the paddle-boxes. Each tent seemed to have around it its own enclosure of brushwood and thorns, within which the flocks belonging to its owner or his family were nightly folded.

Some of the younger women, as well as we could see with a fleeting glance, were good-looking, and all the more youthful were very graceful in their movements and carriage.

We passed on the left bank the mouth of a canal going off from the Tigris to extensive marshes at some distance to the east. This canal is broad and deep, and a large volume of water seemed to flow into it from the river. It is called the Khud or Hud, and is navigable by the boats of the country for many miles. Lower down on the right bank is the entrance to another canal, called by the Arabs Um al Jemmal, which flows from the Tigris into the Euphrates, or the reverse, according to the respective heights of the rivers. This canal is not so large as the other one, but still a large body of water is contained within its banks.

During the night we passed a place called Ozeir, where is the tomb, as it is supposed, of the prophet Ezra, which is visited as a place of pilgrimage by great numbers of Jews. From the earliest ages it has been considered as the place where the Prophet was buried; and Benjamin of Tudela, when writing about it, describes it as the locality of the sepulchre.

We also passed Koorna, where the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris takes place, the former stream having left the marshes, in which it loses itself for some distance, a little above the meeting of the waters; after which the united rivers are called the Shat el Arab.

CHAPTER XXV.

MARGELE—MAIL ACROSS THE DESERT—BASSORA—A GAME OF CRICKET IN THE DESERT—BOAR-HUNTING—BUSHIRE—PERSIAN GOVERNORS—JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR OF PERSIA—PASSES OF KUTEL MALLU AND KUTELI KUMERIJ—RUINS OF THE CITY OF SHAPÛR—TIMOUR MIRZA'S MEMORIAL TABLET—THE TRIUMPH OF PERSIAN ENGINEERING—CARAVANSERAI OF MIANKUTIL—DEATH OF THE PRUSSIAN MINISTER TO TEHERAN—THE NUWAUB MEHMET HASSAN KHADOUR—THE TOWN OF SCHIRAZ—LAWLESS POPULATION—MANUFACTURES.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN the morning of the fourth day after leaving Baghdad we found ourselves at anchor at Margele, about four miles from Bassora, which stands at some distance from the river-bank. Near us lay at her moorings an English ship, which had lately arrived out with a cargo consigned to some European merchants at Baghdad, and on the bank was a square brick house used as a residence by the Vice-Consul. There were no other habitations visible, and, save that a few palm-trees grew around it, the house looked as if it had fallen into a position for which it was not intended, so desolate was the scene.

At some distance lower down, the brigantine which made a monthly trip backwards and forwards between Bassora and Bushire was at anchor in the river; and her commander soon after boarded us to learn the news, which, as an Arab on a dromedary is sent across the desert once a fortnight from Damascus to Baghdad with the mails that arrive by way of Beyrout, we possessed later than any he could have obtained by the line from Bombay to Bushire. This long ride of 800 miles across the desert is performed in nine days by one Arab, who changes his dromedary three times in the course of his journey, in one part of which he is three days without meeting with water. Although not an event of frequent occurrence, yet it sometimes happens that he meets a party of Bedoween of a different tribe, or a broken band of plunderers, who, regardless of desert law, deprive him of his

dromedary and mail-bag, but do him no further injury. To render such a proceeding as unprofitable as possible, no articles of value are allowed to be sent by this means, on the ground that, if the robbers once succeeded in appropriating anything which they could turn to account, it would act as an incentive to future deeds of violence on their part.

During the day we walked over to Bassora, which we found to be a small and half-ruined town of five or six thousand inhabitants, the wretched and dilapidated appearance of whose houses and bazaars showed how much it had decayed since the time when, owing to its situation at the mouth of the united rivers, it enjoyed almost the monopoly of the trade of Arabia with India and the shores of the Persian Gulf. Everything seemed to indicate that the progress of decay was not arrested, but still going on, as the crumbling walls and deserted dwellings but too plainly proved. How forlorn is the condition to which this once prosperous and wealthy city, whose storehouses were filled with the merchandise of the East and West, and whose streets were thronged with the merchants who came from distant lands to the great emporium of the Indian trade, has been reduced! Many causes must have contributed to such a disastrous issue; but undoubtedly the chief is Turkish misrule and mismanagement. Bassora is still the centre of a Pashalic, but one of a low class, and, unless the long-talked-of railway should be constructed, or some unforeseen circumstance should occur to arrest its decadence, it is not difficult to foresee its approaching fate.

Captain Dyer, the commander of the brigantine "Tigris," having kindly offered us a passage to Bushire, we took our leave of Captain Selby, who had been a most agreeable and pleasant host during the time we enjoyed his hospitality. Having been for many years employed on service on both rivers, he was well acquainted with the countries in which he had passed so much of his life, and was also well known

to, and greatly respected by, the Arabs, on whom he had had many opportunities of conferring small favours, of which they seemed to entertain a grateful recollection.

The wind being southerly, we were unable to sail as soon as we had anticipated, and the day succeeding our arrival at Margele was spent in a cricket-match between the crews of the "Comet" and "Tigris," the level plain of the desert affording a ready-made ground. After a well-contested match, the "Comet's" crew came off winners. The whole performance seemed to excite the most intense amazement in the minds of the Arab spectators, who, squatted on the ground, were utterly at a loss to conceive what amusement there could be in such violent exercise. Our conduct, indeed, appeared to them so unaccountable, that they could only explain it by ascribing it to that universal insanity with which they suppose all infidels to be possessed.

The brigantine, which had been built at Bombay, carried five guns, four of which were carronades, and a 24-pounder on a swivel carriage. The crew were English, but the detachment of marines on board were sepoys, the effect of which was curious—European sailors kept in check by natives.

On the 26th January, the wind having fallen nearly to a calm, we dropped down about twenty miles with the current, when the breeze again rising from the south-east, or dead against us, we had to remain at anchor while it lasted, a period of five days. This dreary time was employed by the crew in pig-shooting on the banks, which, being covered thickly with reeds and jungle, afforded a cover to innumerable wild boar. As the sailors seldom returned with an empty bag, we had soon a large supply; in addition to which the Arabs constantly brought to the ship's side numbers of the unclean animal, the touch of which they avoided by towing them after their boats. The price for a young sow was fixed at half a pound of coarse ship's gunpowder; at which rate any quantity of pork might have been purchased, and that

of a far superior quality to the article generally served out, the meat resembling in taste veal, and being free from the usual rankness of pork.

On the 1st February the wind veered round, and we soon got outside the bar; but, with its proverbial inconstancy, it again changed, and, there being but little sea-room, we once more dropped anchor and remained where we were for another day. The breeze then becoming more easterly, we weighed again, and on the 2nd reached Bushire. On the evening of the 3rd we passed on our left hand the islands of Karak, which seemed to be little more than rocks standing up out of the ocean. There being no lights, the ship dropped anchor some miles from the shore, and we had no alternative but to remain on board for that night. Next morning we called on Captain Jones, the British Resident, who at once gave us a most warm reception, and with whom we passed a most agreeable time during our stay at Bushire.

The Residency was a large and roomy edifice which, in its trimness, neatness, and perfect repair, contrasted strongly with the rest of the tumble-down and half-ruined buildings of the town. It stood outside the walls, on the shore, a terrace fronting it on the sea-side. The guard of sepoy whom we observed on duty were not altogether for show, this being the most disgracefully governed of any Eastern city we had yet seen. Near the Residency stood another house, occupied by Captain Disbrowe, the Assistant-Resident, and Dr. Wood, the physician.

The appearance and situation of Bushire have been so often described, that we must assume them to be well-known. It is, therefore, hardly necessary to say that it stands at the end of a tongue of land which, running out obliquely into the sea, forms a large harbour.

The town, which is built of stone, is defended by walls on the land side, the others being open to the sea. The streets are fully up to the usual average of filth and dirt of

every description. In narrowness and crookedness they exceeded those of any other town we had seen, very few boasting of any pavement. The water stood in deep pools in many places, and it required much care to avoid tumbling into a sheet of dark and fetid liquid, which sometimes extended for many yards along the centre of a thoroughfare. At present there are supposed to be about 12,000 inhabitants in the town, and, being of modern construction, it was probably always in much the same condition in which it is at present.

As usual in Persia, the place of governor was filled by one of the numerous Shah Zadehs, or relations of the Shah; generally men whose birth is their sole qualification for the office they hold. Highly favoured, indeed, by fortune is that town which has not to suffer from the vice and cruelty of its ruler. In the case of Bushire, the prince of the blood-royal was a greater scoundrel even than usual, and on all sides stories were told of the constantly recurring instances of his villany. His leisure hours were divided between photography and drunkenness, and, in company with a number of similar spirits, he set an example of debauchery to the people over whom he was placed. His excesses had at last reached such a pitch, that they were too much for the endurance of even the licentious Persians, and representations had been made to his father, t. e. Prince Governor of Schiraz, which it was hoped would have some effect. One outrageous act had once brought the Resident into collision with him, who threatened that, if he did not put some check on the indulgence of his evil propensities, he would personally write to the Shah, informing him of the manner in which his authority was abused by the man who represented him. This threat had the desired effect, and at once subdued him. Some of the photographs executed by this individual which were shown to us, were not badly done, one of the Shah in particular being considered an excellent likeness.

The palace where this youth held his court was a straggling collection of buildings in very bad repair, round which, as if in mockery, stood a few sentries clothed in rags, and looking like scarecrows. The bazaars are miserable and poor, there being no trade in the place itself, and the few resident merchants sending whatever they import at once into the interior. One or two Armenians, the wealthiest of these, are reported to have gained enormously during the late war. The plain comes up to the walls of Bushire, around which extends an uncultivated waste; and the sea breaks upon a flat coast composed of low-lying ledges of rock. The heat in summer is intense, the thermometer rising to over 100° Fahrenheit in the shade, and being 90° during the night, which makes the atmosphere most oppressive. The missionaries at Baghidad, Messrs. Bruhl and Hepstein, had warned us that we should meet with very great cold in the interior of Persia, and the former advised us to delay our journey until the spring was more advanced, when we could travel, as he did during his visits, with many comforts. However, as such a course would have entailed the necessity of having more mules than we travelled with, and as we did not care to delay until the weather became warm on the high lands of the interior, we decided to press on. At Bushire we were told that we should meet with but little snow between it and Schiraz, but that between the latter and Ispahan, the high ranges of hills would probably be covered deeply with it, though seldom impracticable for mules not too heavily laden.

Under these circumstances we decided on starting at once, and accordingly left Bushire on the 8th of February, after a stay there of only four days. We found the rate of travelling by caravan to be about 2*s.* 6*d.* per day for each mule, we paying 100 kerauns, or about 5*l.* for six mules to Schiraz, which we expected to reach in seven days. Captain and Mrs. Jones accompanied us part of our way across

the plain in a light phaeton, which ran easily over the soft and loose sand; but after a couple of hours we arrived at a spot beyond which a wheeled vehicle could not venture, and where we were obliged to bid them farewell. We shall not soon forget the kindness and attention shown to us by them while we remained their guests, and the agreeable evenings which we passed under their roof, during which nothing was omitted that could make the time pass pleasantly.

Once more we were travelling on land, that is, if the mud through which our mules waded up to their knees could be so called, for our road lay not far from the water, and the soil, here of a retentive and stiff nature, was but little above sea level. In many places it seemed almost impassable, but both mules and muleteers knew the ground well, and trudged through the sticky and greasy compound inspired by the consciousness that the thing must be done. After proceeding for some time over soil of this description, we came to firmer ground, and soon after, leaving the main road for a short distance, arrived at a small village called Shukadok, near which was a summer-house belonging to Captain Disbrowe, which he lent us for the night.

The next morning we started very early, as the distance between us and our next halting-place, Dillaki, was not less than twelve hours' march. We continued still over the plain between the mountains which run at some little distance inland parallel to the shore, and passed Brazgoon, a large village covering a considerable extent of ground, and surrounded by palm-trees, as well as a few other villages, which seemed to be in a tolerably flourishing condition. As we approached Dillaki we kept close to the foot of the hills, the plain on our left being converted into a marsh by the waters of some small streams which were so strongly impregnated with naphtha as to have a greenish tinge. The pungent odour from this swamp was abominable, and spread

over the surrounding country for a great distance; yet on the bank of one of these offensive streams some mills had been erected by a strong-posed native. The marsh was covered by a dense jungle of reeds, which we were told swarmed with wild boar.

Just before arriving at Dillaki we saw a curious specimen of Persian sporting, a man stalking a wild duck in the centre of a barley stubble. The latter, as if aware of the powers of his antagonist, kept exactly out of shot, waddling along, and feeding on the grains of corn as he passed. At last, tired of waiting, the Persian fired, and the duck rose, but only to recommence feeding a little further on. We left the man still intent upon the destruction of the bird that seemed to hold him in such contempt.

Dillaki we found to be a wretched village surrounded by a large grove of date-trees, which, contrasting with the bleak hills in the rear, gave it quite a picturesque appearance. It stands at the foot of the mountains which, rugged and sterile, rise behind it to a considerable height. A small fort that once existed here is now in ruins, having been destroyed some time previously by the people of Brazgoon. The neighbouring range is said to abound with wild goats and ibex. We started next morning for a caravanserai called Kunar Taktah, which was to be our next halting-place.

A short distance from Dillaki we entered a ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a considerable stream, which we crossed and recrossed several times. The path soon became very rugged and uneven. The narrow track by which we were continually ascending, almost always in single file, sometimes seemed hardly wide enough for a goat. In one or two places there were the remains of former bridges over the torrent, which, by neglect and disinclination on the part of the government to spend any money on useful works, had been allowed to go to ruin. We crossed, on leaving this valley, some small, isolated plains surrounded by low and rocky

bills devoid of trees. These plains were covered with a kind of thorny bush resembling the common thorn of England, but much smaller, growing only to a couple of feet in height. The grey limestone rocks were here and there intersected by streaks of white marble. This pass, which traverses the first of the rocky barriers that line the slope from the high table-land of the interior to the seashore, is called Kutel Mallu. On its summit stands a half-ruined hut, or guard-house, the use of which it would be difficult to guess. We soon crossed the plain of Khisht, reached the caravanserai of Kunar Taktah, at some distance from the village of the same name, and in the bala khaneh, or room, over the entrance took up our quarters for the night.

Some of the Persian caravanserais, or, as they are called, menzils, are—particularly those on any well-frequented roads—very large, and often contain accommodation for a great number of travellers. They are all built on the same plan, consisting of a court surrounded by cells elevated some two or three feet above the ground. All have doorways, but no doors, and the floor is either paved with flags, or, where these are difficult to procure, with mortar. The spaces between the back walls of these cells and the outer wall of the caravanserai is used as a stable, in which the mules and horses, tied to rings in the wall, eat their fodder off the ground. Hay for winter consumption is unknown, barley-straw, broken and bruised by the means employed in threshing it, being the only substitute. Over the archway leading into the court is a small room, in which travellers of a better class are usually placed. The front of this apartment is in most cases open, and exposed equally to heat and cold. A large platform raised some feet above the ground stands in the centre of the court, and on this, as well as on the flat roof, the muleteers in fine weather pass the night. The khandgi, or attendant, who resides in a room on one side of the entrance-gate, is entitled to an almost nominal sum for each

beast, which should not only go towards the repair of the edifice, but also pay him for keeping the court, cells, and stable clean. Fuel, and in some cases, but not often, provisions, are to be obtained from the khandgi, who makes his own bargain for what is required, and charges his customers according to their wealth, and not according to the value of the article. In many places water has also to be provided by him; for which, however, custom has settled a tariff proportionate to the distance from which it is brought; in this case nearly four miles.

We started from Kunar Taktah very early next morning, as our muleteers were anxious to get on quickly, for reasons which, as we afterwards found out, were more for their own than for our benefit. We soon entered a dark and gloomy defile called Kuteli Kumerij, and in a short time the steep banks became nearly perpendicular cliffs, the walls of rock, broken and rugged, towering upwards to a great height. For some time our narrow road serpented along the face of these rocks at some distance above the stream, descending to a level with the water when they became too precipitous. At last, suddenly turning to the left, the path ascended the face of the ravine on the northern side by a series of windings, sharp turns, and zigzags, over rocks and among crags where it seemed almost an impossibility for an animal like a loaded mule to pass. This defile equalled, if it did not surpass, in ruggedness, the worst passes to be met with in Syria; and, from its extreme narrowness, awkward consequences have ensued when the leading animals of opposite caravans have met in the centre of the gorge.

When halfway up, we encountered a train of camels descending, but had, fortunately, time to retire among some loose rocks to allow them to pass us; they had been half unladen at the summit, and, after depositing their loads, thus reduced, at the foot of the pass, would have to return again to the top for the remaining portion of their burdens.

a spot much better suited to a goat, and their hesitation and unwillingness to proceed had often to be overcome by forcible means. The train was more than half an hour in passing us, during which time we amused ourselves with the evident terror of the "ships of the desert" at thus finding themselves among such crags and precipices.

On reaching the summit we were surprised at discovering that there was no corresponding descent on the other side, the plains of Kumerij, from which the pass takes its name, commencing at the top, and reaching for some distance, till terminated by the low ridges of mountains by which they are bounded. For the remainder of the way to Kazeroun our road lay over small plains, some of which were cultivated, around the few villages scattered about, others sterile and desert. These plains are separated from each other by low ridges of stony and arid hills, forming that peculiar scenery which extends over the greater part of the vast surface of Persia. Nothing tires a traveller more than the wearisome succession of these endless plains and mountains, one of which resembles the other in every particular, the dreary sameness being unbroken by a single tree.

The larger range of mountains on the western boundary of the kingdom, near the Turkish frontier, and the wooded province of Mazanderan, or the ancient Hyrcania, on the north, form exceptions to this rule.

We arrived at Kazeroun late in the evening, and, it being quite dark, had some difficulty in finding our way through the ruinous streets. We at last halted at an archway, on one side of which were two or three large recesses or niches in the wall, some ten feet by six; and in one of these we were to take up our quarters for the night. All inquiries as to whether there was any other place in which we could stop were answered in the negative, and the utmost we could do was to maintain a large fire by which to keep ourselves warm, the weather having become very cold at night. We had already ascended 2000 feet above the sea-level, and the

charvadar, whom we had so ruthlessly deprived of the delights which he had expected to enjoy for some days in the bosom of his family, trudging sulkily, but vigorously, forward. Taking an easterly direction over the plain, we reached in a short time the Lake of Perishun, a shallow-looking sheet of water, the fenny margin of which was covered for some distance by reeds.

Across the swamp the road passed over a kind of causeway rudely made with stones and mud, which led to the foot of the cliffs over which the route lay. On the rocks at the foot of the pass, inside the court of a small house used as a halting-place by travellers, was a mutilated tablet, on which, besides three figures so obliterated that it was almost impossible to make them out, was carved a servant handing a hubble-bubble, or kalcoun, to an individual seated in front of him, with a lion grovelling at his feet. There were in some places remains of colour, as if the figures had been painted or stained in some manner. This notable piece of work was executed by order of Timour Mirza, one of the Persian princes so fêted some years ago in London, who, on his return, took, after the example of Darius and Sapor, this mode of sending his fame down to remote ages. Unhappily, however, for the success of his ambitious desire to make himself known to posterity, the passers-by seemed to have taken so much delight in defacing, in every possible manner, the bas-reliefs intended to perpetuate his features, that all traces of the hand of the sculptor were now nearly obliterated.

Soon after we began to ascend, by a series of zigzags, very creditably engineered for Persia, a high ridge of cliffs which lay before us. The roadway is paved with large stones, and the sides, which are very precipitous, are protected by parapets of masonry, some two feet in height. From one end of the country to the other this little incline,—the solitary attempt in Persia at constructing a road,—is looked upon as a triumph of engineering by the vain and

silly natives. On the top of the pass, which is called Kuteli Dokter, or Maiden's Passage, is a guard-house, as it is termed, though for what purpose placed there, save to extort money from the passers-by, it is difficult to imagine. After passing the guard-house, the road descends into a plain, on which, at some distance from each other, are holm-oaks of large size; the ground between which is cultivated by the inhabitants of some villages in the vicinity. The hills around are bare and arid; in some places covered with a kind of thorny shrub. The acorns that fall from these oaks are gathered carefully by the inhabitants, who convert them into a kind of bread, which, however, we had no opportunity of tasting.

Crossing this wooded plain, in some parts of which the trees had been beautifully grouped by the hand of Nature, we again began to ascend a ridge of hills covered chiefly with oaks, and in a little time reached our halting-place, the caravanserai of Miankutil, built in a kind of hollow in the side of the mountain. Being nearly new, we found it in better preservation and repair than any other caravanserai we had seen. The interior, however, of this stately building, which had been erected as a work of charity by a rich merchant of Schiraz, did not answer to the outward appearance. It was cold and bare, and we had much difficulty, even when aided by the promise of the usually magic back-sheesh, in inducing some of the idlers about to cut fuel for us.

We left the caravanserai early next day, and continued to ascend the mountain, our road lying through the forest which covered its sloping sides. In about an hour we gained the summit, from which our muleteers pointed out in the hazy distance a dim blue line, which they said was the sea; but it was so far off, that it was difficult to distinguish it. As the former pass was called the Maiden's, so this went by the name of Pira Zen, or the Old Woman's. It must be of considerable height, as when we crossed it there was a

great quantity of snow lying on the summit. The road down the other side was easier than the ascent, and we soon descended into the plain of Desht i Arjun, upon which also lay a thin sheet of snow. We continued for some time to ride along this plain in an easterly direction, a low ridge of rocks being on our left and a large swamp on our right. From the foot of one of these rocks gushed a copious spring, which found its way into the morass at some distance off. Around the spring was a grove of large plane-trees. Close to the spot where the water issued from the rock was a small whitewashed building, surmounted by a dome, to commemorate the appearance of the venerated Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, *before he was born!*, to a Jew, under the form of a horseman, on which occasion he killed with his sword a lion about to attack him. While yet a child Ali recalled the circumstance to the then converted Israelite, and in later times some devout Persian erected this building further to sanctify the spot and commemorate the miracle.

In about three hours after we had descended into the plain of Desht i Arjun, we began to ascend another ridge of low mountains, and passed over some miles of broken, uneven ground covered with brushwood, crossing also two streams of some size, one of which, with true Persian grandiloquence, was called the "Spring of Pearls." Towards evening we reached Khanezunch, the more than ordinarily dirty and dilapidated caravanserai where we were to sleep. In this miserable place, which, in filth and abominations of all kinds, could not be exceeded even in the country in which it stood, had died, some months previously, M. Minutoli, the Prussian Minister to the Court of Teheran, who, eager to see and report as much as he could of the country to which he had been sent, had, in neglect of the advice of his friends, persisted in travelling in the hot season without taking the precautions necessary for a European. Disliking, with every reason, among other customs and ceremonies, those of Eastern receptions, he travelled like a private indi-

vidual, taking whatever food he could procure for himself, and putting up with whatever accommodation he could get, for some time apparently without any injury. But in the end fever fastened upon him. Neglected at first, it grew in vigour and strength, and, ultimately, grappling with its victim, was victorious. With only a solitary servant to attend on him in his dying moments, he was at last stretched a corpse in a half-ruined cell at Khanezunch. His body was removed shortly after, and interred at Schiraz.

We put up in the bala khaneh, preferring the cold to the filth below, and having barricaded the front, which was open to the winds, as well as we could, we made a blazing fire, and were soon comfortable enough, in spite of the frozen temperature outside. The whole face of the country was covered with snow, which lay, as we had found, very thick on the tops of the hills, and the pools were all coated over with a thin layer of ice.

We rode over a broken country, sterile and deserted. For a long time nothing occurred to break the monotony of the scene; but at last, on crossing a low ridge, we came in sight of a large plain surrounded by barren mountains, at the opposite side of which were the minarets and domes of Schiraz. All round the city this plain appeared to be divided into gardens, separated from each other by mud walls, within which towered tall and slender cypresses, the only trees visible from the distance at which we were. These gardens did not extend very far from the city, and all outside them was desert and bare.

This, then, was the city considered by the Persians the most enchanting residence in their country, and consequently in the world; these were the gardens so famed for their beauty, fertility, and loveliness; and this oasis in the midst of a stony desert was the earthly Paradise of which we had heard so much. We soon crossed the plain, and riding for a few hundred yards between the mud walls which bound the gardens and lined the road, entered the city by the Kazeroun

gate, and rode to the house of our consular agent Nuwaub Mehmet Hassan Khadour, who invited us to remain in his house.

The Nuwaub was so called from the circumstance of his being the nephew of a dispossessed Indian of that rank, who, after his deposition, had retired to Schiraz, where he lived in great luxury, enjoying a pension from the British Government. We were quartered in a small house, built on one side of a garden, which had been erected purposely by him for the reception of strangers. The garden, or rather court, through the centre of which ran a copious stream of water, was paved with large flags, and filled with poplar-trees, some of which were of great height and age. At one end of this court was a small room looking like a hay-loft, where our host spent some hours every day, chatting with his numerous visitors, who, squatted round the walls on their heels, talked and smoked kaleouns incessantly. In the evening a dinner was sent, which did not speak much for the kitchen of the ex-Nuwaub, consisting merely of a fowl and rice, with some sweetmeats and acid wine.

The next day we devoted to seeing the town, also making a short expedition beyond the walls. We found it in much the same condition as most of the other Eastern cities we had seen, many of the houses being ruinous and nearly all out of repair. The streets are narrow and filthy, very few indeed boasting of any pavement, and many being nearly impassable from mud and dirt. The Vakeel bazaar, of no very great size, is lofty and vaulted over with brick. The shops which it contains are kept cleaner and neater than usual. It is in the form of a cross, with a dome over the point of intersection. Under this dome is a circular well, from whence an ample supply of clear and sparkling water is always procurable—no small boon in such a climate. In other respects the architecture of this bazaar, which was built by Kureem Khan, who, when king, was too modest or

too superstitious to call himself Shah, and contented himself with the title of vakeel, or deputy, does not differ from that usual in such places. Opening off from it are several large and spacious caravanserais, which, however, did not seem well filled, and, on the whole, very little business seemed to be going on.

Schiraz contains no fewer than ten madrasschs, or colleges, and thirteen or fourteen large mosques, besides a number of smaller ones. In the schools, from what we heard, little seemed to be taught except some reading and writing, the literature being the Koran and the deeds of Rustum, Antar, and other fabulous heroes. Every kind of practical instruction is totally neglected in Persia, chiefly through the conceit of the natives, which probably exceeds that of any other nation under the sun, not excepting our own.

The province of Fars, of which Shiraz is the capital, comprising nearly the whole of the south of Persia, is a hot-bed of the bigotry and intolerance which always accompany ignorance, and the people of this district have usually been considered as the most difficult to manage in the entire kingdom. Until very lately, when they were put down by the measures adopted for their repression, an organized gang of thieves, pickpockets, idlers, and scamps of all kinds existed in Shiraz, and kept in constant terror the more respectable inhabitants. They were called Lookees, and had regularly constituted themselves into a band, which for a long time set at defiance the feeble attempts made to restrain them. Always ready to excite tumults, or, with the hope of plunder, to take advantage of an *émeute*, they continued for years to be the plague and scourge of the town. A late governor had for the time subdued their turbulence by the severity with which he punished those that were apprehended, many of whom he put to death; but, according to all accounts, the prospect of chief in the streets was at any time sufficient to collect together a great number of rascals of the worst description.

The wine of Schiraz is openly made, and sold publicly by the Armenians. It is of two kinds, red and white, the former tasting like rough and coarse sherry, and the latter like a sweet, thin Chablis. The greater part of the Mohammedans drink it quite as much as the Christians, but refrain from trafficking in it, for fear of too openly defying the bigotry of the few fanatic mollahs, who possess so much influence over the multitude. The delicious and delicate flavour of this wine has been described in rapturous terms by Persian writers ; but, like everything else in Persia, its excellence has been grossly exaggerated. It is kept in large jars, and sold in glass bottles of various sizes, holding from a quart to two or three gallons. The manufacture of these bottles gives employment to a large number of people.

An extensive branch of industry is the making of kaleouns, some of which are very beautifully worked in the precious metals. The bowls are generally formed of a cocoa-nut, the more costly descriptions being ornamented with silver and gold. The price of a kaleoun varies from a shilling to fifty pounds sterling, and sometimes, for very choice specimens of workmanship, even more is given by wealthy and tasteful individuals. In Persia the kaleoun entirely supersedes the pipe, which in some places is unknown to the common people ; and even in Turkey the use of the former is much more prevalent. The tobacco grown in the neighbourhood of Schiraz is of good quality.

Enamelling is an art much practised among the Persians, who sometimes exhibit the excellence of their workmanship in articles of jewellery, the execution of which is very delicate. The metals used are silver and gold. Carpets used formerly to be made at Schiraz, but of late years the manufacture has declined, and now none but of a very coarse texture are fabricated.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PALACE OF TAKHT I KAJAR — GRAVE OF M. MINUTOI — THE
KIOSK OF THE BAGHI NOO — A PERSIAN PAINTING — A
SPECIMEN OF EASTERN ROYALTY — TOMB OF THE POET
SAADI — GRAVE OF HAFIZ THE POET — VISIT OF THE SHAH-
ZADEH'S SECRETARY — THE PRINCE GOVERNOR OF SCHIRAZ
— MILITARY DISPLAY — PERSIAN PRINCES — NATIONAL CRE-
DULITY AND DECEIT — DEFILE OF THE TENGEH ALLAH AKBAR
— VILLAGE OF KHAUNA — STREAM OF BENDAMÎR — APPEAR-
ANCE OF THE PLAIN.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER we had gone through the town, seeing as much of it as we could in a short time, we left it by the Baghi Shah gate, and rode to the palace of Takht i Kajar, situated on the slope of a hill about a mile distant. A large space of ground is enclosed by the high brick walls which surround the buildings and gardens. The entrance gate is covered with coloured tiles. Both palace and gardens are now somewhat dilapidated. At the foot of the hill is a large basin of water, seventy yards square, with a fountain in the centre. On the water floated some wild geese, ducks, and teal which had become quite domesticated, and seemed to take hardly any notice of passers-by. At each corner are small summer-houses, gaudily painted with bright and glowing colours. From the edge of this basin rise six terraces, one above the other, on which stand rows of orange-trees, the walls of each terrace being of coloured tiles. The ground is laid out in flower-beds. On the highest terrace is the palace, or rather villa, small and mean-looking, its materials flimsy and the decorations tawdry and glaring. The walls of some of the rooms, which are open to the front, are covered with representations in fresco of Persian beauties. The view from the palace over the plain of Schiraz extends to the snow-capped mountains, the whole intervening scene lying before us as in a panorama. On both sides and at the back of the buildings is a spacious garden, in which are rows of oranges, cypresses, and

fruit-trees. We were told that occasionally, during the hot weather, the Governors of Schiraz came out here to pass some weeks; but, to judge from appearances, they did not do much to repair the already sadly dilapidated house and gardens.

This palace was built by Fetteh Ali Shah, when Governor of Schiraz, during the life of his uncle, and was long his residence. Many evidences of his taste and luxurious habits still remain. Now all is going rapidly to decay and ruin, and in a short time the very materials will be removed to build with them another equally costly and useless toy, which, in its turn, will be neglected and deserted.

Leaving the Takht i Kajar, we passed through a large cemetery, covering a considerable portion of the hill-side in the vicinity of the palace, and visited the grave of M. Minutoli. It is simply a square platform built of brick, covered over with plaster, and without any inscription or memorial to record his name or the melancholy circumstances of his death. From thence we went to the summer palace or kiosk of the Baghi Noo, built not very long ago by one of the sons of Fetteh Ali Shah. It stands in the centre of a large garden, in which, between the cedars, pines, and plane-trees that grow so luxuriantly, are several very prettily laid out flower-beds.

The interior of the kiosk consists of the usual central hall, from whence open off the smaller apartments, the walls of which are adorned with paintings of Fetteh Ali Shah and some of his fifty-six sons. One of these paintings, in which the rules of perspective are set at utter defiance, is intended to represent the reception of the embassy sent from India under Sir John Malcolm to the Persian court in the early part of this century. The Shah's beard, as in all the pictures of him, is a miracle of minute and delicate finish. His sons stand around staring steadfastly before them, their countenances totally devoid of any kind of expression. It is, however,

in the delineation of the European uniforms and costumes that the genius of the artist shines forth, achieving for him his greatest triumph.

It would be utterly impossible to describe the absurd caricatures intended to represent the various individuals composing the embassy. The same stony look, in which there is a total vacancy of thought or expression, is exhibited in the features of the envoy and his suite.

At the time we visited it the palace was inhabited by a prince of the blood royal, a first cousin of the Shah, and son of his uncle the Governor of Schiraz. We found him sitting in a pavilion, in the company of a very dissipated lot of young Persians, employed in listening to some musicians and drinking raki, the whole party very far from sober. His Royal Highness, who invited us to taste the spirit, excused himself for not attempting to enter into any conversation, by saying that he had drunk too much; a confession little needed, as he was hardly able to stand. He pressed us very much to stay and listen to his band, which, for our edification, he ordered to play one of his favourite airs. The command was followed by an outburst of the shrillest and most discordant sounds that could be produced out of the instruments used, fifes and tambourines. Having remained for some minutes, we took our leave, raki being again pressed upon us by our royal entertainer, who, as we were informed by the servants of the Nuwaub, was a "chok biyuk adhem," a very great man. These individuals did not seem to see anything peculiar in the conduct of the prince, the only emotion visible in their countenances being regret at leaving so soon the raki and music, the power of enjoying both of which to such an extent they evidently envied him exceedingly.

Leaving behind us the scene in which this accomplished specimen of Eastern royalty took so much delight, we next visited the tomb of the poet Saadi, which, situated at some

distance from the Baghi Noo, is a couple of miles from the city. On one side of a courtyard, formed by a lofty brick wall, is a small building, containing two or three small rooms in the centre and a larger one at either end, all of which are open to the court and to the weather. In one of these larger rooms, the walls of which are covered with Persian writing in golden letters, is the tomb, a stone sarcophagus covered with inscriptions nearly obliterated. We were told that they were all verses of Saadi's own poetry, which is much esteemed by the Persians, the tone and style, by all accounts, being such as, from their peculiar taste, they are best qualified to appreciate. In the centre of the court are some other graves, very much neglected; whose they are we could not ascertain. The building is now used as a temporary abode for dervishes or holy men, who study the poet's more abstruse works near his tomb, in the hope of catching from their vicinity to his remains some of the spirit by which he was inspired.

Saadi lived to a great age, 116 years, and passed through life with a very great reputation for sanctity, holiness, and learning. He made the Hadj to Mecca no less than fourteen times, after each pilgrimage returning to Schiraz, his native city, with an increased reputation for piety. If his writings, however, are to be taken as a criterion of his character, he must either have been a great humbug, or singularly liable to departures from the standard of morality which he had set up.

On our return from the tomb of Saadi to Schiraz we visited the tomb of Hafiz, which was on our way. The remains of the great lyric poet of Persia repose in the centre of a burial-ground that forms part of a small garden filled with fruit-trees and flowers, and surrounded by a high brick wall. A kind of kiosk, or summer-house, is built across this garden, separating the part which is used as a cemetery from that which is laid out as a pleasure-ground.

A large slab of variegated marble, placed there by Kureem Khan, the "Vakeel" Shah of Persia, on which are inscribed a number of verses from his works, covers the grave of the poet. The cemetery around is literally paved with tombstones, on some of which are long inscriptions. The odes of Hafiz are considered by the Persians as unequalled by those of any other poet of any age or nation. His memory is still highly venerated, and his works are regarded with superstitious reverence. Those who desire to penetrate the secrets of the future are in the habit of opening at random a volume of his poems, and the first lines that present themselves are, by some distortion of the sense, imagined to convey the desired information. Some of the more bigoted and fanatic among the clergy and ulema, or doctors of the law, consider his productions as immoral and reprehensible in the highest degree; but public opinion overrules their decision, and Hafiz remains, as he long has been, an author high in the estimation of his fellow-countrymen.

From the Hafiziyah, as it is called, we returned to the town through lanes with high mud walls on either hand, within which were gardens and pleasure-grounds. Having expressed to our host the Nuwaub our desire to see the Shahzadeh, or prince of the blood royal, who governed Schiraz, we were visited in the evening by the secretary of that exalted personage, to whom our wish had been communicated. He evidently came to discover, if he could, who and what we were; and though at first he was very shy, silent, and reserved, after some time he became more open and inquisitive. He was a handsome man, and very well dressed; his beard was beautifully dyed, and his curls carefully oiled and combed out from under his lambskin cap.

After some time the conversation turned upon geography, in which branch of science the worthy secretary soon betrayed that he was profoundly ignorant. Our host, with an air of conscious superiority, took down from a shelf a small

volume, which he handed to one of his visitors, a grey-bearded old gentleman. The latter read out from it, among many exclamations of wonder and incredulity from the audience, a description of the Geysers of Iceland. Their curiosity was next directed to us, and we were asked to explain our reasons for coming to Persia, why we had left our homes, what routes we had followed, and a host of other questions, some of which were most absurd. When they had obtained all the information they could extract from us, our visitors took their leave, saying that we should be informed early next day whether the Shahzadeh would receive us.

Accordingly we remained at home the whole of the next day, but it was late in the evening when a message arrived that the Prince Governor would be visible the following morning at nine o'clock. At that early hour therefore we proceeded on horseback to the residence of the prince, the servants of our host walking before us in procession, and some ferashes, or police, clearing the way.

The Shahzadeh lives in the Ark, or citadel, a large building occupying one side of the Meidan, an open space used as exercising ground for the troops, as a market-place, and for the execution of criminals. This palace, behind which is a large garden, is flanked by towers in a semi-ruinous state, the whole wearing a sadly dilapidated look.

On entering the Meidan we found two companies of soldiers in red jackets drawn up in line to receive us, the aspect of whom was ludicrous in the extreme. No two uniforms were alike: some wore shoes and some went without; a few had boots, into which were tucked their loose trousers, which were of all colours and shapes; some wore cross-belts, others dispensed with them; some were armed with firelocks at least a century old, with bits of wood instead of flints, while others boasted of the real Brown Bess with the Tower mark.

It was a difficult task to keep one's gravity on beholding these doughty warriors, so ridiculous was their appearance, as through a double line of them, with arms presented, we passed into the garden surrounding the palace. On our appearance, a band, composed of half-a-dozen performers, commenced playing what was probably intended for the Persian national anthem; but, as it was utterly impossible to distinguish anything save the shrill squeaking of fifes and the monotonous beating of tom-toms or kettle-drums, we could not form an opinion of the music.

We were received by the secretary whom we had before seen, who, on this occasion very grandly got up, was surrounded by the servants of the prince, as miserable-looking a set of ragamuffins as could well be met with. On dismounting, we were conducted into a large room, the walls of which were lined with small bits of looking-glass, placed so as to reflect the light from different angles. At one end of this apartment, the floor of which was covered with a handsome carpet, a gilt chair was placed, and at the other, opposite it, were two intended for ourselves.

We had been visited the day before by a Persian, a native of Schiraz, who, having been in India when a boy, had received his education at the Bishop's College in Calcutta, where he had remained for some years. After the mutiny he had returned to Schiraz, where he had for some time tried in vain to obtain permission to set up a school, all his efforts being frustrated by the influence of the Mollahs, who, dreading the power which he would attain from his possession of an education so superior to their own, had interfered to prevent his getting the necessary licence. He told us that he had lived since his return from India by giving lessons in private, and by writing letters for merchants, from which, however, he assured us, he did not gain much. As Demetri, now that we were among a people who prided themselves on their politeness and regard to forms and ceremonies,

would be hardly a proper channel of communication with such a dignitary as the Shahzadeh, we proposed to this Persian, who spoke English perfectly well, that he should accompany us, as he would thus have such an opportunity as he might never again possess of speaking himself face to face with the governor, whom he might inform of the manner in which he had been treated by the Mollahs. He at once acceded to our proposal, and now stood behind us, apparently in a state of great uneasiness and anxiety. The poor man, whose hopes had been so long deferred, and who had endured so many disappointments, tremblingly awaited the coming of the dignitary who by a word could realize his utmost expectations.

We remained in the room for some minutes before any one appeared, conversing in a low tone with the secretary, when at last a door opened, and a tall, stout, middle-aged man, wearing the usual high conical cap of black lambskin, entered the room at the end furthest from us, and taking his seat on the gilt chair, while the secretary and various others of his household stood by the walls, motioned us at the same time to be seated. We sat down on the chairs placed for us, the whole length of the room thus intervening between us and the prince. The conversation commenced with the usual inquiries after our health, which, being duly responded to, were followed by a topic on which the Shahzadeh showed great curiosity, viz., geography. Numerous and highly entertaining were the questions he asked us about the countries of Europe, the ways of travelling, the extent and power of the different kingdoms. He made several inquiries about the Americans, but it was evidently beyond his power to comprehend a republic. How a man in command of an army should not avail himself of his authority to seize the supreme power for himself, was an enigma which he could not solve.

He asked us whether it was really true, as he had been

told, that England was an island, and how so large a one could exist. He was also curious to know whether there was any other way of going from Persia to England besides by Gibraltar. The Franks, as he had been informed, had discovered that the world was round, and that people walking with their heads down and their feet up were on the other side of it, but of course he did not believe that. The circumstance, however, which of all others evidently most surprised him, was the visit of the Emperor of the French to England, and, more wonderful still, the subsequent visit of the Empress as a private personage. How the Emperor could have been so foolish as to put himself into the power of a nation with which his uncle had been so long at war, and which was still a rival of France, was to him a mystery. He considered it a tempting of destiny, rash and foolhardy in the extreme. But, even admitting that a man could have been foolish enough to place himself in the power of a former enemy—he had heard of such things having been done before—how the Empress, a woman, could have been allowed to travel, as a private person, by herself, without any restraint, in a foreign country, passed all belief. An act of such outrageous folly he could only regard—and all his attendants seemed to be of the same opinion—as an instance of the madness which periodically affects all Franks.

We were asked a good deal about the Chinese expedition. When we said that the only view both of England and France was to open the country to trade, an expression of incredulity spread over the prince's features, such a reason for going to war being wholly beyond his comprehension. He regarded it, however, as a wonderful thing that the troops of two nations at such a distance from China had been able to capture the metropolis of a country so powerful and populous as he had heard it was, and he frankly professed his inability to comprehend why, when we had the power to do so, we did not divide China between us.

Such an act of national self-restraint almost inclined him to believe what he had been told, that England had so many countries under her, that she could not manage to govern any more, a compliment which we duly acknowledged.

Our own motives for travelling next excited his curiosity. He asked us for what purpose we had come to Persia, and whether we were in any profession. On learning that our journey had been undertaken for amusement, he naïvely inquired whether we could not amuse ourselves much more at home in the enjoyment of all the luxuries which he had heard of in Europe. Our interpreter then attracted his notice. When the prince asked him whence he came, and what he was doing, he at once availed himself of the opportunity, which he knew might never occur again, and launched out most volubly into a complaint of the conduct of the ulemah, who had refused him his licence for setting up the school. With his eyes fixed humbly on the ground, as if not daring even to look on the great man, he made, to judge by his rapid and continuous flow of language, the best possible case for himself, his tones being subdued, as though daunted by the power and dignity of the personage to whom he spoke. When at last he ceased, the Shahzadeh asked a few questions of his secretary, who, having probably received a slight consideration beforehand for any services he might render, spoke favourably of the applicant, and the long-desired permission was at last granted publicly to the overjoyed suppliant, who was told at the same time that it was to our auspicious visit he might ascribe his success—a compliment to us, but not speaking much for the prospects of improved education in Persia.

The prince brought our audience to an end by hoping that he might see us again before we left Schiraz, as he wished to have some further conversation about European countries and customs, regarding which he was very desirous of knowing more. On hearing that we intended leaving his

government the same day, he expressed his regret at our making so short a stay. He asked whether he could be of any service to us, and assured us that, though the phrase was often used without any meaning, he really meant what he said, and if we could think of any way in which he might assist us, he would take great pleasure in doing so.

Before leaving, tea *à la Russe* was handed to us. On first sitting down, coffee and kaleouns had been brought in. In Persia, when a visitor first sits down, a kaleoun, accompanied by either tea or coffee, is handed to him, a few whiffs only of the former being taken. After a short time a second kaleoun makes its appearance, accompanied by more tea, and this again is followed, shortly before the visitor leaves, by a third, which is generally brought in when he evinces the usual signs of his intention to depart.

The interview having come to an end, we made our bows, and retired, the secretary accompanying us to the place where our horses were in waiting. On entering the Meidan we found the ragged band of soldiers still drawn up, and behind them a crowd of all the ragamuffins of the town, whom curiosity had drawn to the spot. Again the fifes and tom-toms sounded their salute to the Franks whom the Shahzadeh delighted to honour; while we, preceded by some of our servants and ferashes, and followed by others, rode in great dignity homewards; our attendants, who skipped actively before us, evincing much skill in avoiding the numerous pools and deep ruts filled with fetid mud.

The most influential positions under government are almost invariably filled in Persia by the near relatives of the sovereign. All the more important governments are given to his brothers or cousins, and, as princes of the blood royal are counted by hundreds, there is never any difficulty in finding a person duly qualified by birth, if in no other way, for office. This is one of the points in which Persia differs most in its government from Turkey. In the latter, all the

relatives of the Sultan, who, by some extraordinary exercise of generosity, may have been permitted to live, are obliged to reside at Constantinople under the eye and supervision of the Government, remaining, moreover, in complete seclusion. Till quite recently all the male children of the Sultan's daughters and sisters were put to death as soon as born.

In Persia, on the contrary, the number of the Shah's relatives is turned by him into a source of strength. They are all pensioned, or in some way provided for; and as it is supposed that the descendants, male and female, of Fetteh Ali Shah, the great-grandfather of the present Shah, number considerably more than a thousand persons, they form no small burden on the revenues of the nation. A Persian governor of a province or large town has far more power than a Turkish pasha. The latter, by the Tanzimat, or new code of laws, called the Magna Charta of Turkey, has not the power of inflicting death, or more than a moderate amount of punishment, without referring to Constantinople. In Persia, on the contrary, the power of life and death is given by the Shah to any favourite, and in most cases is made use of by the recipient as a means of extorting money from those placed under his authority. The more important governments are seldom allowed to remain long filled by the same person, two, or at the most three years' tenure of office being the most that is generally permitted.

The Governor of Schiraz in 1861, the uncle of the present Shah, was generally considered one of the best behaved of the royal family—no very great praise—but his sons were by no means looked upon in the same light. The hopeful scion of royalty we had heard so much of at Bushire was one of them; the dissipated young scamp we had seen too drunk to speak, among a lot of tipsy companions, in the gardens of the Baghi Noo, was another; and, by all accounts, the remainder of his domestic circle were not thought, from their behaviour, worthy of much respect. For one or two little

excesses more than usually disgraceful, their father, it was said, had privately bastinadoed some of his hopeful progeny ; but the punishment, severe as it was, was not supposed to have brought about any amendment in the ways of the princes.

We found, on our return to our house, that Demetri also had had an interview with some of the military authorities, who informed him that the gallant array of troops we had seen formed part of the army levied to repulse the English invasion ; which, however, it had been unnecessary to send further than Schiraz, as the British, on hearing of their approach, had evacuated Bushire, and fled to their ships. This story, which had been really told to the soldiers, was implicitly believed by as many of them as had not come under the fire of the invading expedition.

One of the many things which surprise a European in Persia is the simplicity and credulity which induce people—who, when it does not serve their purpose, never think of telling the truth to each other—to believe implicitly any number of lies that may be told them. Exceeding, probably, every other nation under the sun in falsehood and deceit, no people are so easily imposed on. They consider it no disgrace themselves to commit a dishonourable action, and do not feel the least shame when detected in meanness or want of principle. A common topic of conversation among them is the astonishing value which Europeans place upon their word. This respect for truth they are quite unable to understand ; and, if there is any ignominy on either part, they consider that it may be justly attributed rather to him who is duped than to him who deceives.

A few hours after our return everything was ready for our departure. We had engaged mules to take us the whole way to Ispahan, the journey to which would occupy twelve days, not including a day's halt at Persepolis and another at Murghaub. For six mules we were to pay twenty tomauns,

or about 9*l.* 10*s.* We bade adieu to the Nuwaub in the garden, his household taking that opportunity of gratifying their curiosity with a sight of the Franks, whose strange equipment and costume they gazed upon with wonder. The Nuwaub had nine wives. The last married was very young and pretty; a fact which she contrived to let us know, by coquettishly allowing her child to pull off her veil while playing with it at the door of the hareem opening into the garden.

We left Schiraz on the 18th February, the weather still continuing very cold. No signs of spring were perceivable on the wintry landscape that lay before us. We passed through the defile of the Tengeh Allah Akbar, and for some miles rode in a north-easterly direction, by the side of the little stream of Roknabad, the praises of which are sung by Hafiz in glowing terms. Leaving its banks, we crossed two or three low ranges of stony and sterile hills, on which were no signs of habitations, and in five hours after our departure from Schiraz reached the village of Khauna, which was to be our halting-place for the night. During the whole day's march nothing could be more miserable or wretched than the appearance of the country. Though in the vicinity of a large city, it was so desert and bare, that even the few goats pasturing on it seemed to seek in vain for sustenance among the stones that covered the surface of the ground.

Khauna is a mud-built village of small size. The houses are flat-roofed, and more dirty than ordinary. The people whom we saw were squalid and apparently in extreme poverty; a fact, however, which in Persia is not to be judged of by appearances, as, the more wealthy a villager becomes, the more he strives to avoid showing his riches, unless he has some powerful friend or protector to save him from being pillaged and robbed under some pretext by the governor of the district or his underlings.

On leaving Khauna, next morning, we rode for some dis-

tance along a causeway by the side of a swampy lake, on which were large flocks of wild geese and ducks. The plain on both sides of this fen was so soft and muddy, that it would have been quite impossible to pass over it but for the causeway, which itself was so rugged, from having been long out of repair, that it was with difficulty our mules could pick their steps over the rough stones of which it was formed. Having crossed the marsh, we passed through an opening in a low ridge of rocks bounding it to the north, and entered on an immense plain perfectly waste and desert; no signs of human beings, not even a solitary shepherd, being visible, from the point where we stood, on its broad expanse. On the opposite side, in the far distance, was a bare, parched, and drab-coloured range of mountains, at the foot of which, our muleteers told us, were the noble ruins we had come so far to see, and which, had the day been clear, would have been visible from our present position.

Following the direction in which they pointed, we tried in vain to discover any signs of the columns they professed to discern. We could see nothing but a vast solitude bounded in the hazy distance by rugged and broken hills.

In a short time we came to a narrow stone bridge spanning a wide ditch filled with what looked like liquid mud, rolling towards the east in a very sluggish current, between steep banks of alluvial clay, the surface of the soupy-looking fluid being many feet below the level of the ground on either side. This was the far-famed stream of Bendamir, the ancient Araxes; the chosen home, according to Moore, of the nightingale and the rose, the flower which, in Eastern allegory, is given as a bride to the bird of song. But, alas for poetry! stern truth must assert that no rose, or any other bush six inches high, in which a bird could hide itself, was to be seen; and the stagnant canal, filled with puddle, had an appearance resembling anything rather than the

romantic scene described in such sparkling language by the poet.

A small river, the Polvan (of old the Medus) forms a junction with it some distance above the bridge, the united waters being thenceforth called the Bendamîr, from a dam, or bund, which had been formed for purposes of irrigation by the Amir Assaf ud Daulat, in the tenth century. A short time after crossing the Bendamîr, a few slender columns, appearing in the far distance like threads, were to be seen at the base of one of the hills in front, and by degrees the ruins and vast platform on which they stood came slowly into view. As we approached the opposite side of the plain, it began to assume a more fertile aspect, some villages dotted the surface, and the soil was watered and cultivated. In one of these hamlets, about a mile distant from the ruins, we took up our quarters; the house allotted to us by the Kedkhoda, or chief of the village, being a mud hut with a roof very far from impervious to the rain, which fell heavily during the night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RUINS OF PERSEPOLIS — ANCIENT NAME OF THE CITY — THE GREAT PLATFORM — COLOSSAL STATUES — RUINS OF CHEHEL MINAR — SCULPTURES AND BAS-RELIEFS ON THE RUINS — SIR R. K. PORTER'S ALLEGORICAL EXPLANATION — TERRACES — TABLET WITH INSCRIPTIONS IN CUNEIFORM LETTERS — TOMBS OF THE KINGS — REMARKABLE EXCAVATIONS — MUTILATIONS OF THE BAS-RELIEFS AT NAKHSH I REGIB — NAKHSH I RUSTAM — TABLETS HEWN OUT OF THE ROCK — TOMB OF DARIUS — INSCRIPTION ON THE TOMB — ANCIENT FIRE-TEMPLE.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next morning the weather had cleared up, and we devoted the day to visiting the vast remains of the palace of the ancient kings of Persia, which, as some believe, but without any certain evidence, stood in the midst of their capital, of which not a trace now is visible. The numerous travellers who have visited Persepolis, from the time of Sir John Chardin down to the present day, have given such ample descriptions of the remains, that, until the period when the inscriptions, which exist in such quantities, shall be fully deciphered, it would seem that nothing more can be added to what has been already written.

The ancient Persian name for the city which was called Persepolis by the Greeks is unknown. The modern Persians call it either Chehel Minar, the Forty Pillars, that figure being generally used to signify an indefinite number, or Takht i Jemshid, the Throne of Jemshid, a fabulous monarch who is supposed to have lived for many centuries, and, among other great deeds, to have built the stately palace which bears his name, and whose magnificent ruins and mysterious inscriptions have so long astonished the traveller and perplexed the antiquary. Modern science has, however, succeeded recently in deciphering many of the latter, and little doubt is now entertained that the construction of the great platform itself, as well as two of the three palaces or buildings standing on it, is to be attributed to Darius, the son of Hystaspes. The magnificent staircase with the

entrance on the top, and the other palace, are the work of his son Xerxes, who also mentions in his inscriptions his father's work and the erection of other structures, of which all traces have disappeared. Although not capable of positive proof, yet it is believed that this was the palace partly destroyed in a drunken debauch by Alexander the Great, at the request of the celebrated Lais; a story, which, however, rests only on the authority of Quintus Curtius and Plutarch.

The great platform, which has been in part excavated out of the rock, and partly built forward upon the plain out of the materials thus obtained, varies in height according to the level of the ground, to all appearance (for we did not measure it) from ten to forty feet. The ascent to this platform from the plain below is by two magnificent flights of stairs, considered by some to be unrivalled for beauty and grandeur. They rise very gradually, the height of each step being only three inches and a half, and the width twenty-two feet. The blocks of limestone of which they are built are so large, that many steps have been cut out of a single stone. The lower flights of steps lead away from each other. On reaching a landing-place at about half the height of the platform, they turn towards the interior, and approach each other as they ascend to the top.

On gaining the level of the platform, the first objects that meet the eye are two colossal statues of bulls standing together, looking forth upon the plain, the space between them being little more than four paces. They form thus a gateway to a building, out of the wall of which, after it had been erected, they appear to have been hewn, differing in this respect, as well as in having four instead of five legs, from the somewhat similar monolithic statues of alabaster found at Nimrûd. On the walls above these bulls are inscriptions in cuneiform characters, detailing the titles of Xerxes, the builder of the edifice, as clearly and sharply cut as if executed but yesterday.

The heads of the bulls have been destroyed, but the carving of the trappings and other ornaments with which they are decorated is perfectly preserved, and as fresh as if but just finished by the skilful sculptor.

Round their necks are collars of roses, and on their backs, shoulders, chests, and ribs, the hair is curled and ornamented, the workmanship being most delicate. They are raised five feet from the ground by a pedestal of that height.

Behind these monsters stand two columns with very peculiar capitals; and in rear of them, facing the mountain and looking in an opposite direction to the first pair, are two gigantic human-headed winged bulls standing on either side of a gateway or portal. The features of these have been sadly disfigured, but, with this exception, they are in perfect preservation.

On tablets near them in the wall are cuneiform inscriptions containing the titles and dignities of Xerxes. On the wall between the legs of the first pair of bulls are inscriptions of a different character, and far more legible, being the names of Sir J. Malcolm, Sir Harford Jones, Texier, Macdonald Kinnear, and Colonel Macdonald, some of which are deeply cut in the stone with a chisel, while the others are painted on the wall. The colossal size of these sculptures—the human-headed winged animals on the inner or eastern side of the portal measuring nineteen feet from the top of the diadem which covers the head to the ground—gives them a peculiar air of power and dignity, suitable to guardians over the once gorgeous palaces of the Great King. It should be remembered that Nineveh had been destroyed nearly a hundred and fifty years before the earliest Persian work. We can have little doubt, however, that the great works at Nineveh were well remembered by their Oriental neighbours, though unknown to the European Greeks. The discoveries at Camirus, and the whole circle of Greek ornamentation, prove the influence of Assyrian art, though the

Greeks did not know, or, at least, have not recorded, whence they derived their primary forms. Their strong resemblance to the earlier Assyrian sculptures at once suggests the idea that the Persian artist derived his models from the banks of the Tigris.

At a distance of about fifty-four paces south of this noble entrance, and on the side of the great platform next the plain, is an elevated terrace, on which stand the columns from whence the ruins have derived their present name of Chehel Minar. This terrace is nine feet in height above the platform; its length, on the front or northern side, is given as two hundred and twelve feet. The ascent to it is by a double flight of steps projecting from the face of the wall, and by two other staircases near either angle. As in the terraces of the great approach from the plain, the slope is very gradual, and the steps are very low, the height of each not being more than four inches.

The entire wall of the terrace in front is covered with sculptures in bas-relief, representing, seemingly, a procession bearing animals and offerings of various descriptions as presents for the king. Groups of figures in different costumes, conducted by Persian officers, bring the articles of most value produced in their native country to lay at the feet of the monarch; some lead camels, and others horses, which then, as now, seem to have been the most acceptable present to an Eastern potentate. It is thought that these sculptures are intended to represent the annual feast of the Norúz, or vernal equinox, from the most ancient times the great festival of Persia, when the Sovereign received, as he still continues to do, the principal personages of the State, who each present him with an offering, and the governors of provinces and tax-collectors bring in the revenues of the State collected during the past year. On the angular spaces made by the slope of the stairs in front, is carved on either side a battle between a lion and a bull.

The wall under the landing-place of the stairs is divided into three compartments; the centre one is blank, that on the left of the spectator is filled up by four spearmen in long robes, and that on the right by three similar figures bearing shields in addition to their spears. On ascending the stairs to the platform on which formerly stood the stately palace, the ground is covered with broken columns and the remains of sculptures. In the centre once rose a square group of thirty-six columns, flanked on three sides by a double row of pillars, six in each row. Of these seventy-two columns but thirteen now exist, forming, with the two others near the portals above the great staircase, a total number of fifteen; but in the latter end of the 17th century, when Chardin visited the ruins, it would appear that nineteen were then standing within the platform, and another, of which all trace has disappeared, upon the plain without; to such an extent have these noble remains suffered, even in recent times. All those still standing are more or less injured.

The capitals of all these columns are damaged and disfigured, while some have fallen or been pulled down. Those of the outer rows of pillars are very peculiar, being composed of the fore-parts of two bulls, the legs folded under them, looking in opposite directions, and joined together in the centre of the backs. Only one capital of this extraordinary style yet exists at Persepolis.—(Loftus found perfect specimens of the same style of sculpture at Susa during his excavations.)—These columns are fluted, and are said to be from fifty-five to sixty feet in height. It is supposed that they once supported beams bearing a roof of some description, of which, however, not a vestige now remains.

South of the terrace, on which stood the palace, rises another of smaller dimensions, raised five or six feet above the ground, and to which ascends from the west a broken and ruinous flight of steps; a more perfect staircase, however, is on the southern side, that furthest from the

Chehel Minar. In its front is a tablet with a cuneiform inscription; on either side are sculptured figures bearing spears, the greater number of which are now buried under the accumulated rubbish.

On this terrace, which Sir R. K. Porter says is one hundred and seventy feet long by ninety-five in width, are the ruins of an oblong edifice, the two principal entrances to which are composed of four large blocks of marble of a dark colour and highly polished, each adorned with bas-reliefs of guards or spearmen. The remaining chambers are three in number. The principal apartment, which is sixteen paces square, is entered by six doorways, on the sides of which are sculptured bas-reliefs of the king followed by attendants, one bearing a fly-flapper and another an umbrella. The hair of the monarch is curled and carefully arranged, and the small holes which yet remain in the cap were probably used to attach to it some ornament or covering.

On three sides of the room are niches in the wall, on which are cuneiform inscriptions; and four windows, like the doors, nearly buried in the ground, look out on the southern side. On the walls are three other bas-reliefs representing single combats between a man and a lion, a man and a griffin, and a man and a monster with the body and head of a lion, the feet or claws of an eagle, its back, neck, and breast covered with feathers, and a large horn growing out of its forehead. The man, who is clothed in long robes which leave his arms bare, and whose hair and beard are elaborately curled, grasps with one hand the horn of the monster, which has risen on its hind legs, while with the other he thrusts his sword into the belly of the formidable animal, which has seized the arm and breast of its antagonist with its claws.

Whether or not these extraordinary sculptures have any occult meaning is still matter for conjecture, and various theories have been put forward for their interpretation. Sir R. K. Porter, writing in the spirit of Winckelmann and of

the latter part of the last century, considers them allegorical. The figure represents the pontiff king, or Religion and Authority conquering Infidelity. He supposes the Chehel Minar to be the great hall of reception or audience chamber of the palace, and the building we are describing to be one of the temples or places of worship attached to it. On the southern side, and terminating that portion of the edifice, are two square pillars, on which are inscriptions in cuneiform and Arabic characters. On the east and inner side of this terrace, next the mountains, is a large mound, which is supposed to cover the remains of what some believe to have been the banqueting hall in which the victorious Alexander held, with his companions, the feast that terminated in its destruction.

Further south of the latter building, and near the corner of the great platform, is a fourth terrace, the wall of which on the north is sculptured in bas-relief with figures of archers. The ascent to it is by a flight of steps on the north-western angle, from the top of which run eastwards a double row of five columns standing ten feet apart. South of these, and towards the extremity of the platform, are the bases of twelve columns, which stood at the same distance from each other as the last. The buildings we have hitherto attempted to describe are all on the western side or front of the great platform facing the plain.

Let us turn now towards the east, and approach the mountains in rear. Along the southern verge of the great platform, rises a fifth terrace, on which stand some very extensive ruins, suggested by Sir R. K. Porter to be those of the royal palace, or the private residence of the king. The huge blocks of marble forming the portals and windows are yet in their places; but in other respects this building has suffered even more than the others, broken fragments of carvings and sculptures strewing the ground in every direction. In the centre court, which is said to be ninety feet square, once

stood in six rows thirty-six columns, each three feet three inches in diameter.

From this great court open six smaller courts and chambers, and two wide portals on the northern side lead into a vestibule or portico, extending the whole breadth of the large court, in which stood eight columns of the same size as those last mentioned, the plinths of which alone remain. In each of the two centre courts opening off the large one, stood also four columns of the same dimensions. The windows are built of large blocks of marble, on which are bas-reliefs of men, dressed some in long robes and others in short tunics, leading animals, and bearing in their hands various dishes and bowls which seem to contain food, while others bring bottles and cloths for washing hands; the whole, apparently, representing servants bearing in a repast. There is a similar scene in the Koyunjik room of the British Museum, and another banquet scene in the basement. On the blocks forming the frames of the doors are bas-reliefs representing the king followed by two attendants, one bearing the royal umbrella over his head, and the other carrying a fly-flapper.

Over these figures are inscriptions in cuneiform characters, probably the most ancient in Persepolis, which may be translated as follows:—"Darius, the great king, king of kings, the king of nations, the son of Hystaspes, the Achæmenian, he has executed this sculpture."

Underneath this building are the remains of a subterranean channel, chosen, as those who have read Beckford's "Vathek," will remember, as the entrance to the "Hall of Eblis," by which water was conveyed from the great cistern or reservoir excavated out of the rock at the inner or eastern edge of the platform. Another subterranean channel runs due north to a small cistern, which still exists near the great portals at the head of the flight of steps leading to the grand platform from the plain. Again at some

distance due east of this pile of ruins are the remains of another edifice, consisting of a large room sixteen paces square; joining which on the south is a chamber open to the same side, two single stones of colossal dimensions forming the termination of the walls. A doorway of large size connects the enclosure with the open apartment, on both sides of which is sculptured the figure of the king, accompanied by one attendant only, who carries an umbrella. It should be remembered that the satrap is the man who carries the satrapa or umbrella.

There are two other doorways opening into the large room from the east and west, on each of the frames of which are bas-reliefs of combats between a man and a lion. No inscriptions are to be found in this building, which stands on the platform unsupported by a separate terrace. At some distance due north are the walls of a large square building, extending two hundred and ten feet on each side. Not far from the northern front, and separated from each other by a space nearly equal to the breadth of the edifice, are two colossal bulls standing on pedestals, five feet in height, with their faces turned northwards. There are two doors on each side of this building; those on the north, which are thirteen feet in width, being the largest. On their sides, in addition to other bas-reliefs, are sculptures of the king seated on his throne, with his feet on a footstool, and over his head a canopy or awning supported by slender pillars.

Three attendants stand behind the king, one bearing the royal bow and battle-axe, another a fan, and the third a wand. Each of these has the face muffled, perhaps, as supposed by Sir R. K. Porter, to prevent their breath from polluting the sacred person of the king. In front of the king are two figures, one bringing flat bowls or pateræ, and the second bearing in one hand a short staff, while the other is held over his mouth. Underneath the king and the attendants immediately surrounding him, from whom they are separated

by a border of roses, are five rows of figures, each row divided from the one above by a similar border : these most likely represent the attendants who stood upon the platform beside the throne, which was itself on an elevation of five steps.

On the north side also are two portals, between the walls and the colossal bulls, composed of enormous blocks of the same polished dark-coloured marble. On the inside of these blocks, a great part of which is buried in rubbish, are bas-reliefs of two figures with spears representing guards. The two doors on the southern side of the building have on their inside faces nearly the same sculptures as those on the northern ; the king seated on his chair being in this case accompanied by but one attendant bearing a fan, while over his head hovers the peculiar winged figure known under the name of Feroher. Underneath the king are three rows of figures, each supporting with uplifted hands the platform upon which the row above it stands, the lower one being nearly buried under the rubbish.

In the walls in the interior of the building are niches of large size, the inner portion of which is finely polished ; but it is not easy to determine for what use they were designed. On the four doorways facing east and west, are sculptured representations of single combats between the so-called pontiff king and monsters similar to those already described. Some, however, differ, in having the body and feet of a lion, and the fore part, as well as the head and neck, of an eagle, the king grasping a projection from the forehead of the monster, and thrusting his dagger into its body. At ninety paces distant to the north of the two colossal bulls, in front of this building, stand two others looking southwards, facing the first pair. These latter formed a portal similar to the gateway at the head of the grand flight of steps leading up to the platform from the plain. Beyond them, a few yards to the north, stands an isolated column.

At a short distance to the south-east of the large square

building to which we have just alluded, are some immense blocks of stone, forming the doorways to a small square edifice, the walls of which have disappeared. One of these doorways, of which three yet remain nearly perfect, was on each side. On the inside of the eastern is sculptured the king, in long robes, walking with two attendants behind him, one carrying a fly-flapper and the other an umbrella, while overhead floats in the air the Feroher, or guardian spirit.

On the northern and southern doorways the same king appears seated, one attendant standing behind him with the fly-flapper, and the Feroher hovering over his head. In the courtyard of this little building stood once four columns, the foundations of which alone now exist. These ruins of ancient palaces and temples, seven in number, are all that remain upon the great platform, which is paved with large blocks of the same dark-coloured marble as that used in the construction of the buildings. Its dimensions are given as on the south 802 feet, on the north 926, and on the west 1425, while the mountain rises from the eastern edge. Vast as is its extent, it is no more than proportioned to the grandeur of the buildings which it supported. The mighty work, perfect as it still is, save in a few trifling details, serves, as its founder doubtless intended it should, to perpetuate to future ages the memory of the power and magnificence of the proudest monarch of ancient times; while the beauty of the architecture and the delicacy of the ornaments of the buildings which it bore—the dwelling of the Great King—show to what excellence many of the arts had already arrived in those long-past ages of which we possess but such dim and hazy ideas.

Yet, in gazing on all this splendour, it is impossible not to reflect that, like the still more imposing Egyptian remains, it was intended only to exalt the majesty of one man, and that no useful or beneficial object was attained by it. No remains of works calculated for the good of the many are to be found in the vicinity—no traces of such mighty structures

as those by which the Romans benefited the nations they brought under their rule are to be discovered. The isolated ruins of palaces and temples are all that preserve the remembrance of the long-departed glories of the monarchs, the capital of whose widely-extended dominions was the once famous city of Persepolis.

Having visited all these buildings, we next went to see the tombs of the kings, excavated in the side of the mountain rising on the eastern edge of the platform, from which they are not far distant. There was no difficulty in reaching them, the slope of the hill being very gradual. The situation chosen for the sepulchres differs in this respect from that selected for the tombs we afterwards saw at Nakhsh i Rustam, where they are cut out in the face of a precipice. The tombs of the kings are three in number, two lying not far from each other, and the third at some distance to the south.

We first entered the tomb in the centre. A large recess, said to be a hundred and thirty feet in height by seventy-two in width, is cut out of the face of the rock and divided into two compartments. In the lower division is a doorway, which has been broken through to effect an entrance. On passing through it, we found ourselves in a chamber, the dimensions of which are given as forty-six feet long and twenty wide. At one extremity are three small cells, arched over, intended as a receptacle for the bodies, but now empty. On either side of the doorway two pilasters, with capitals of the double half bulls, or unicorns, support a cornice; above which, on the entablature, is represented a large chest, or ark, having on it a fire altar, before which is a small low platform, on which stands the king, who, with a bow in his left hand, holds up his right in adoration of the sacred element. In the air, between the king and the altar, near which is a circular figure representing the sun, floats a Feroher, the king's attendant spirit.

In front of the chest stand two lines of figures, fourteen in each row, holding above their heads their hands armed with daggers. On either end of the chest or ark is a figure of a demi-unicorn, with its back towards the ark. On each side of the recess are nine compartments, each containing the bas-relief of a single figure. The entire excavation penetrates on one side forty and on the other thirty feet into the solid rock.

The adjacent tomb to the north is very similar to that just described, but the inside of the chamber below was so choked up with clay and rubbish that it was too difficult a task to enter. The third tomb, lying to the southward, does not appear ever to have been finished, but it is nevertheless supposed to be the most ancient of all. The lower part of the recess is excavated out of the rock, the upper is built up with large stones. The decorations and sculptures are neither so numerous nor so handsome as those on the other tombs, and are much more decayed. In front are a great number of large blocks of stone strewn over the face of the hill—the remains it is thought of a labyrinth through which the intended sepulchre was approached by secret passages. There is no sign of an entrance to this tomb. At the bottom of the hill, at the south-eastern angle of the great platform, is the reservoir, in which were collected the waters that flowed down from the mountains in the rear, and from which subterranean channels led to the different buildings on the great platform, and to a smaller cistern near the head of the steps ascending from the plain.

The ruins of Persepolis are situated at the foot of the western slope of a range of rocky and sterile mountains, running as nearly as possible north and south. This range is traversed, at about three miles to the north of Persepolis, by a wide valley, or rather gorge, which narrows gradually as it advances among the hills. Through this valley, flowing from the east, runs the river Polvar, one of the streams

forming lower down the Bendamír. On the northern side of the mouth of the defile, which is three miles in width where it debouches into the plain of Mervdusht, are the precipices in which the tombs of the Persepolitan kings are excavated, and the Sassanian sculptures carved—the latter having the name of Nakhsh i Rustam; while opposite to them, on the southern side of the entrance to the gorge, are the Sassanian bas-reliefs called Nakhsh i Rejib.

Riding in a northerly direction from Persepolis for about three miles, along the foot of the hills, we came to a large natural recess in the rocks, huge masses of which were heaped together in confusion. On three of these are sculptured bas-reliefs, all greatly injured, the features of the figures being destroyed, and the whole of them having evidently been deliberately mutilated. The bas-relief to the right represents two horsemen of a size larger than life, one of whom holds out a mural crown or circlet to the other, who is receiving it. The costume and drapery of these figures are nearly obliterated by the hammers of the destroyers. The bas-relief opposite to the entrance of the recess represents two colossal figures, dressed in long robes, standing face to face, and holding in their right hands a wreath, and in their left staffs or wands. One of these figures bears a globe on his head, the Sassanian sign of sovereignty, the other has a cap with three plumes of feathers. Between the two figures, but nearly destroyed, stand two little children. Behind the king are two attendants, the first a eunuch with a fly-flapper, the second a man with a long beard, one hand resting on the pommel of his sword, the other elevated. Behind the figure with the plumed cap are two other figures looking like women, but the sculpture is nearly obliterated. The tablet on which this bas-relief is executed is smaller than the first, which is seventeen feet in length, while the former is only fifteen.

The third and largest tablet is on the left of the entrance,

and the bas-relief on it represents a Sassanian king of colossal size, on horseback, followed by nine persons, three of whom stand leaning on their swords. The king wears flowing robes, with a cuirass and belt, or cestus, the globe of sovereignty on his head, and his hair in large bunches of curls; his horse's trappings are handsome, and the attitude of the animal is well and boldly designed. The nine figures following him, who are probably intended to represent the guards of the monarch, are all dressed exactly alike, in round caps, long robes girt with belts, and their hair in curls. On the breast of the horse is an inscription in Greek and Pehlvi, translated by De Sacy as follows: "This is the likeness of the Servant of Ormazd, of the God Sapor, King of the Kings of Iran, and of Turan, of the race of the Gods, son of the Servant of Ormazd, of the God Ardashir, King of the Kings of Iran, of the race of the Gods, grandson of the God Babek, King."

Sir R. K. Porter calls attention to the shape of the swords, which differs from that of the ancient Persian, being, in imitation of the Greek, quite straight. This innovation he quotes an ancient writer to prove was introduced by the last Darius in the time of Philip of Macedon, a circumstance from which the Chaldaean soothsayers prophesied the destruction of the Persian empire by the Greeks. The mutilation of the bas-reliefs at Nakhsh i Rejib is to be ascribed, according to Chardin, to the time of Shah Sufi, the successor of Shah Abbas. Sixty men, it is said, were employed for some time in defacing the sculptures of Persepolis, in order to discourage the visits of Europeans.

On leaving the sculptures of Nakhsh i Rejib, we rode across the mouth of the valley to those of Nakhsh i Rustam, which lie exactly opposite, at a distance of probably three miles. The plain between the two is perfectly flat and intersected by numerous water-courses, to avoid the larger of which, we ascended the valley for some distance and then forded the Polvar.

Descending the opposite bank for a short time, we struck off in a north-westerly direction, and soon arrived at the foot of the lofty cliffs, in whose perpendicular face are the great tablets hewn out of the rock, which had been visible from Nakhsh i Rejib. The height of the precipice is said to be nearly 900 feet. The marble or limestone of which it is composed is of a bluish colour, and in it the tombs, four in number, are excavated at about forty paces' distance from each other, the lower edge of the tablet or excavation being about thirty-five or forty feet from the ground. They are in the form of a cross, the upper and lower divisions of which are longer than the transverse, the entire length from top to bottom seeming to be from eighty to ninety feet. In form they are all alike, but on one only are there any inscriptions. The face of the entablature being perpendicular, and the cliff sloping, though in a very slight degree, the lower division penetrates more deeply into the rock than the upper. It has a perfectly plain surface without ornament or bas-relief. In the centre of the transverse division of the cross is the door or entrance to the tomb within, with a handsomely fluted architrave, on either side of which pilasters, with the double half-bull or unicorn capitals, support a cornice of a plain and simple description. In the upper division of the cross is a large chest, or ark, on the side of which are carved a double row of fourteen figures, each with uplifted hands supporting a handsomely ornamented cornice or frieze. At each end of the chest is the head of a bull or unicorn, standing on a curiously shaped pillar terminating in the leg and paw of a lion which rests upon a kind of urn. On the top of the ark, elevated on a pedestal or platform of three steps, stands the King; opposite him, on another pedestal of the same description, is an altar with fire blazing. The king, who is dressed in a long robe, holds a bow in his left hand. His long hair and beard are carefully curled, and his right hand is extended towards the



altar. The Feroher floats in the air above, and at a little distance behind the altar is a circle, apparently intended for the sun.

The greater part of the seeming door is false; at the bottom of it alone is an opening into the chamber hollowed out in the interior. Sir R. K. Porter, who entered one of these chambers, describes them as having on the side opposite to the entrance three arched recesses, in each of which is a trough-like cavity cut in the rock, covered with a large slab, all of which had been broken into, and the contents rifled. He represents the whole interior as blackened by smoke. The entrance was originally closed by a stone door, the holes of the pivots on which it hung being still visible. At the top of the excavations are four figures of the King, adoring the fire on the altar opposite him, the features of which seem, as well as can be seen from below, to be the same on all. On the sides of the excavation are small compartments in which are figures in bas-relief, some holding spears or lances, and others with their hands uplifted in an apparent attitude of prayer.

On the third side, to the east, or furthest from the entrance to the valley, the upper division is covered everywhere with cuneiform letters, and there are some also on the centre compartment. These inscriptions having been copied and interpreted, it is ascertained beyond a doubt that this was the tomb of Darius, who, according to an ancient historian, caused it to be made during his own lifetime; although he never entered it, being deterred by the warnings of the Chaldean soothsayers, who bade him beware of a catastrophe which would ensue. Some of his relatives, nevertheless, were not to be prevented, and, trying to ascend by means of ropes, the attendants who held them let them go, and they were dashed to pieces. In the dark and stifling chamber high up in the face of the rock, the favourite eunuch of Darius passed the last seven years of his life in watching

over the remains of his master, a mode of keeping guard over the dead yet followed by the Guebres of India, in whose revolting burial-places, where the bodies may become the food of birds of prey, guardians are appointed, who, being considered defiled and impure, often continue in their office till death.

History records that Alexander the Great, after the body of Darius was found, sent it to Sysigambis, his mother, that it might receive interment with royal honours in the tomb of his ancestors. We are not, however, aware that the body of the last Darius ever reached Nakhsh i Rostam. The translation of the principal inscriptions on the tomb is as follows:—

The first paragraph, which is the same as that at Van and at Elwand, is as follows:—"The great god Ormazd, (he it was) who gave this earth, who gave that heaven, who gave mankind, who gave life (?) to mankind, who made Darius King, as well as the King of the people, as the lawgiver of the people." The next paragraph continues:—"I am Darius, the King, the Great King, the King of kings, the King of all inhabited countries, the supporter also of this great earth, the son of Hystaspes the Achaemenian, a Persian, (and) the son of a Persian, an Arian, and of Arian descent." In the third paragraph "says Darius the King:—By the grave of Ormazd, these are the countries which I have gained besides Persia. I have established my power over them. They have brought tribute to me. That which has been said to them by me, that they have done. That which has been given (to them) by me, that they have possessed. Media, Susiana, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Zarangia, Arachotia, Sattagydia, Gandara, India, the Sacæ of Emodus (?), the Sacæ of the valley of (?) the Tigris, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Sparta, Ionia, the Scythians beyond the sea, (namely) the Scodraë, the Ionians, the Tiberines (?), the Budians (?) (or Bœotians), the Copeans, the Sauromatæ, and the Greeks." The fourth

paragraph continues:—"Says Darius the King—Ormazd, as he saw (fit), bestowed this. . . . dependent (?) world on me. He made me King (of its many nations). I am the King (of them). By the grace of Ormazd I have established them firmly. That which I have said to them, that they have done. If all parties shall respectively observe a line of conduct agreeably to my wishes, the stability which produces permanence shall be enjoyed by those countries which Darius the King has possessed (?). This shall be assured to thee, O ruler of the Persian people! supremacy over. . . . This shall be assured to thee, O Persian people! thy ruler shall inherit prosperity from Persia!" This translation is to be received with reserve. In the fifth paragraph "says Darius the King:—That which has been done, all of it I have accomplished by the grace of Ormazd. Ormazd brought help to me, so that I accomplished the work. May Ormazd protect from injury me and my house and this province. That I commit to Ormazd. That may Ormazd accomplish for me." The sixth and concluding paragraph of this upper inscription is:—"O people, the law of Ormazd, that having returned to ye, let it not perish. Beware lest ye abandon the true doctrine. Beware lest ye oppress it (or lest ye stumble)." The lower inscription on the tomb of Darius, although extending to about eighty lines, is so deplorably mutilated, that Sir H. Rawlinson has not attempted to interpret it.

The most eastern, or innermost, of the four tombs is cut in the front of a projecting part of the cliff, and faces nearly west, from which circumstance, the rays of the sun having less power, it is better preserved than the rest. Underneath these tombs of the early Persian kings are some tablets, on which are bas-reliefs of the Sassanian period, very inferior to the more ancient sculptures in taste, design, and execution. The figures are all of colossal size. The most eastern tablet is on a level with the ground; part of it, indeed, is covered with

the rubbish which has accumulated round the base of the precipice. It contains three figures, the two principal of which, a man and woman facing each other, hold in their right hands a circlet, from which hang down some wide ribbons or bands. The woman wears a kind of mural crown on her head, on the top of which her hair seems arranged in masses of curls, long curls and braids hanging down over her shoulders also. Her dress is close-fitting, a belt is round her waist, and the sleeves, like those worn by women in Persia at the present day, are very long. On the head of the man is a diadem surmounted with the sloba, or Sassanian emblem of sovereignty; his hair is arranged in bunches of bushy curls, and his beard, tied like a tuft, hangs down from the point of his chin. He wears a short under-garment clasped round the waist by a belt, and a kind of cloak over his shoulders, held together by a brooch. In his left hand he grasps the hilt of a sword. Behind him, and less disfigured than the others, is the figure of a man with a short beard, on whose head is a peculiarly shaped helmet, underneath which his long hair is collected together in braids on the back of his neck. His right hand is uplifted, in his left he holds the hilt of a sword, and his single garment is clasped round the waist with a belt.

The whole bas-relief is dreadfully mutilated, parts of the sculpture being entirely obliterated. It is thought to represent a royal marriage, the monarch being Bahram the Fifth, surnamed Gur, on account of his passion for the chase of the wild ass, in which he at last met his death. The woman is one of his queens, whom he divorced for an incautious expression, but subsequently restored to greater favour than ever, on proof of her fidelity and affection. On a coin of this king almost the same scene as that on the tablet is represented, the figure of a boy being added, which may have been obliterated in the bas-relief. The sculpture on the next side, nearest the mouth of the valley, repre-

sents a tilt or tournament between two warriors on horseback. The lance of one is elevated, and his figure is thrown back, as if unseated; his antagonist is striking him fair in the breast with his spear. The latter, who is arrayed, apparently, in chain armour, wears a winged helmet surmounted by a globe, from which flutter a number of long bands. A case, supposed to be a quiver, hangs by a belt from his waist, but it appears to be empty of arrows. A prostrate figure lies under his horse's feet, and behind him stands a standard-bearer, the ensign being a ring at the end of a staff, with a cross bar underneath, from the ends of which hang what seem to be short bushy horsetails. The other figures, both horse and man, are nearly obliterated, and a large portion of the bas-relief is buried in sand and rubbish. This sculpture, which stands underneath the second tomb from the east, is thought by Sir R. K. Porter to represent a single combat between Bahram the Fifth and a Tatar Khan whom the king killed with his own hand in a great battle fought near the city of Rhey, not far from where Teheran now stands.

The next bas-relief, which stands underneath and between the second and third tombs from the east side, is the celebrated one representing Sapor receiving the submission of the Emperor Valerian, who occupies a suppliant posture before him. This sculpture is very little injured, and it seems a difficult task to conjecture how the rage of the destroyer could have been vented so completely on the others, while this has escaped comparatively unscathed. Sapor is mounted on horseback, wearing the peculiar mural crown with the globe of sovereignty on the top. His hair is arranged in bunches of curls on each side of his neck; his beard is tied in a bunch, or tuft, which hangs from the point of his chin, and a large row of pearls is round his neck. A cloak, fastened in front by a clasp, floats back over his shoulders; his inner garments are a short kind of tunic,

fastened by a belt round the waist, and very loose trousers, which hang down over the feet. While with the left hand he grasps the hilt of his sword, he holds in his right the uplifted hands of a figure standing in front of his horse. This figure, as well as another on bended knees, with arms extended as if in supplication, is in the Roman costume, both wearing shackles on their ankles and chaplets round their heads. The one in an upright position, whose hands are within those of Sapor, is supposed to represent Cyriades, whom, as an additional insult to the Romans, the conqueror forced the captive legions to elect as their emperor, and who is therefore represented as receiving his investiture at the hands of the Persian king. The other Roman is the Emperor Valerian, whose abject condition as a prisoner is depicted by his humiliating position at the feet of the haughty monarch, who is said to have used his unhappy captive, still wearing the imperial purple, as a footstool by which to mount on horseback, completing his savage triumph by hanging up his stuffed skin in a temple, after the death of the unfortunate Emperor. Behind Sapor stands a eunuch, with a round-topped cap; his hair flowing from beneath it in little braids, and his right hand elevated. Only the upper part of this figure has been sculptured, the space which the lower part would have occupied being covered by a Pehlvi inscription, which has not yet been deciphered; there are also underneath the horse the remains of an inscription in Greek characters.

Underneath the most western tomb is another representation of a tilt between two horsemen, one of whom is supposed to be Bahram Gur, and the other the Tatar Khan already referred to. The crown, or diadem, of the king is differently shaped in this from the first bas-relief of the same subject, terminating in three long points, each of which is surmounted by an ornament somewhat in the shape of a half moon. The lance or spear of the Tatar is broken; the king strikes his adversary on

the centre of his breast, and from the rearing posture of the horse and that of his rider on his croup, the former has evidently lost his seat. The king wears armour composed of small scales, and from his side hangs a quiver. His horse is decorated with various trappings on the neck, breast, and croup. Behind the king is a standard-bearer on horseback, holding an ensign, somewhat similar to that in the other bas-relief, but the transverse bar, from which hang two circular ornaments, is surmounted in this with three globes, instead of a ring. The Tatar Khan is dressed in a similar manner to that in which he is represented in the first bas-relief of the same subject.

The next sculpture represents two men on horseback, dressed in long flowing robes, facing each other, and holding in their right hands a ring or circlet. One of the figures wears a helmet surmounted by a globe, beneath which his long uncurled hair falls down over his shoulders, while his beard is tied into a tuft at the point of his chin. His left hand, which is in a curious position, is closed and held up to his mouth. His long and loose trousers hang down over and conceal his feet. A strap, or kind of shoulder-plate, round the horse's breast, is ornamented with medallions of lions' heads, and from behind the saddle hang chains terminated with large tassels. Behind stands an attendant bearing a fly-flapper. On the shoulder of the horse is an inscription in Pehlvi, which has been thus translated: "Here is the likeness of the servant of Ormazd, of the god Ardashir, King of the kings of Iran, of the race of the gods, son of the god Babek, king." The other figure wears the mural crown over hair falling in masses of bushy curls. His beard is not tied, like that of the other personage, in a tuft. In his left hand he holds a staff or baton. His legs and feet are concealed by long loose trousers, and a cloak hangs over his shoulders, fastened by a brooch in front.

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Round the horse's chest and flank passes a strap, orn

mented with medallions, and from behind the saddle hang chains terminated by tassels. The tail is tied at the top with ribbons, and is clipped in a formal manner, ending in a point. Underneath the horse's feet is the body of a dead man, whose hair seems composed of snakes, which twine round his temples. Prostrate under the feet of the other horse is a figure wearing a helmet, with a mark on the right side. On the shoulder of the horse ridden by the figure with the mural crown is an inscription in Greek and Pehlvi thus translated: "Here is the likeness of the god Jupiter." Sir R. K. Porter considers that this bas-relief is typical of the restoration of the ancient Persian empire and worship, by Ardeshir Babegan, the first of the Sassanian kings, and lineal descendant of Cyrus. The figure with the mural crown represents Ormazd, according to his opinion, crushing under his horse's feet the snake-haired demon of idolatry, and presenting to Ardashir, who tramples on the defeated Parthian, the diadem of royalty.

The next bas-relief, close to the last, represents a figure wearing the royal globe, leaning from the pommel of his sword, with his head, from which his hair hangs in a thick bunch of curls, turned over his right shoulder. His clothing is very simple, fitting close to his body; a collar of pearls is round his neck. He is only to be seen as far as the knees, his legs being concealed by the bench before which he stands. On one side of him are five figures, and on the other three, whose heads and shoulders are alone visible, as they stand behind a wall, in an opening or division in which is the king. The three figures on the left of the monarch wear caps, their hair hanging down in braids, and their long beards being carefully arranged. They each hold up the right hand with the forefinger outstretched. Two of the five figures to the right of the king wear caps similar in form to those on the heads of the figures to the left; two others have coverings of a peculiar low shape with projections; and the figure furthest

from the king has no head-dress, his hair, which is cut short on the forehead, falling in thick curls behind, in much the same way as children's hair is sometimes seen at the present day. Round his neck he wears a handsome collar, and his tunic is fastened in front by a double brooch. Some of the other figures also wear collars and brooches. It is not known to what circumstance this bas-relief refers.

On the plain in front of the tombs and bas-reliefs, and not far distant from the foot of the cliffs, stands a small building, which is believed to have been a fire-temple. It is built of the marble of the adjacent rocks. Its shape is square, each side being 25 feet, and its height is said to be 35. The doorway, which is some ten or twelve feet from the ground, is on the northern side, or that facing the tombs. The interior consists of but a single chamber, the walls of which are upwards of five feet in thickness. The ceiling and walls of this apartment are black with smoke, and it is not doubted that in this chamber was preserved with the utmost care the sacred fire. The doorway seems to have been closed with a block of stone, the grooves for the pivots of which yet remain. Underneath the door on the outside, the stone has been broken in an attempt to penetrate into a chamber supposed to exist under the other; but nothing but a solid mass of building was found. The top of the building is finished by a cornice, one of the stones forming which is of great size. Although of such remote antiquity, this structure has a fresh and recent appearance, the edges of the stone being clearly and sharply cut.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE THREE DOMES—ISTAKHR—HAREEM OF JEMSHED—ROAD-
WAY BUILT BY SHAH ABBAS—PLAIN OF MURGHAB—
SEPULCHRE OF BATHSHEBA—TOMB OF CYRUS—TAKHT I
SULEIMAN, OR SOLOMON'S THRONE—ZINDAN I SULEIMAN,
OR SOLOMON'S PRISON—REMAINS OF PASARGADÆ—CON-
DITION OF PERSIA—TRAVELLING IN THE COUNTRY—A
MISERABLE CARAVANSERAI—VILLAGE OF SURMEK—CALEN-
DARS—KANATS, OR WELLS FOR IRRIGATION—THE TOWN
OF KUMISHAH.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE had now seen the tombs of the Achaemenian kings, the sculptures executed by the Sassanian monarchs, and the temple in which for ages had been preserved with veneration the holy element adored by the Persians, which so much care was taken to shield from pollution or defilement. The temple is still called "Kaaba i Zerdusht," or Temple of Zoroaster, by the Persians, while the sculptures are supposed by them to represent the combats and triumphs of Rustum, the Hercules of Persian fable.

Leaving the valley, and turning to the north, along the foot of the cliffs which skirt the plain of Mervdusht, we came in a short time to two fire-altars, hewn out of the rock not far above the level of the ground. They stand side by side on the same platform, which is also excavated. Their height is about six feet, and their form a square of four feet and a half at the base, inclining inwards to the top, where they are three feet eight inches. In the top of each is a hollow in which it would appear that the fire was placed; and if, as is supposed, the city of Persepolis extended for a long distance over the plain to the north and west of the ruins of the palaces and temples on the great platform, it is probable that these altars may have been built to afford to travellers entering and leaving the city an opportunity of adoring the sacred element.

In the great plain of Mervdusht, in a northerly direction

from Persepolis, and at an apparent distance of seven or eight miles, rise three hills called Sib Goombedan, or the Three Domes. On one of these, Istakhr, the remains of fortifications, visible from a great distance, are described as consisting of the ruins of several towers and walls, together with those of four reservoirs. A tower which once stood within this rock fortress is said to have existed from a period of the most remote antiquity, Darius having, according to Persian traditions, deposited in it the library of sacred books he had collected, which were afterwards removed by Alexander the Great. Many learned men have believed that Istakhr was itself the ancient city of Persepolis, the former ruins being only those of the royal palaces. The castle of Istakhr was used as late as 1501 as a state prison. These hills form very striking objects, rising as they do abruptly from the plain, and standing isolated and separated from the neighbouring ranges of mountains. Near them, on the plain, are reported to exist vestiges of buildings of great antiquity, and in the adjoining cliffs small niches are hewn out at a great elevation from the ground.

It would appear that there are no relics found at Persepolis similar to those picked up in such quantities among the Assyrian and Babylonian ruins, such as cylinders and rings. While we remained in the neighbourhood, the only antiquities brought to us by the villagers were some Sassanian and Arsacidan coins.

We had now visited all the more important objects of interest in these remains, the most remarkable monuments of ancient Persia, embracing a long period of history, and extending over the many years which elapsed from the time of Darius, son of Hystaspes, and Xerxes, and that of the conqueror of the Emperor Valerian, about the two hundred and sixtieth year of our era. Not being, unfortunately, either antiquaries or artists, we could not add anything to the information so laboriously gathered by former travellers,

to which, unless some future excavations should reveal objects now concealed, it would seem there is but little to be added.

What has been discovered may be thus summed up: Darius commenced the great platform and pile of palaces and temples, leaving them at his death in an unfinished state, to be completed by his successor Xerxes. That Artaxerxes Ochus either built or repaired some of the buildings, may be inferred from his name occurring in two inscriptions. This knowledge is all that we possess of the origin of this mighty pile of ruins, the remains of the palaces of the Great Kings, at the foot of which we presume that the capital of their empire, the renowned city of Persepolis, once stood.

We left Persepolis on the 21st of February, and passing by the bas-reliefs of Nakhsh i Rejib, ascended the valley of the Polvar or Kuraub, and in a short time arrived at some very remarkable ruins standing on a low hill near the river's bank. The remains of walls, gateways, and other structures are strewn about, large blocks of stone and broken columns lie on the ground, and in the midst of these stands a fluted pillar of no great height, with a capital of the double half bull, exhibiting on the back a cavity intended to receive the end of one of the beams of a roof. The prostrate columns are similar to that still erect; they are all of a grey-coloured marble, and well preserved. There seemed to be the remains of two distinct piles of building, and Sir R. K. Porter thinks that they were originally constructed as a fortress to defend the passage of the valley, the road up which passes through the gates. These extensive remains now bear the name of "The Hareem of Jemshed."

Continuing our route up the valley, we rode for some hours between rocky, bare, and sterile hills. The banks of the Polvar are here low, and covered with stunted bushes. In five hours after starting, we arrived at the village of Leidoon, standing on some small hillocks at the foot of

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the cliffs, on the left bank of the stream. In one of its miserable but seemingly ancient huts we took up our abode for the night. The thick walls of this edifice were built of large stones, cemented together with mud, and the rooms, only two in number, were both small and very low. Near the village the valley was cultivated, and a large portion of ground seemed allotted to vineyards, the vines in which were not larger than gooseberry bushes.

Leaving Leidoon early next day, we rode up the valley for about an hour, and then, crossing the stream at a ford, continued our course by the right bank. Soon after starting it began to rain, and continued to do so for some hours. The gusts of wind down the valley were also icy cold, but nevertheless our sturdy and lightly-clad charvadars trudged through the mud in their broad-soled shoes with seeming indifference. At last the valley narrowed, and the cliffs approached each other so near, that the roadway for a short distance was cut in the face of the rock which overhung the river. This was the work of Shah Abbas the Great; and, although narrow, and capable of affording room for only one horse, or, at the most, two abreast, was a wonderful instance of engineering in a country where such labours are so rare.

After passing through this defile, we entered a plain of no great size, with a small village in its centre, and near it a yellow-coloured building, looking in the distance like a house built of cards on an elevated pedestal. This was the plain of Murghaub, and the village was called after the building in its vicinity, which is considered by the Persians to be the sepulchre of Bathsheba. On approaching nearer we found that the platform, on which the edifice rests, was composed of large blocks of stone. It is of an oblong form, the base being, it is said, forty-three feet by thirty-seven. The platform rises pyramidically in seven layers of these huge stones, each layer being smaller than that below it, and receding a little, so that the structure on the summit, standing on the



highest layer, is not more than twenty-one feet by sixteen, while the dimensions of the layer itself are given as twenty-six by twenty. The height of the platform appeared to be about twenty feet. The tomb on the top is of a very simple form. The roof is composed of large blocks, hewn to represent an ordinary slanting roof, with upright gables at each end, such as may be seen on labourers' cottages in England. The walls are composed of large stones forming the whole thickness, which is five feet. The dimensions of the chamber inside are said to be ten feet in length, seven in width, and eight in height, the floor consisting of two huge blocks. The walls are plain and devoid of ornament, some scrolls and inscriptions in Arabic letters being alone visible, of course of modern date. In the floor are holes, in which seemingly were once fastenings of metal, in all probability those of the sarcophagus. The ceiling is blackened with smoke, and the walls are also darkened—the latter, moreover, are much injured and disfigured. At one end is a narrow doorway, about four feet high, closed by a common wooden door, which we found unlocked.

Other travellers have related that, from its being supposed to be the tomb of the mother of Solomon, none but women were permitted to keep the key of the door or to enter the sepulchre. However, we did not find any difficulty in examining it, nor were there any obstacles thrown in our way. The whole edifice had been originally surrounded by a row of columns, twenty-four in number, six being on each side, some of which, broken and shattered, yet remain, and the people of the adjacent village have connected them by a low mud wall. It is no longer doubted that this building is the tomb of Cyrus the Great, which is minutely described by an ancient historian as containing the body of the king in a golden sarcophagus with purple coverings and carpets; sufficient, as Sir R. K. Porter remarks, to account for its entire removal. Had it been made of stone, it would yet

have remained, however injured, like those in the tombs of the kings at Persepolis.

On the walls of the tomb, according to another historian, was the following inscription: "O man! I am Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, founder of the Persian empire and sovereign of Asia; therefore grudge me not this sepulchre." The tomb was rifled by Polymachus, one of Alexander's officers, who, for this unworthy action, was put to death by his sovereign. Another inscription was also placed below the former one, to the following effect: "O man! whosoever thou art, and whencesoever thou comest (for come I know thou wilt), I am Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire: envy me not the little earth that covers my body;" from which Sir R. K. Porter was led to conclude that, though the body of the king was replaced, the precious sarcophagus was not restored. Of these inscriptions no traces now remain, and they are supposed to have been on tablets which were fastened to the walls. The entire edifice is of the most massive description, and, where uninjured by the hand of man, is as perfect as when just finished.

About a mile distant to the north-east, on the plain, is a slight elevation on which, rising from a marble platform, stands a single column of considerable height. At the corners of the platform, to the north, are low massive square pillars, of about four feet on each side, on each of which is an inscription in cuneiform characters. A third column of only a few feet in height stands to the south. Only a couple of blocks remain, on one of which is the same inscription as on the other pillars. At some distance to the south-east of this ruin are the remains of a building, in which are to be seen the platforms, or plinths, on which stood formerly two parallel rows of columns. In the centre is the celebrated square pillar, or block, of marble on which is the bas-relief supposed, from the inscription above, to represent Cyrus himself.

The sculpture consists of the side figure of a man, larger than life, standing with one foot slightly in advance of the other. From his shoulders issue two pair of wings, one pair reaching down to the ground and the other extending over his head, the feathers of which are very delicately executed. His dress is a long, close-fitting robe, the edge ornamented with a fringe. His beard is short and carefully curled; and from the crown of his head, on which is a cap, branch out horizontally two twisted horns, on which are placed three round balls supporting some strange ornaments, surmounted again by three more balls. Above are four lines of cuneiform characters, forming the same inscription as that on the square pillars round the tall column, and which is now read as the simple memorial, "I am Cyrus the King, the Achaemenian." The height of the pillars seems to be fourteen or fifteen feet; their breadth from four to five.

At the western extremity of a rocky ridge of hills to the north of the plain is a large platform built of white marble, with one side resting on the hill. The other three sides are each one hundred yards in length, the greatest height being, it is said, thirty-eight feet six inches. The faces of the platform are much disfigured in consequence of the stones having been displaced to get at the iron cramps by which they were once fastened together, large gaps in the masonry having been in some places made for this purpose. There are no remains of buildings or columns on this platform, which is strewn with rubbish, broken stones, and debris from the adjoining hill; and it is still a matter of conjecture what may have been its original destination, or for what purposes it has been used. It bears the name of *Takht i Suleiman*, or *Throne of Solomon*.

At about a quarter of a mile to the south-west of this platform are the remains of a building which goes by the name of *Zindan i Suleiman*, or *Prison of Solomon*, somewhat similar in appearance to the fire-temple at *Nakhsh*

i Rustam, but of smaller size. One side of a tower alone exists at present, with the remains of a projecting cornice on its top; and a doorway, the edges of which are broken and injured, is to be seen high up in the wall. The remains of this edifice, which, as well as that at Nakhsh i Rustam, is thought to have been a fire-temple, are about fifty feet in height.

A few hundred yards to the south of this ruin is a square pillar, about twenty feet in height, composed of two stones only, and on which was the same inscription, in cuneiform characters, as that found on the other columns —“ I am Cyrus the King, the Achæmenian.”

On this plain, which is now called after the village of Murghaub, situated at its northern extremity, once stood the city of Pasargadæ, the rival of Persepolis. The few scattered ruins described are the sole remains of its former magnificènce. Some other mounds and smaller ruins can be traced, which may possibly yet conceal additional fragments and relics; but at present it would seem that no more information than that suggested by the fact that the name of Cyrus is so often repeated in the inscriptions on the ruins, can be obtained. The evidence by which it is proved that the supposed sepulchre of “ Mader i Suleiman,” or Mother of Solomon, is really the tomb of the Great King, affords one instance in which Xenophon is more accurate as an historian than Herodotus. The former asserts that he died a natural death about 530 years before our era; while the latter represents him to have been put to death by Thomyris, the Scythian Queen, to whom he had fallen prisoner after a defeat. Numerous are the traditions and legends of this monarch, who is known under the name of Kai Khosru in Persia. He is represented as having miraculously disappeared, and his deeds and prowess form a favourite subject for the native historians and poets.

At a few hundred yards distance to the north of the tomb of Cyrus are the remains of a building, called by the

natives a caravanserai, but which, in the lower part at least, would appear to be of very great antiquity, the stones being of large size and carefully joined without cement. It is thought that an ancient edifice existed here, which, to judge by the still existing cells opening into the central court, similar to those seen at the ordinary khans, must afterwards have been converted into a caravanserai. We remained only one night at Mader i Suleiman, a village more dirty and wretched than usual, the inhabitants of which are Ilyâst, or nomads, who, leaving their houses in the summer to pasture their flocks in the mountains, return to them in winter. These nomadic tribes are said to be wilder and more uncivilized than the inhabitants of the plains.

We had now reached the furthest point of our journey. Our route henceforth was homewards through the three principal towns of Persia; Ispahan, Teheran, and Tabreez. We had seen the ruins, vast and imposing in the grandeur of their awful desolation, of the mighty cities of ancient days; we had witnessed the remains of the civilization of bygone times at a period to which history itself barely reaches; and we had beheld the fragments of the great works which yet exist to attest the industry, wealth, and skill of peoples and races long since passed away, and whose places now know them no more, their very names being forgotten by those who have succeeded them in the occupation of the countries in which they have left such enduring memorials.

We were now to witness decay of a different nature, that of a people, in acuteness, natural talent, and cleverness, second probably to none in the world, but whose lying, deceit, treachery, and dishonesty have reduced them to be a byword in the East, where their very name is considered synonymous with all that is false and dishonourable. Their country, which, if we can believe historians, was once a very garden of fertility, has now, through their idleness, incapacity, and want of industry, become in most parts a waste; the

few wretched and poverty-stricken villages scattered over it only serving to render more hideous the surrounding sterility. Persia differs from every other land in this, that the lands in the vicinity of the high roads are invariably worse cultivated and more neglected than those in the remoter and more secluded districts, a circumstance easily accounted for by the fact that the villages near the principal routes are periodically plundered by the soldiers and public functionaries, who, quartering themselves on the miserable inhabitants when they pass through their villages, extort from them, under various pretexts, considerable sums. So intolerable have been the acts of oppression practised with impunity by government officials and great personages on the peasantry, that large districts, which at one time were carefully cultivated and thickly inhabited, are now desert, waste, and depopulated. The ruins of what once were considerable villages near the dilapidated caravanserais, show the rapid decline of the country; and the general absence of security, coupled with the degraded character of the people, makes it a matter of surprise how any government whatever can be carried on in a society so debased.

Our horses' heads at last turned towards home, we rode for the first half of the day over low ridges of hills, with small plains intervening, continuing, however, gradually to ascend, as we had done on the preceding day. As a considerable quantity of snow had fallen during the night, the whole country was white, and it was with difficulty we could get our baggage mules through the drifts which in some places blocked up the road. The pools of water were covered with ice, and the blasts of wind descending from the frozen hills were bitterly cold. The scene was as desolate and bare as it is possible to conceive, and no signs of human habitations were visible.

Having ridden for five hours through this waste, we began to descend, and soon reached a large plain, which

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took us four more hours to cross, not reaching—in consequence of our late departure from Mader i Suleiman—the caravanserai of Dhabid, where we were to pass the night, until long after dark. We passed on the plain a caravanserai called Khavna Kergam, and also, at some distance to the right, a mountain, standing isolated and detached, of a very peculiar shape.

We found, on arriving, that every chamber in the half-ruined caravanserai was already occupied, the only place in which we could take up our quarters being an archway, half of the roof of which alone remained, the floor being covered a foot thick with snow. However, having secured all the wood that was to be procured from the Khandgi, we soon made a good fire, and sweeping out the snow, were shortly the envy of our fellow-travellers, less comfortable though better lodged. It was impossible for any human habitation to be more wretched and miserable in appearance than this khan with its dilapidated cells. The centre of the court was filled with a heap of frozen snow, which had been scraped up from about the entrances to these comfortless sleeping apartments, out of which, in two or three places, where a few hungry dogs snarled and growled, protruded the limbs of mules that had died from the inclemency of the weather and insufficiency of food.

We left this isolated and squalid caravanserai as early as we could the next morning, and reached another, called Khanagoora, in six hours. We began to ascend immediately after leaving Dhabid, and continued to do so for four hours, until at last we had reached a very considerable elevation, which could not have been much under seven thousand feet above sea level. The hills were covered with deep snow, through which we could scarcely get the laden mules, which floundered and fell constantly; the drifts, in one or two places, being so deep, that it was with great difficulty we could extricate them. Having crossed the snow,

which lay thickest just below the summit of the pass, we descended into a plain, in the centre of which was the caravanserai, and over which also the snow lay in patches. Neither on this day nor on the preceding, had we passed a single human habitation; not even a sheep was to be seen on the surface of the plains; which intervened, with dreary monotony, between the ridges of low rocky hills. The only living creatures that seemed to inhabit the waste were ravens and magpies, which found luxurious fare on the numerous bodies of mules and horses which lay by the road-side. Judging from our own experience, we should consider the latter bird, both from its frequency and from certain peculiarities of character which it possesses in common with the human inhabitants of the country, to form a much truer emblem for the land of Iran than the nightingale.

The next day we rode, in six hours, along the plains in a north-westerly direction to Surmek, leaving the high snowy ridge we had crossed on the preceding day on our left hand, and another lower rocky range on our right. We saw no signs indicating that the country was inhabited until near the end of our day's march, when we found the neighbourhood of Surmek covered with gardens, surrounded with mud walls, in which were fruit trees and poplars; the branches of the latter being used, as is common in Europe, for fuel. We put up in a filthy caravanserai outside the walls which enclosed the village, and as we had arrived early, spent the evening in walking about the gardens, the sight of the trees in which was most grateful after all the desolation we had lately passed through.

The village of Surmek itself is of some size; but the houses, as usual, are poor and miserable, no one daring to exhibit his superior wealth to his neighbours by the erection of a larger or more commodious dwelling. The houses are built of mud with flat roofs, large portions of which having fallen down, it seemed the present occupation

of the inhabitants to restore and repair them. When at dinner in the caravanserai, after darkness had set in, we were visited by a dervish, a very holy man, as we afterwards heard, who begged hard for some of the savoury stew, the odour of which seemed pleasant to his nostrils. On our asking him how he could think of eating the food a Christian had touched, he coolly replied that no one could see him. These dervishes seem to be regarded in Persia in the present day much as the mendicant friars used to be looked upon in Europe, with contempt by the higher, and reverence by the lower classes. The latter are often victimized by the sacred impostors, whose insolence and impudence are unbounded.

They are called "calendars" by the natives—a name that will at once recall many scenes in the Arabian Nights. They lead a wandering and roving life, living upon the alms which they obtain from the piety or fear of the villagers. They are generally dressed in some queer and odd fashion, sometimes even in skins, and their entire visible property consists of a bowl to receive their food, a horn which they blow to announce their arrival in a new place, and a stick or some kind of weapon. Nevertheless, many of them in time accumulate considerable sums, and retire from the fraternity to spend the remainder of their lives in debauchery and profligacy. Many of these vagabonds keep up such a show of religion, calling upon the name of Ali with such persistence and loudness, that they are esteemed by the common people as miracles of holiness and sanctity; and when they are consulted by the simple peasantry, who regard them as oracles, the best of whatever the house can afford is placed before the wily scoundrels, whose hypocrisy is only equalled by their assurance.

Our next day's journey was only four hours to Abadah, a large village, but, as usual, in a decayed and semi-ruinous condition. Our road lay in a north-westerly direction over the plain, which, as we advanced, began to be more carefully

cultivated. Numerous watercourses and rivulets intersected its surface in every direction; the ground in the neighbourhood of Abadah, especially, seemed very fertile. We put up under a broken arch, which appeared the only remaining part of what was once a large caravanserai, and having purchased a quantity of the little shrub, about nine inches in height, that grows in the desert, and which, with dried cow-dung, forms the only fuel in these regions we managed, as it luckily did not snow, to keep out the piercing cold of the night. The whole plain during our day's ride was covered with snow, which had also accumulated in deep drifts, where the sun's rays could not touch it.

The next day we rode, in six hours, over the same dreary plain to an isolated caravanserai, called Shurgestoun. A village, now deserted, once stood near it; and there yet exists a small fort not far distant, close to which is the tomb of some Mohammedan saint. It had frozen hard during the night, and the snow was crisp and hard under our horses' feet. The caravanserai was large and well built, but rapidly falling into decay. Our stage, the following day, was to Amunavadh, another caravanserai, but of a much better description than usual; passing by Yezdikhaust on our way. Riding for five hours along the same monotonous flat—the hills on either side covered with snow to their base, and the ground also white wherever the rays of the sun had not sufficient power to melt the frozen drifts—we at length arrived at a deep ravine running west and east, on a large rock rising out of which was built the village of Yezdikhaust, the only access to it seeming to be by a wooden bridge from the top of the precipice.

Every available portion of this rock was covered with houses, many of them built on beams running out over the cliffs. The place altogether had a very strange and peculiar appearance, something similar to, but on a very much smaller scale than, Ternova in Bulgaria. The mud-built

and flat-roofed houses were in the usual ruinous condition. In four hours more we reached Amunavadh, near which are the remains of what was once a large village, but is now nearly deserted, a few wretched huts inhabited by some squalid and poverty-stricken peasants alone standing.

The next day (1st March) we rode in seven hours to Kumishah, a straggling town at the foot of the ridge of hills which terminate the long and dreary plain over which we had travelled for four and-a-half days. We passed a few villages surrounded by mud walls, and towns built of sun-dried brick, the walls giving to each the appearance of a petty fortress. At about an hour's distance from the town the plain assumed a curious character, the deep clay of which it was composed being in every direction intersected with fissures, through which, in most cases, ran streams of water. Most of these fissures or crevices had a natural appearance, but many were evidently artificial, and seemed originally to have been tunnels connecting the wells, or kanats, sunk by the Persians for the purpose of irrigation. These tunnels, or subterranean channels, are often of great length, and are universal throughout the country, water being conveyed by them for long distances without evaporation or waste. A well is first sunk near a spring, with which another, made at some fifty yards distance, in the direction in which it is desired to bring the water, is connected by an underground channel, sometimes simply tunnelled through the ground, and in other cases, where the soil is soft, built of brick or stone. Other wells being dug at similar distances, the water is thus conducted pure and fresh from the source to a distance occasionally of some miles. In the vicinity of Kumishah the country seemed better cultivated than we had seen it since leaving Schiraz. The gardens around the town were large, and filled with fruit trees, from the wood of which, our charvaders told us, a considerable manufacture of the long carved spoons used in Persia was carried on.

The town itself, to judge by the quantity of space enclosed within the circumference of the mud walls and numerous towers which surround it, must once have been of considerable size, but it was destroyed by the Afghans in the early part of the last century. A dozen tumbledown shops, not larger than booths, were dignified by the name of a bazaar. We put up in a small caravanserai of the same ruinous character as the rest of the surrounding buildings, in which we were fortunate enough to find a vacant cell and a good supply of fuel.

During the day we had seen on the plains a few small herds of gazelles, so tame that they allowed us to approach pretty near before scampering off, but for the whole distance of a seven hours' march we had not beheld a sheep or goat. The only birds that seemed to inhabit the country were ravens, of which there were great numbers, hooded crows, magpies, and a few pigeons, the latter wild and very small, their colour a light grey or blue. The ground, where not utterly bare of vegetation, was thinly covered with a small plant with a long single root, which grew in tufts at some distance from each other, and did not exceed eight or ten inches in height. Our charvadars constantly strayed from the path to pull out some of these by the roots, and thus collect a supply of fuel, no other being procurable.

Another day's march of six hours brought us to the caravanserai of Mahyar, in the neighbourhood of a village of the same name, surrounded by a mud wall. It was once, to all appearance, a very handsome building. The gateway had been decorated with coloured tiles, some of which yet remained; and the interior, though, as usual, much dilapidated, and, like everything in this country, falling rapidly to ruins, was capacious and roomy, showing by the appearance of what was still in good preservation, the liberality of its founder.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ISPAHAN—THE CHEHAN-BAGH, OR FOUR GARDENS—PALACE OF THE CHEL SITOON—THE MEDRASSY, OR COLLEGE OF SHAH HOSEIN—THE NEW PALACE—THE STREETS OF JULFA—PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BAZAARS, AND MOSQUES—THE AFGHAN INVASION OF PERSIA—THE IMAM JUMAH—STRANGE CEREMONY—THE ARMENIAN ARCHBISHOP—ARMENIAN CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH—THE ATESHGAR, OR PLACE OF FIRE—PIGEON TOWERS—THE SHAKING MINARETS—THE AIN A KHAUNA, OR HALL OF MIRRORS—ENVIRONS OF ISPAHAN.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE next stage, that to Ispahan, was a long one of ten hours. Accordingly, starting very early, in a short time we began to ascend a rocky pass in the mountains that bounded the small plain. As the high land did not continue long, we soon descended into some undulating and broken ground, shortly after coming in sight of the gardens of Ispahan, though a spur of hills from the chain to our left hid the city itself. These gardens, surrounded each with its mud wall, seemed to extend nearly as far as the eye could reach in an easterly direction over an immense plain, at the other side of which were snow-capped mountains.

Crossing this spur, the city itself lay before and below us, covering a large extent of ground, and containing within it so many trees, that in some places it had the appearance of a grove, out of which rose a few slender minarets. With the exception of the green dome of one large mosque, no building remarkable from its size or beauty struck the eye. Numerous open spaces, which we were told were laid out as gardens, were interspersed among the trees. The ground everywhere, both on the plain and within the town, was white with snow, which gave to the city and trees the appearance of rising out of a large marsh. We descended from the mountain, passing by at some distance on the left hand a considerable Armenian monastery, and in a short time after entered Julfa, the quarter of Ispahan inhabited by Armenians. This part of the city, which lies to the south of the river,

was so called from Julfa on the Araxes in Armenia, the inhabitants of which were transported by Abbas the Great, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, to the then capital of Persia, where they were located en masse.

We rode through a succession of filthy lanes, lined by ruinous mud walls, and having squeezed ourselves with difficulty through some doorways, the purpose or use of which it seemed difficult to comprehend, we at last reached the house of Mr. Stephen Agenor, the English Consular agent, an Armenian merchant, whose family belonged to Ispahan, and who, having been educated in Calcutta, spoke English as well as his native language. We found his house furnished in a mixture of the English and native styles. The walls were decorated with the usual Persian mirrors, composed of small pieces of glass, between which hung some handsome English prints, and on the tables lay a few English newspapers, "Illustrated News," &c., only a couple of months old. By the assistance of this gentleman, we procured rooms in a house not far distant, in which also an officer of the Indian navy had been for some time resident, being so much reduced by illness as to be unable to attempt a winter journey to Bushire on his return to India.

Our house occupied three sides of a courtyard, the centre of which was filled with almond and pear trees, and round which ran a broad path, the fourth side being occupied by a brick wall. The apartments opened on to this court, which was entered from the street by a small low door, and a long passage. A narrow and semi-ruinous staircase at one corner of it led to a couple of rooms looking out towards, but not on the street, and in these we took up our abode.

We arrived at Ispahan on the 3rd of March, having thus been sixteen days from Schiraz, the journey having been prolonged from the short stages which the charvadars took whenever they found themselves among acquaintances or friends.

On the day succeeding our arrival, we crossed the river

by one of the two bridges called after its builder, Alaverdi Khan, one of the generals of Shah Abbas, and rode to the Chehar Bagh, or "Four Gardens," the royal residences where once lived the monarchs of Persia, now deserted, dilapidated, and ruinous. The bridge is a handsome one of thirty-three arches, of no great size. A pathway for foot passengers on either side of the roadway is covered in by smaller arches, forming an arcade. The level of the road is at no great height above the river, or rather its bed, there being scarcely any water trickling through the gravel and stones below. On passing over the bridge we entered a long and broad avenue formed by double rows of magnificent plane-trees on either side, in gardens opening off which, called the Hasht Behesht, or Eight Paradises, stand the several palaces, now sadly mutilated and decayed.

We were conducted to one or two, in a semi-ruinous state, in which there was nothing worthy of remark. We next rode to the Chel Sitoon, or "Forty Pillars," the favourite dwelling of the Shahs of the race of Sufi, who having been deprived of their kingdom by the Afghans, were restored by Nadir in the person of Shah Tahmasp, who was afterwards deposed by his victorious general. The latter, ascending the throne in his stead, made the name of Nadir Shah known and feared far and wide in the Eastern world.

The palace, before which is a piece of water, is open in front, the roof being supported by wooden pillars, rising from pedestals formed by the backs of four lions of white marble. These columns, of which there are eighteen, each being forty feet in height, are completely covered over with small pieces of looking-glass, some winding round them spirally, and others arranged in various odd shapes and devices, the whole effect of the light and seemingly fragile stems of wood thus supporting the richly decorated ceiling being exceedingly graceful. The roof itself, besides being painted in medallions with blue, white, and gold scroll

work and flowers, is also decorated with mirrors and other ornaments and arabesques. The floor of this splendid portico as well as of a hall opening off it, which is three or four feet above the ground, is flagged with white marble, and a fountain, which plays in the centre, is beautifully reflected in the mirrors that cover the side walls.

Some of the arabesques, the designs of which are very delicate, are remarkably well executed, the colours also being well preserved where the brilliant light has not had too much power. From the hall at the back of the portico, doors open into a large and lofty room, the walls of which are hung with pictures of battles and carousals, painted by Persian artists, in the style peculiar to the country. In the most curious specimen of these triumphs of native genius, representing Nadir Shah engaging the troops of the Indian emperor Mahmud, the two sovereigns occupy at least half the surface of the canvas, the remainder being filled up by their respective armies. The features of the warriors are all painted with an expression of the most placid self-satisfaction; their countenances, even when engaged in deadly combat, manifesting a feeling rather of mild benevolence than of angry hostility. The elephants, with swords grasped in their trunks, appear to be far more excited by the combat, in which they take an active part, than the delicate and carefully curled heroes on either side. In another battle piece representing an engagement between Shah Tahmasp and the Turkish Sultan Suleiman, the Shah smiling most amiably all the while, cuts in halves one of his adversary's soldiers, who, to judge by the expression of his features, rather likes the operation. The other pictures representing entertainments given by various Shahs, Abbas the Great, Abbas the Second, &c., are painted with the same ludicrous contempt for reality. If we can judge by the quantity of wine vessels placed before the guests, hard drinking seems in their times to have been the order of the day. Some dancing girls are also doing their best to amuse and entertain

the half-drunken revellers. These pictures, absurd as they are, are yet valuable from being in all likelihood the portraits of the different sovereigns whom they depict, not only in the performance of their warlike exploits, but also in the enjoyment of their hours of pleasure.

Covering the floor of this room was a carpet of the same date as the rest of the building, bearing the traces of having been once very rich and handsome, but so faded and worn that scarcely any pattern could be discerned. Behind this large apartment were the other rooms of the palace, in one of which lived a native artist, who, we were told, was the best painter in Ispahan. His chief employment seemed to be painting kalemduins, or cases for holding writing materials, some of which were remarkably handsome, and not exceeded in minuteness of detail or delicacy of finish by productions of the finest miniature painting. He showed us a portrait of the Shah dressed in a short blue frock coat, with high collar, completely covered over with gold embroidery and precious stones.

On leaving the palace of the Chel Sitoon, we visited the Medrassy, or college of Shah Hosein, not far distant from it, and from being in the Chelhar Bagh, also called by that name.

The gates, on one side of the grand avenue, were of brass, plated over with silver, and decorated with gilt ornaments in raised designs, some of which were intertwined with verses of the Koran. The interior consisted of a row of cloisters or cells, surrounding a large court, or garden, in which, among a number of plane-trees, trickled several rivulets. On one side was a mosque, the interior of which, as well as the dome outside, was covered with tiles brilliantly coloured and glazed, many of which, however, had fallen off. The cells were now empty of both professors and students, the mosque was silent and deserted, we were the only beings who broke the solitude, and the whole edifice, which, particularly in the summer, when

the trees are in leaf, must once have been very beautiful, was hastening rapidly to decay.

Not far from the Medrassy was a garden containing a small palace, in a tolerable state of preservation, built by Shah Suleiman, and consisting of a large hall, with several rooms opening from it. In the hall were two large pictures, one representing Fetteh Ali Shah hunting, the other the same monarch holding a State reception, his sons and chief ministers standing round him. The Shah himself, his throne, and his sons, are all equally covered with jewels. The long black beard of the former, on which, said to be the finest in Persia, he particularly prided himself, is most carefully painted; and although the picture itself is ludicrous in the extreme as to proportion and perspective, yet the likenesses are said to be accurate. The hunting-piece represents the Shah on horseback, transfixing a lion, or some animal resembling one, with a lance. The horse is looking straight before him, utterly regardless of his proximity to the king of beasts, who, though severely wounded, gazes tranquilly on the spectator.

Another picture represents a European in the costume of the time of William the Third—red coat, ruffles, hat, all complete. This, we were told, represented an Englishman, called Stergy by the Persians, and who was considered by them so remarkably handsome that to this day his picture is constantly painted on ornaments and knickknacks. He was attached to a former mission to Persia, and his real name we were afterwards told was Stracey, or Strachey.

From this small palace we passed through some gardens and avenues, with rows of plane-trees, to the "new palace," built about ten years ago by Cheragh Ali Khan, when governor of the city. It was on the Julfa, or south side of the Zenderood, and was simply a handsome house in the Persian style, built round a court laid out as a garden, with trees and plants. The principal rooms of the interior, which was

tastefully decorated, were a large hall, the walls of which were covered with looking-glass, and a reception-room, in the centre of which was a marble fountain, surrounded with slender wooden columns, covered with mirrors reflecting every object on their surface. One end of the room was closed in with lattice-work, behind which the ladies of the seraglio could sit and gaze on the visitors without being themselves seen, and a pretty and light gallery ran round the apartment some twelve feet from the ground. This palace is now the property of the Government, and is uninhabited, but, at the present moment, it is deserving of remark as being, with the exception of the foreign embassies at Teheran, probably the only public building in Persia in perfect repair.

We returned to our house through the narrow and muddy streets of Julfa, which exceeded in filth those of any other town we had seen. In consequence of the sewage of each house being discharged into open cesspools in front, the stench is sometimes almost unbearable. In most of the streets, a water-course, sometimes merely a stagnant ditch, runs down the centre, between a row of poplar-trees, thus serving to water the gardens as well as to drain the houses. As these gardens are very numerous, and as many of the houses are built in them at a distance from the thoroughfares, some of the streets have the appearance of lanes between mud walls, over which hang the branches of plane and other trees.

It is said that, like the Mohammedan portion of *Ispahan*, Julfa has declined, until it now contains only about a tenth of the number of inhabitants of which it boasted in the days of Shah Abbas. It is now thought that its population hardly reaches as many as three thousand, while even within the last quarter of a century it reckoned more than three times that number of inhabitants. The once busy trade carried on by the industrious colony no longer exists. Constant and unvarying oppression has broken the spirits of

the Armenians, so enterprising and eager for gain in other lands, and in a few more years, unless some unforeseen circumstances should occur to arrest the progress of decay, this once prosperous and thriving suburb of the ancient capital of Persia will become a ruin and its gardens so many jungles.

We spent another day in visiting the principal bazaars, the Meidan Shah or parade ground, and in riding through the town, or at least as much of it as has survived the destruction caused by the Afghans. The Meidan Shah is not far from the Chel Sitoon, and the gardens of the Chehar Bagh commence close to it. It is said to be half a mile in length by two hundred and fifty yards in width. In the centre stands an object worthy of the people and its rulers, a lofty mast or pole, which rises from a platform elevated some feet above the surrounding ground, serving as a scaffold for the numerous executions. From the sides of this mast hang several hooks, to which the bodies of criminals, after, as is most commonly the case, they have been dragged through the streets and bazaars, are for some days suspended by the heels.

The punishments of Persia, though not so barbarous as in former times, are yet very cruel. One mode of execution is so barbarous that it is to be hoped it is but rarely practised. The criminal, suspended by the legs to posts at some distance from each other, is cut in halves by repeated blows of the executioner's scimitar. When at Teheran, we were told that the invariable rule whenever the Shah makes a royal progress to any large town in his dominions, is to put to death some criminals as a means of impressing on the people a sense of his power and authority. A short time before his last visit to Ispahan, a number of unhappy wretches, who had been guilty of some robberies, had been induced to surrender themselves by a promise of pardon, and had for some time lived in peace, quietly confiding in the

royal faith. On the appearance of the Shah, however, it was necessary that some victims for the executioner should be found; and, in spite of the pardon, these unfortunate people were seized and executed, to the great edification of the populace, who, in all likelihood, esteemed their sovereign all the more for his breach of faith.

On each side of this large square is some important public building. On the south-west, by which we entered, is the Ali Kassi, or Gate of Ali. Opposite to it is the mosque of Sutf Ollah. A very large and handsome mosque, called the Meshed Shah, built by Shah Abbas, is on the south-east; while on the north-west side is the entrance into the great bazaar. Round the square itself runs a double row of arches one over the other, forming thus two stories of arcades, which we were told had formerly been fitted up as shops, but which were empty and neglected. The Meshed Shah is a very extensive building. Its huge dome was once covered over with blue enamelled tiles, but large patches of them have fallen off, leaving the brickwork beneath exposed, thus spoiling the otherwise brilliant appearance of the building. On either side of the entrance to the Meidan Shah were two lofty minarets, and close to the mosque itself stood two others. The dome of the mosque of Sutf-Ollah was also of considerable size, and similarly ornamented with enamelled tile-work, in much better preservation than on the Meshed Shah. As a matter of course, we were not admitted into either of these mosques. The Ali Kassi gate is a lofty building, five stories high, in a large open hall or apartment, in which, over the archway, it was a favourite amusement of Shah Abbas to sit and review his troops in the square below. This room seemed to have been once very handsomely ornamented, the remains of various decorations still existing, though sadly decayed and disfigured. A narrow and dilapidated staircase, formerly covered with enamelled tiles, leads from one story to the other to the top of the edifice,

from which an extensive view of Ispahan and its environs is obtained.

Over the gate leading into the bazaar, which is opposite to the Meshed Shah, is an open apartment, once used as an orchestra for a military band, when the rage for European manners and customs first became prevalent in Persia. Round the Meidan Shah is a channel or watercourse, which is now dry, and in many places ruinous. As may be expected from the generally decayed state of the city, the bazaars of Ispahan have sadly fallen off from the once prosperous and busy state in which they are described to have been when it was the capital of the kingdom. Still, to all appearance, a considerable trade was carried on. The shops were filled with goods chiefly of the cheaper stuffs worn by the commoner classes, and were it not for some large bazaars, which are shut up and deserted, it would be difficult from the thronged condition of those still used as places of business to discover the decaying state of the city.

The principal bazaar, which is called after its builder, Shah Abbas, is very extensive, and like the rest, it is roofed with brick. The shops are spacious, and, according to the ideas of the country, handsome. Another bazaar, built by Shah Hosein, and called Bazaar Boolund, is now deserted, as well as a large caravanserai in its centre. Both are rapidly going to ruin, and as no one of course thinks of preserving an edifice no longer wanted, in a short time no traces of either will exist.

Our appearance in the bazaar caused no little excitement, Europeans being such a rarity in Ispahan; probably there was not another in the town besides ourselves. The Circassian costume of Demetri at once gave rise to the idea that we were Russians, and having stopped for a short time at one of the shops, that intelligent individual was taken aside by a solemn-looking white-bearded old gentleman, who, by the gravity of his countenance, had evidently something serious to

communicate. When after a conversation of some minutes, Demetri returned, we learnt the object of the old gentleman's interview with him. It was to warn us—in our supposed character of Russians—to beware of the designs of the English, who, the reverend-looking politician declared he knew positively were digging, at a great depth under ground, a tunnel from Mosul, on the Tigris, to Teheran, issuing from which unexpectedly into the heart of the city, they would thus possess themselves without difficulty of the capital. To his certain knowledge the English had been at work for some years at this stupendous excavation; and as no one could be thoroughly up to the designs of such "regular devils"—such was the complimentary epithet by which he distinguished our countrymen—Demetri was to warn us to be on our guard against them.

The streets of Ispahan differ in no respect from those of other Eastern cities, being narrow, crooked, unpaved and dirty. As to the houses, there is hardly one in the whole city in repair, and in many places whole districts have been abandoned, and are now covered with fragments of walls and heaps of rubbish. Ispahan, which once in its palmy days of prosperity and magnificence, under Shah Abbas the Great, contained upwards of 600,000 inhabitants, has never recovered from the destruction and ruin it endured at the hands of the Afghan conqueror Mahmud, who, in the beginning of the last century, captured the city, putting to the sword all the inhabitants who were not able to escape a fifteen days' massacre. The final blow was inflicted by the removal of the capital and the residence of the monarch to Teheran, at the close of the last century, a change which took place under the present or Kajar dynasty, who, originally springing from a Turcoman tribe, preferred being near their own kindred to being surrounded by the partisans of the fallen or Zend race of kings.

At present it is supposed that the entire population does

not exceed 80,000, and this number is so rapidly diminishing, that in a short time the once proud city which gave laws, only a couple of centuries ago, to so large a portion of the East, may have dwindled into a village surrounded by heaps of rubbish and shattered fragments of brickwork. The city, which, with its suburbs, is said to be fifteen miles in circuit, was once surrounded by walls, the remains of which are still to be seen in certain places. It still contains twelve mosques, as many Medrassys or schools, and a number of baths, all more or less in a state of decay and dilapidation, soon seemingly to end in total ruin.

We returned to Julfa by a circuitous route, passing through a part of the city which had lain desolate and waste ever since the time of the Afghan invasion. Immense heaps of rubbish and ruins lay scattered about over a large area, through which might still be traced the lines in which the streets once ran, now only hollows in the masses of débris. On all sides were ruin and desolation, and a large district within the walls of the second city of the empire was a desert waste.

Having heard that the Imam Jumah, the principal dignitary of the Moslem faith in Persia, was then resident in Ispahan, we expressed a desire to visit him, and he having intimated his gracious intention of admitting the infidel strangers to an audience, a day was arranged for our reception. We were accompanied by Mr. Agenor, who acted as our interpreter, and who brought with him, as a present to the great man, the head of the Persian church, a translation into Persian of the Bible. We were kept waiting for the appearance of this dignitary about half an hour, which we employed in looking over the new house which he had just finished, and on which, if current reports were to be believed, he had spent large sums. Though of small size, the rooms were gems of their kind, being ornamented and decorated in the extreme of Persian art. In each apartment

were alabaster fountains. The walls and ceilings were covered with fresco paintings minutely and delicately finished, and with a profusion of the usual small mirrors. The whole interior showed a lavish expenditure, and there seemed no doubt whatever that the holy man intended to make himself as comfortable as he could in the residence he had erected for his old age.

We went up a narrow filthy staircase to the roof, under an archway, on which we found four chairs had been placed, three for us, and one for the Imam Jumah. We were surrounded by a crowd of servants, who we were told were never paid anything, being maintained by the voluntary contributions and presents made by those who had business to transact with, or favour to solicit from, the great dignitary. To these we were objects of intense curiosity, and as infidels rejecting the faith which they cherished, they seemingly found it hard to believe that so holy a man as their master could hold any intercourse with us. A few minutes after we sat down there was a movement in the crowd. A tall, stout man of about forty appeared in the doorway leading from the interior of the house to the roof, and followed by a young-looking individual, who, from the kalem-dun or writing-case which he wore in his belt, appeared to be his secretary, came towards us with much stateliness and dignity. He had taken but a few steps, when there was a commotion among the bystanders. A black sheep which had been kept in the background was dragged forward by the horns, and with many pious ejaculations, led twice round the religious dignitary, after which it was taken away and given to some wretched and poverty-stricken people in the court below, who were eagerly waiting for the prize.

The object of this strange ceremony, we afterwards learnt, was, that a disease under which the holy man had for some time laboured, should pass from his body into that of

the sheep, which had been presented by one of his most faithful followers, with the design of thus relieving his spiritual director from his ailments. We were not told whether the flesh of the animal thus transformed into a scape-goat would convey, in the opinion of the devotees around, the malady into the bodies of those who consumed the meat. On the conclusion of this ceremony the Imam came forward, bowed stiffly, and seating himself in the chair opposite us, asked us a few insignificant questions about our journey, evidently not believing us when we told him we were travelling for pleasure.

His notice being attracted by the book which Mr. Agenor held in his hand, it was presented to him. Opening it at random, he stumbled upon the passage, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," words of which he at once availed himself to point out that the Christians disobeyed their own sacred book in drinking the forbidden liquor. Mr. Agenor referred to other passages in the New Testament, such as the account of the miracle at Cana, where the use of wine was permitted. He was unsuccessful, however, probably from the excitement of the moment, in his attempt to discover the passages in the Persian Bible, and the Moslem champion evidently considered that he had the advantage in the argument. The bystanders were apparently much impressed by the ability and learning of the Imam Jumah, who had not only gained the victory over the infidel with such ease, but had availed himself of his opponent's own sacred book as the means of assuring his defeat.

After a little time coffee was brought in, together with small cakes of the manna of the tamarisk, a substance which, exuding from the plant, is found in early morning as a whitish powder on the leaves. These cakes, he told us, had come from one of his villages in the neighbourhood of Ispahan, and that they were supposed to be the best made in the country. To us they appeared insipid and tasteless, but the Persians con-

sider them a delicacy of the first description. Our entertainer was gifted with one of the very worst countenances it was possible to witness. Every low passion seemed plainly written on it, and with truth, if the stories told us of his conduct and general behaviour were to be relied on. The unfortunate inhabitants of the villages belonging to him were oppressed and plundered by him without mercy, no appeal for the relaxation of his severity being ever listened to. He bore the reputation of being even a more shameless taker of bribes than any other official, whether civil or ecclesiastical, in the Government of Ispahan. Nevertheless, owing to the position he occupies, he possesses immense influence over the people; and so great is the power he wields, that he is able, through the priesthood, at any time to get up a religious opposition to any measure of the Government obnoxious to him.

After an interview of half an hour, we took our leave, and descending the dirty staircase, mounted our horses in the court below, and returned to Julfa, where we went to see the Armenian archbishop, an ecclesiastic of a very different description, and the opposite of the Imam Jumah in every particular. He was an old man, whose kind and benevolent countenance was rendered venerable by the long grey beard which fell down over his breast. He was dressed in long black robes, similar to those worn by the bishops, whom, when in Armenia, we had seen at Etchmiadzin, where, he told us, he had been brought up. Before coming to Ispahan, where he had been but for a short time, he had been Bishop of Sebastopol and the south part of the Crimea, whence he had been removed to his present diocess.

He spoke very despondingly of the actual state of the Armenians in Persia, but hoped, according as the influence of the European courts became more powerful at Teheran, owing to the every-day increasing decay and decrepitude of the Government, the position of his people would become ameliorated. At present, save in the neighbourhood of the

capital, where in case of any outrageous act of oppression a representation made to a foreign minister seldom fails to procure redress, the most flagrant acts of injustice are every day practised with impunity by the Mussulman officials on the unfortunate Armenians. Both the Mussulman and native Christian population of this country, as a rule, are far ahead of most other nations in vice, treachery, and lying, the latter art being brought by them to its utmost perfection. It is to be hoped, however, that, as Islamism declines, the nobler principles of Christianity may yet assert their influence, and that, even in a worldly point of view, the spirit of commercial enterprise among the Armenians may ere long succeed in changing this now languishing and dispirited people into a prosperous and flourishing community.

Just previously to our arrival at Ispahan, the archbishop had been presented by the Shah with the insignia of the Lion and Sun, on which account he had to receive the visits of congratulations of all the Moslem officials. As we were taking our leave, the treasurer of Ispahan, son-in-law of the governor, who was an uncle of the Shah, made his appearance, followed by a crowd of servants, who quite blocked up the passage through which we were to pass. This custom of bringing a number of servants to a visit of ceremony, means more than is commonly supposed. The great men never paying their servants, the latter, unless they steal, have no means of existence, except such as they receive in the shape of bribes or presents from friends or dependents of their masters. When a man of high rank goes to visit another the latter is expected to fee all the visitor's attendants, and although between equals this custom is rapidly dying out, yet when one of the parties is poorer and less influential than the other, it would be considered unwise to offend those who possess the ear of the more powerful personage. The archbishop promised to come to see us before we left, and we parted from the kind old man, who prepared with a sigh

of resignation to receive his guest and his numerous followers.

We next went to the Armenian church or cathedral of St. Joseph, adjoining the residence of the archbishop. The entrance, probably from design, is mean and shabby, but the edifice itself is large and handsomely decorated, the interior of the dome being covered with enamelled tiles in gaudy colours, and the walls painted in fresco with various subjects, chiefly miracles and martyrdoms. On the left of the entrance is a large picture of the "Last Judgment," resembling much in its composition and design that in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The church itself, which, amid the general decay, we were surprised to find in good preservation and repair, is built in the usual form of a cross, with a handsome dome raised over the centre. The lower part of the walls of the interior are encrusted with enamelled tiles. In the pictures painted by native artists, the usual contempt for the rules of art is conspicuously displayed. A small monastery, in which reside a few monks attached to the service of the church, is on one side of the court. A graveyard surrounds it, in which are the tombs of many Europeans, including several Englishmen, who during the last two centuries have died at Ispahan.

We rode on another occasion with Mr. Agenor to the Ateshgar, or "place of fire," a hill about three miles from the city, on which are the remains of a fire temple erected, it is said, by Ardeshir, or Artaxerxes. Our road lay through a never-varying succession of gardens. The lanes with which the country was traversed in such numbers that they formed a perfect labyrinth, had generally a water-course on one side, lined by a row of poplars. The size of a path was no indication of its being a principal thoroughfare, for sometimes from a broad and well-beaten track we struck into an alley only a few feet in width. The gardens were planted with fruit trees, of which the apricot, nectarine and peach seemed

the most numerous. These at last suddenly ceasing, we found ourselves at a short distance from the Ateshgar, the plain in the vicinity of which was stony, gravelly, and uncultivated.

On the top, to which we ascended by a winding path, are the ruins of a building of modern date. A wall, at some distance from them, was shown to us as all that remained of the ancient temple. There was nothing whatever remarkable about it, except the large size of the bricks of which it was built. The hill itself, rising isolated from the plain, is of considerable dimensions. From its summit an extensive view of Ispahan, with the plain and mountains beyond it, is obtained.

In summer, the bright green foliage of the poplar and plane-trees, which are everywhere cultivated, must be very refreshing to the eye, as a contrast to the parched and arid scenery around. Even as we saw them, with the snow lying on the ground, they had a warm and cheerful appearance. Numerous pigeon towers were to be seen scattered about on the outskirts of the city. These structures, so curious to strangers, are common in Persia, where they are used for the purpose of collecting the dung as manure for the melon beds. They are often of considerable size, tapering upwards to the top. A number of holes allow free ingress to the interior, on the wall of which are several small niches, where the pigeons roost, make their nests, and rear their young. These pigeons, of a smaller size than ours, are, with the exception of roosting in these houses prepared for them, quite wild. Once a year the towers are cleaned out and the manure collected, after which the door at the bottom of the building is again locked for twelve months. These dove-cotes are the property of private individuals, who hire them out to the melon-growers at a rent varying from ten to twenty pounds a-year.

On our return from the Ateshgar, we visited the "Shaking

Minarets," one of the lions of Ispahan. These minarets are at the corners, or on the roof of the tomb of a certain saint, Scheikh Abdallah, in a suburb of the city called Kaledun. We entered a court in which stood a vaulted edifice, like a small mosque, with a flat roof, at the front corners of which were the remains of what had once been lofty and very slender minarets, but of which all but a remnant some eight or ten feet in height above the roof had fallen, or been thrown down. The remains of a spiral staircase, so small that it was with the utmost difficulty we could squeeze ourselves up, yet existed in each. A guardian of the tomb ascended to the summit of one of these, and swaying his body backwards and forwards as violently as he could, a vibratory motion was produced which soon communicated itself to the roof of the vault and the other minaret.

It was not difficult to find out the cause of this phenomenon; the minarets, although enclosed in the main edifice, yet had been built from the ground, unconnected with it. Being slender and unsupported, they were, of course, easily moved, and the motion produced was, from their elasticity, as easily communicated to the rest of the building, which was very slight and frail. The rocking of one minaret was thus sufficient to occasion the vibration of the whole roof, as well as of the other minaret, and the material of which the buildings were composed being brick, facilitated the communication of the motion. The shaking minarets of this tomb, which is supposed to have been built about five hundred years ago, have been mentioned by almost every traveller who has visited Ispahan.

We returned by a different route, but through the same labyrinth of gardens, to our house at Julfa. We visited but one other palace, called from the mirrors with which the columns and walls are covered, the "Ain a Khauna," or "Hall of Mirrors." Like all the other palaces it is situated in a garden, and open in front. The roof is supported by lofty

CHAPTER XXX.

WE left Ispahan on the 12th of March, our first stage, as usual a short one, being only as far as Gez, a walled village four hours' march from the city, a short distance beyond which was the caravanserai, in which we put up for the night. As it had rained heavily during the day, our road, which lay over the plain, was deep in mud, and we could get on but slowly. We passed several buildings in ruins, some of which, apparently caravanserais, had been most solidly built, but when these structures were deserted, the peasantry had carried off the bricks according as they wanted them for their own houses or enclosures, and thus they had gradually become mere ruins. We remained at the caravanserai the whole of the next day, our muleteers, to our intense disgust, insisting on waiting for the remainder of the caravan, which was to leave Ispahan the day after us. When we remonstrated with them, they set the question at rest in the most effectual manner by running back to the town.

On the 14th we continued our journey to Murchikar, another small walled village with caravanserai outside, near which Nadir Shah defeated the Afghans in a decisive battle during the last century. Save the ruins of one or two caravanserais, there was nothing in our day's ride of seven hours worthy of remark along the route, which lay over a barren and sterile plain. Close to the caravanserai was a small stream, turning a little mill-wheel, only four or five feet in diameter. This tiny rivulet, in many places only

a foot wide and eight or ten inches deep, was full of trout of fair size, which lay fearlessly in shoals in the clear water. They were from two to ten inches in length, and although in such quantities, no one seemed to care for them as food. However, by means of baksheesh we soon contrived to procure some, the means by which they were caught being a basket into which they were driven by a boy walking up the stream.

We found our caravan to consist chiefly of indigo, which had been sent from India by way of Bombay and Bushire, and the price of which being very high at Teheran would repay even the long land carriage. Our chief charvadar seemed a very good-natured old fellow. He wondered greatly at our extravagance in buying fowls wherever we could not get other meat, and asked Demetri seriously, whether it was really true that the Franks eat meat in that reckless manner every day, a thing that very few true believers could afford to do. On learning that such was really the case, the vision of abundant flesh-pots had such an effect on him that he began to inquire more about Europe, and evidently pondered over a removal to a land so favoured.

Our next stage was to Souk, a caravanseraï not far from a small walled village of the same name, and more picturesquely situated than any we had seen for some time. For the first six hours the road lay over the same flat plain as on the preceding day. Then began a gradual ascent, by the banks of a stream, the water from which was diverted by a hundred small channels for the purpose of irrigating the soil. Several plane and poplar-trees, growing by the edge of the brook, gave a cultivated and inhabited appearance to the valley. Apricot and apple orchards clothing the sloping sides, made the neighbourhood of Souk, in comparison with the desert through which we had passed, appear to be a garden of fertility. We left very early the

following day, our charvadars fearing that we might be delayed for some time by the snow, which they heard had lately fallen on the high lands we had to cross. We commenced to ascend immediately on leaving the caravanserai, and in a couple of hours reached the snow, in and through which we floundered on for no less than four weary hours. The baggage mules were continually slipping, stumbling, and falling. Sometimes they would disappear bodily in a drift, entailing the necessity of unloading before they could be extricated. The ground was covered deeply with a heavy fall which had taken place during the previous night, and no signs of a path were to be seen in many places. At last we reached the summit of the pass, and began to descend on the opposite side of the mountains, reaching the large village of Kohrood in eight hours after leaving Souk. We put up at the chappar khan, or post-house, the caravanserai near the village, which was small and filthy, being already filled with muleteers coming south from Teheran.

Kohrood, even in countries more favoured by nature than Persia, would be considered a pretty village, the situation being very picturesque, and the surrounding country being covered with gardens and orchards. The village itself is as it were nestled under a mountain. In front of it is a valley well cultivated, and irrigated abundantly with the water from the melting snows on the hills above. Wherever the water is brought the ground appears fertile, contrasting strongly with the sterility of the soil within a few feet, probably, of the irrigated spots, which was not favoured with a due supply of the precious element. The neighbourhood of Kohrood is considered by the Persians as a kind of Paradise; and, in comparison with the hideous sterility around it, certainly is an oasis of fertility. Its fruits are celebrated far and wide throughout the kingdom. In some places the ground is cultivated in terraces, along which the water is conducted in small channels, so that every tree has

its proper share, corn being grown in the intervals between the stems.

Our next day's journey was the same length as the preceding. In eight hours we arrived at Kashan, the first four being down the valley, and the remainder along the edge of a salt desert at the foot of the mountains. At about an hour from Kohrood we passed, on the right hand, a large reservoir or tank, made by building a dam of masonry across the valley, thus preserving during the hot weather a supply of water for the villages on the plain at the mouth of the valley. This dam was erected by Shah Abbas, who, it would seem, was the only person that ever considered it worth while to construct any works, however small, of public utility.

During our descent from Kohrood into the plain, we obtained our first sight of Demavend, the snowy summit of which, glittering in the sun, was plainly visible, though from where we were it could not have been less than 150 miles distant. It towered high above the horizon, in form of a blunt cone. The hills around it being very low in comparison, it seems to rise isolated and solitary from the plain. Our charvadars told us that from the summit of one of the adjacent mountains, a view of Ispahan, at some eighty or ninety miles' distance to the south, might also be obtained.

On issuing from the valley we crossed the plain to Kashan, the ground in the vicinity of which is laid out in gardens, and seems well watered, while the surrounding soil is waste and desert. Kashan itself is a town of considerable size, surrounded by mud walls. It is said to have been founded or embellished by Zobeide, the favourite sultana of Haroun al Raschid, and was, like every other town in Persia, at one time much larger and more populous than at present. Still it possesses a considerable commerce, being celebrated for its shawls, copper manufactures, and a kind of velvet

much esteemed. The scorpions found in the neighbourhood, remarkable for their size and the deadly venom of their bite, are supposed to exceed in dimensions and vigour any others of the species in Persia.

Passing through the gardens surrounding the town by a succession of narrow and winding lanes, similar to those at Ispahan, we arrived at a caravanserai just inside one of the gates in the dilapidated wall, and there put up in the midst of a crowd of muleteers and gaping idlers, attracted by the unaccustomed sight of Frank strangers. The bazaars of Kashan, as well as we could judge from a very short visit which we paid to them, are dirty and mean, but were thronged with people. The chief things to be seen are copper kettles and pots, with a large quantity of raw silk brought from the northern provinces of the kingdom. There are some mosques of no great size in the town, but there did not seem to be any buildings of importance. The streets, as a matter of course, are narrow and filthy, and the houses dilapidated and half ruins, large spaces being occupied only by heaps of rubbish and broken bricks.

Kashan would appear to have greatly degenerated from what it was at the time when Chardin visited it. That traveller speaks of the forty mosques, three colleges, and two hundred sepulchres of the descendants of Ali which it then contained, as well of the bazaars and caravanserais, remarkable for their size and beauty. The old traveller relates a curious story about the sepulchres, which, originally destroyed, as it would seem, by the Tatars, were, after their expulsion, again sought out and restored. After some years, however, had elapsed, a discovery was made that put the whole city into confusion. A large monument, which had been erected over the supposed tomb of one of the holiest of the descendants of the son-in-law of the Prophet, was discovered to have been built over the spot where lay the remains of Yuzbek, a Tatar Mollah, who, being a Suni, was of course detested

by the Sheahs. The monument was accordingly at once pulled down, and the people, enraged at having for so long a time worshipped at the tomb of a heretic, made a road over the place where it stood. But after some time, on the appearance of a treatise proving that no such person as Yuzbek had ever existed, the populace became indifferent, and ceased either to venerate or revile the spot.

Leaving Kashan at an early hour, we rode in seven hours to Sim-Sin, a large caravanserai, near which are the ruins of a considerable village. Our route over the plain was intersected in many places by deep water-courses. We passed by a few villages of no great size, surrounded as usual by mud walls. During the day we witnessed some wild hawking, a mallard having been struck down by a falcon close to our feet. Although the hawk seemed scarcely to touch its prey, the victim nevertheless fell dead, and was immediately appropriated by Demetri. The weather had become sensibly warmer since we had descended into the plains, and in many places signs of the coming spring began to appear. The barley made its appearance above ground, and the buds began to show on the poplar-trees near the villages.

The next stage was to Pashangun, a caravanserai and chappar station standing by themselves on the plain, the road to which lay along the foot of the hills skirting the salt and barren desert. The fearful poverty and wretchedness of the country were shown in a very striking manner at this spot by the bodies of a number of sheep and goats which had died from starvation, not being able to procure a sufficient quantity of food to sustain life on the sterile soil. Over their emaciated carcasses growled and quarrelled the hungry dogs of the caravanserai, disputing their prey with the vultures and hooded crows, which had been collected by the prospect of a banquet.

From this miserable scene we rode the next day in five hours to Kom, in the mosque of which lie the remains of

Fatima, the daughter of Moussa Kazem, one of the twelve Imams or descendants of Ali. Its gilded dome was visible for a long distance over the plain, glittering brightly in the sunbeams. The town is surrounded by gardens and orchards, through which we passed, and on entering the town we rode through a number of devious and tortuous streets lined by half-ruined and dilapidated houses, reaching at last a chappar khan, which was to be our halting-place for the night.

Kom is celebrated for containing the most famous "Busts," or sanctuaries in Persia. The mosque in which the holy Fatima is interred possesses a sanctity that no power, however great, would venture to violate. Any attempt to seize the persons of those who seek refuge here would be at once resisted by the whole Mollahhood, reverend gentlemen who can at any time create a riot by exclaiming that the "Faith" is insulted. Matters accordingly must be arranged with them before the criminal or victim is laid hold of. The usual means of gaining possession of his person being to starve him out, guards are placed round the entrances, and no one being allowed to enter without being searched, the unhappy wretch has soon no alternative but to surrender or die of hunger and thirst. The great dome of the mosque is covered with gilded tiles. The façade, as much as we could see of it, is ornamented with Arabesques and rich scroll work, and the archway at the entrance is, like the dome, faced with tiles thickly gilt. The mosque itself, a modern building, was built by Fetteh Ali Shah, the former structure having fallen to ruins. In addition to the tomb of Fatima, it contains that of the monarch by whom it was built, of Shah Abbas the Second, of Shah Sufi, and of Mohammed Shah, father to the present ruler.

There are besides this a number of other sanctuaries in Kom which, possessing the privilege of sheltering from justice or oppression any criminal or victim, yield in consequence a considerable revenue to the holy guardians of the

tenacious character as the banks. After crossing this quagmire we began to ascend a low range of barren hills, and an hour after dark arrived at the caravanserai, in the chappar khan near which, as it seemed cleaner than the other, we put up. Close to this was a beehive-looking structure, built of clay, intended to contain a supply of ice for travellers during the summer heats. These ice-houses, simply and cheaply built, the material being obtained from the hole which is dug underneath, answer exceedingly well the purpose for which they are erected. Common in the neighbourhood of all the towns, by their means cool water in the fiercest heats of summer is an easily procurable luxury in Persia.

The next day's march was to Ousurket, a caravanserai near which were two or three considerable villages. We rode for some miles through a succession of low but rugged and stony hills, crossing two or three small streams, one of which was swollen greatly with the melting snow. After some time we came to a district called by the natives Melek ul Moot derrat, or "Valley of the Angel of Death," Azrael making it one of his abiding-places on earth. This spot must have strongly affected Malcolm, who describes it in his amusing little book as being full of the most frightful precipices and ravines he had ever beheld. We found it to be simply a rough and uneven tract of country, worn by water into a number of small ravines, the effect of the winter rains washing away the loose and friable soil of which it is composed, being to leave behind ridges of stony hillocks.

This desolate region is supposed by the Persians to be inhabited by Ghouls, a species of malignant and malicious demons, whose existence is firmly believed in throughout the East, and whose attributes, half human, half supernatural, seem to partake both of the character of a vampire and of an ordinary robber, inasmuch as they plunder the travellers whose bodies they devour. They are of both sexes, and, unlike other demons, are subject to death. Their choicest food is human flesh,

to procure which, when they cannot seize on some unfortunate traveller, they dig up the corpses out of graveyards. They inhabit caves, their chief haunts being in the most desolate places and among the most inaccessible rocks and precipices. Woe to any luckless wayfarer who may venture alone near their loathsome dwellings! His bones, bleached and white, not found perhaps until years afterwards, afford a terrible testimony of his hapless fate.

Yet with all these fiendish qualities, a Ghoul seems to be a very stupid animal. Many are the stories told of the easy manner in which some of them have been outwitted by clever and acute travellers, even after they had fallen into their hands. A Persian, who was travelling to Teheran, attended by his servant, had joined our party at the last caravanserai. Believing firmly in the existence of Ghouls, Jinns, and other demons and spirits, good and evil, he related to us a story, for the truth of which he pledged his veracity! Two muleteers had lost their way among the broken ridges through which we were riding, and, the night being very dark, had laid down to sleep at the bottom of one of the water-worn furrows. The ravine being narrow, they lay down feet to feet, a head being thus at either extremity of the joined bodies. In a short time they were discovered by a Ghoul, who at first was going to seize upon and murder both, but seeing on a nearer approach, as he supposed, a man with two heads and his feet in the centre of his body, he fled away in terror from the unwonted apparition.

Our travelling companion, who, as he informed us, was a gentleman living on the produce of some villages which belonged to him, was going to Teheran for the purposes of amusement, intending to remain there for some time. Mounted on a handsome horse, curled, painted, and armed to the teeth with richly ornamented but very useless-looking weapons, keeping up a constant conversation, in which he succeeded as fast as his ready wit and fertile imagination

could devise them, he was a very fair specimen of a modern Persian. He informed us that, having met in the mountains on the preceding day a band of robbers thirty strong, who had just plundered and slain a solitary traveller, he had at once attacked them single-handed, had killed four, and put the rest to flight. This absurd story was told with the calmest and most unconcerned countenance, the narrator looking us full in the face all the time he recounted his imaginary feats of bravery. Even the usually contemptuous countenance of Demetri relaxed into a smile, as he translated for our benefit the gallant warrior's account of his doughty deeds. After a while, however, his amusement changing apparently into real admiration for the talent displayed, he exclaimed—"But what a lot of lies!"

After a seven hours' ride we reached our caravanserai, overjoyed at the thought of having got over the last march before reaching Teheran, which was to be our next stage. We left Ousurket early the next morning, in order to arrive before evening at the capital. Our road for the first two hours lay over a low range of rugged and stony hills, and for six more across the plains of Teheran, flat and in general sterile and bare, but dotted over with scattered villages and gardens.

We passed by, on the right hand, at the distance of three or four miles from the city, the mosque of Shah Abd ul Azim, a sacred edifice, which also enjoys the privilege of being a "Bust," or sanctuary, frequently made use of from its proximity to the court of the "Refuge of the Universe." On the right hand, but at some distance off, our charvadars pointed out to us the remains of the walls of Rey, the Rhages of Tobit, situated on some steep hills bounding the plain, a spur from the Elburz chain of mountains to the north of the city, of which the lofty snow-covered cone of Demavend formed the principal object.

We approached Teheran through heaps of rubbish and dirt, backwards and forwards among which wound the road

between the two principal cities of Persia, and entered by a gate built of brick, above which was a picture of one of the combats of Rostum, executed in enamelled tiles; the faces of both the warrior and the "Deev" or demon with whom he is contending, having the same placid expression already remarked as distinctive of all the other paintings of Persian heroes. On passing through this gate we came at once into a small open space or square, in the centre of which was the execution pole, some forty feet in height, and by no means meant alone for show.

Riding through some wretched, tumble-down streets, we reached in a short time the British Embassy, where we became the guests of Mr. Alison, the English minister at the court of Teheran. The Mission House, a large flat-roofed building, with a portico in the centre and wings on either side of it, is built in a kind of Italian style. It is two stories high, and plastered over with yellow stucco. In front was a garden, in which grew a number of cypress and orange trees planted in rows, the whole surrounded by high walls, with a gateway opening on the street in front. At the opposite side of the street was a considerable piece of ground, which, having been presented to the British Government by a former Shah, was used as a kitchen and fruit garden.

The situation of Teheran is similar to that of Ispahan—a large stony plain, arid and desert where not irrigated, but fertile and green where supplied with water. The city, which is of quite modern date, became the capital only towards the close of the last century, when the present royal family ascended the throne, and transferred thither the seat of government from Ispahan, in order to be in the vicinity of their tribe in Asterabad. Teheran, said to be four miles in circuit, is surrounded by mud walls and deep ditches, the former crumbling and dilapidated, the latter in many places nearly filled up with the dirt and rubbish emptied into them. The population is thought to reach 100,000, but probably it

is in reality much less, the houses being small and straggling, and there being also many empty spaces within the walls. From its central situation between the countries bordering on the Black and Caspian Seas and the regions north of India, as well as from its being the capital, Teheran is a place of considerable trade, of which we had evidence in its bazaars, which were thronged with strangers, merchants, and idlers. They were in general roofed over with brick, but in other respects mean and shabby, being of small size, narrow, and of course dirty, full of either dust or mud, as the dry or wet weather prevails. The streets are crooked, unpaved, and full of mud holes. An open sewer frequently occupies the centre of the thoroughfare, the stench from which, to judge from the patience with which they endure it, seems rather fragrant than otherwise to the Persian nostril. The whole appearance of the city is mean and wretched. The only buildings we observed in a state of repair were those of the foreign missions, and the only street in the capital that can boast of a pavement is that opposite the British embassy, which, laid down at Mr. Alison's expense, was regarded with wonder by the natives. The citadel or "ark" in which the Shah resides is surrounded by walls and a ditch, smaller than those of the town, within whose circuit they are contained. In front is a large square, in which the troops are exercised, and in the centre of which, as if in readiness to quell any émeute, are some pieces of cannon. The interior of the "ark" is laid out in courts and gardens, round the outer of which are the apartments of the court attendants, while the inner are inhabited by the Shah himself and the ladies of the harem. Both outer courts and state apartments are poor and shabby, badly kept and tawdrily furnished, the faded gilding, and plaster peeling off the walls, showing either the indifference or poverty of the King of kings.

When we arrived at Teheran the spring had commenced,

the corn-fields were green, the buds on the trees were bursting out into leaf, and the weather had got pleasantly warm during the day, although the nights still continued very cold. The climate varies considerably; in summer the average temperature being 95° Fahr. in the shade, while in winter the snow often remains on the ground for weeks, and the frosts are very severe. The wintry aspect had already disappeared in the neighbourhood of the town, and the gardens were rapidly putting on their summer appearance. The gardeners of the Mission, strangely enough, have been for years Ghebers, the only followers of that persecuted creed in the town, and who, being under British protection, are unmolested. They are only four or five in number, and every morning and evening, this remnant of the once numerous fire-worshippers of Persia, the sole professors of the ancient creed of Zoroaster in the capital, may be seen offering to the rising and setting sun the same adoration paid by their forefathers in long bygone ages.

About six or seven miles from Teheran is a small village called Goolahek, which was presented to the then British Minister by Mohammed Shah, father of the present king. Dwelling in a place which is British property, the inhabitants are under British protection, and enjoy a security for their persons and goods elsewhere unknown in the country, the fruits of which may be at once seen in the comfortable and solidly-built houses, the evidence of the wealth and independence of their owners. In this village we sought in vain for any trace of the decay and dilapidation universal in Persia. Both walls and roofs were tidy and well kept, presenting to our eyes a most unwonted appearance, accustomed as they were to the sight of ruined edifices and deserted houses.

Near Goolahek is a large garden and orchard, in which stands a summer-house, where the members of the Mission often spend some weeks during the great heats of July and

August. Between this and Teheran is erected a hideous building, standing on terraces behind a piece of water, and surrounded by a garden enclosed by high mud walls; the whole looking as if it had fallen from the clouds on the bare, stony, desert plain. This is called the "Kasri Kajar," or "Kajar Palace," and is sometimes inhabited for a short time by the Shah during the summer. This delectable residence was, by a late Persian ambassador to Paris, considered preferable to Versailles, as he described the latter on his return to his master as being much inferior both in size and beauty to the Persian palace.

In the same direction from the city as Goolahek, but some miles farther on among the mountains, is a stone shaped exactly like a mushroom, resting on another presenting an equally good resemblance to the stem, a constant place of resort for the inhabitants of the city, who flock to it to enjoy their "kif," or pleasure. It also affords a frequent topic of conversation among the learned men and savans of the town, most of whom being of opinion that it is the work of the genii, think that under no circumstances would it do one any good to know how it came there, and therefore inquiry is in reality useless. Others, on the contrary, assert that this remarkable object is the body of an old woman turned into stone by a saint to whom she had refused charity, and that a moral lesson may be derived from visiting the spot in a due state of piety and credulity.

About a mile west of Goolahek, at the foot of the hills, is another palace called Tajarish, built by Mohammed Shah, and in which he died in 1848. It is still unfinished, though going rapidly to decay, as it was deserted at his death, and has been since uninhabited. Nothing can well be more forlorn than these modern ruins. Age and antiquity harmonize with solitude and desolation; but when everything around looks bright and fresh, there is something indescribably depressing in desertion and neglect.

At a short distance from the city, to the north-west, is the favourite palace of Fetteh Ali Shah, the great-grandfather of the present Shah. It still remains in good repair, and is surrounded by a garden with fountains, tanks of water, &c. The principal apartment is decorated with pictures, representing a reception of Ambassadors by Fetteh Ali. The Shah is sitting on his throne, while guards and attendants introduce the envoys. Among the latter are portraits of Sir Gore Ouseley, Sir John Malcolm, General Gardanne and his suite, all carefully executed; they are dressed in their respective uniforms, with long stockings pulled on over their boots, and coming halfway up the thighs. In another room we were shown a bath, into which, we were told, it was a favourite recreation of the old Shah to toss the young ladies of his harem one after the other; the beauty of the latter, when the Shah was in these sportive humours, not deriving any aid from exterior adornments. In a room upstairs was strangled, by order of Mohammed Shah, the Prime Minister of that monarch, who was also Caimacam of Teheran, by which name he is generally remembered.

At about an hour's ride to the south-east of Teheran, and at the end of a spur of hills from the chain to the north of the city, are the remains of the walls of Rey, a city according to tradition the oldest in Persia, and which, occupying unfortunately a large space of ground on the adjoining plain, was from its marshy and unwholesome character so unhealthy, that it had at last to be abandoned. Not being far from the city of Teheran, the materials of the ancient town were largely used in the construction of the present capital. At present all the visible remains of the ancient city, which was at one time the capital of the kingdom, and the birthplace of Haroun al Rashid, are some shattered fragments and broken bricks once forming part of its massive walls.

At the foot of the hills, not far from the village of Abd ul

Azim, stands a lofty tower, built of brick in a very peculiar form, the general shape being round, but the surface divided into angles of two to three feet in depth. A handsome gateway ornamented with arabesques still remains entire. Round the top of this tower, which seems to be about fifty feet in height, runs a Cufic inscription. This edifice is believed by the Persians to have been built by Yezid, the son of Moawiyah, and is execrated accordingly by all true Sheahs. The more prevalent opinion now is that it was the tomb of Tognul Beg, the famous Seljuk Sultan, and father of the celebrated Alp Arslan. On the face of a rock not far from this tower is a bas-relief representing a horseman with lance in rest, riding at full speed. The sculpture, which is partly unfinished, has been much injured, but enough remains to show that it is of the same Sassanian era and character as those at Nakhsh i Rustom and Nakhsh i Regib. As well as can be distinguished, the rider, who wears on his head the globe of sovereignty, is clad in loose and flowing garments. Sir R. K. Porter supposes this sculpture to have been executed by order of the first of the Sassanian kings to commemorate his victory over the Arsacides or Parthian monarchs, whom he expelled from the country. Not far removed from this ancient relic, Fetteh Ali Shah had engraved a tablet representing himself, covered with jewels, seated in state on his throne, forming an absurd illustration of Persian vanity.

The Tasia, or religious theatrical representation of the death of the Imam Hosein, taking place during our stay at Teheran, we went to see it, having been warned beforehand not to smile, or by any indifference of behaviour show that we were not duly impressed with the affecting scene. The representation took place in a building like a caravanserai, the open court in the centre of which had been covered over with canvas. The stage was in the centre on a brick platform raised some feet from the ground. The actors, who held small bits of paper in their hands, from which they read

their part, mounted and dismounted according as their turns arrived. The women spectators were all ranged on one side of the building, the men on the other. The whole performance lasts for some days, the principal being on the last, as on that day the Imam's murder is represented.

At the beginning of the representation Hosein was seen seated before his tent receiving the messenger of Shamer, the general of Yezid, who had sent to summon him to surrender at discretion. The latter was a very truculent, fierce-looking individual; the Imam on the contrary, a mild, but exceedingly dirty looking old man, who, surrounded by a few companions, and his children, refuses to give himself up, and prepares to meet his fate. The next scene represented a pause in the battle. The holy man, faint and weary, was in the centre of a few survivors, the dead bodies of his own children being among those that lie around, and not even water was to be had to refresh the exhausted frame of the grandson of the Prophet, and those who were true to him to the last. The women at this scene began the shrill wailing expression of grief and sorrow peculiar to their sex in the East, beating their heads violently with their hands, and contiguing to sob and groan in real or feigned sorrow through the remainder of the performance. The next act represents the Imam and all his devoted followers slain, and their bodies left on the plain, denied the rites of burial by the ferocious Shamer. The corpses all lie about the platform, those of some of the murderers being among them, the latter with small bits of meat on their breasts. A tame lion is led in through the crowd. He smells first the body of one of the Imam's children, and, as there is no meat on his chest, turns away from it, or in other words refuses to touch the holy corpse of the child of the Imam. He is next led to that of one of the party of Shamer, from which he immediately tears the flesh which had been laid on it, and devours it amidst the loud applause of the spectators. The bodies are thus visited one by

one, those of the companions of Hosein being respected by the animal, each rejection being greeted by the sobbing and wailing of the women, while loud expressions of satisfaction welcomed the destruction of the remains of his enemies.

The feelings of the susceptible weaker sex are sometimes worked up to an incontrollable degree by these representations, a ludicrous instance of which had only recently occurred. The day previous to our visit, the mother of the Shah had been among the lookers-on, and the actors knowing this, naturally exerted themselves to the utmost. Highly excited by the cruel and relentless behaviour of Shamer, at the conclusion of the scene she had him summoned before her, when she ordered the unhappy actor, whose only fault was his too faithful representation of his part, to be soundly bastinadoed in her presence!

CHAPTER XXXI.

NASR OOD DEEN, SHAH OF PERSIA—STATE OF THE CAPITAL—
THREATENED FAMINE—SALAAM OF THE NO RUZ—COSTUME
OF THE SHAH — CEREMONIAL — THE CROWN JEWELS — THE
DERIAH NOOR, OR SEA OF LIGHT—MISERY OF THE PEOPLE
—THE PERSIAN ARMY — EUROPEAN OFFICERS IN THE SER-
VICE OF THE SHAH—ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE—CURIOUS
ANECDOTE—PRISONS AND PRISONERS IN PERSIA—REVENUE
OF THE STATE—PUBLIC WORKS—DECLINING CONDITION OF
THE EMPIRE—RUSSIAN ENCROACHMENT.



CHAPTER XXXI.

THE present Shah of Persia, "Nasr ood Deen," or "Defender of the Faith," ascended the throne on the death of his father Mohammed Shah, in 1848, strange to say, without any of the spilling of blood usual on such occasions. He was then in his eighteenth year, and his authority having been at once acknowledged throughout the kingdom, there was no pretext for the wholesale massacres which, until his accession, marked the advent of a new sovereign.

His character, to judge from his acts, has hitherto been rather better than that of the generality of his predecessors, the many atrocious acts he has committed being dictated more by cowardice than innate cruelty. His basest deed was the murder of his prime minister and brother-in-law, the Amir Mirza Takee, after having solemnly sworn that, if that unhappy man gave himself up, and left the British Mission in which he had sought refuge, his life and liberty should be respected. Upon this promise the Amir surrendered, contrary to the advice of every European in Teheran. It is a strange fact, however, that the Persians, who ought to know best the powers of lying and treachery prevalent among their countrymen, are more credulous and easily duped by fair words than foreigners. His wife, the Shah's sister, from the time of her husband's disgrace and fall, never left his side for a moment, custom, stronger always even than law, making it a crime of the first magnitude to put any one to death in the presence of a female member of the royal family. After her

confiscated, and his family in one day reduced from affluence to beggary and want. This occurred only a fortnight before our arrival at Teheran.

A circumstance in which tragedy and comedy were ludicrously intermingled occurred during our stay in the capital, forcibly illustrating the way in which the government of Persia is carried on by the present ruler. One morning we were awakened by loud sobbing and wailing at the gate of the Mission, and on looking out perceived a number of women, nearly all old and ugly, who had thrown off their veils, and with loud cries were imploring the English Elchee to speak to them. Their request was that Mr. Alison should write to the Minister of the Interior, to ask him to have the stores of grain forcibly opened and sold to the starving people, saying that they had money to purchase it if they could only get it. The minister accordingly wrote to Ferukh Khan, who said he would go to the Shah on the subject. In a short time the crowd dispersed rapidly, and although there was no apparent reason, a few Ferashes alone being seen in the distance, yet the streets quickly thinned, and soon became deserted.

The means by which this enlightened ruler of a nation had allayed this tumult were rather peculiar. When Ferukh (who is well known in London) went to him, it was said that he simply laughed, and replied that he would quell the riot in half an hour. Calling at once for a number of Ferashes, he told them to bring him in an hour a dozen pair of ears out of the crowd. These worthies, overjoyed at the prospect of reaping a golden harvest, immediately rushed forth and seized every well-dressed man whom they met in the streets, giving him the choice of having his ears cut off, or of paying for them a ransom proportioned to his appearance. The means were effectual, payment was prompt, and in a very short space of time the streets were deserted. As it was necessary, however, that the ears should under any circumstances be

produced, a number of beggars were seized, their ears cut off, and brought to the Shah, who, it was said, remarked to Ferukh Khan that he knew how to govern the Persians. A mirza, or scribe, who was giving lessons in Persian to a member of the mission, entered the embassy in a great fright, complaining bitterly on recovering from his terror that he had had to pay two tomana, or about one pound sterling, as a ransom for his ears, which he rubbed as if to assure himself that they were still in his possession.

Although the infliction of torture is as a rule dying out in Persia, probably owing to the presence of Europeans in the capital, yet occasionally instances have occurred in which, when the Shah was more than ordinarily exasperated, or when his fears have been unusually excited, horrible cruelties have been perpetrated by his orders. Recently a man of the name of Ali Mohammed, a merchant of Bushire, originated a new doctrine, alleging that he had discovered some chapters of the Koran which the Persians believe to have been lost, and which contradicted in many respects the other portions of the sacred volume, establishing new dogmas and inculcating different tenets. This man travelled through a large portion of the country preaching the new creed, and obtained such a number of converts that the Mollahs, exasperated and alarmed, applied to the Government to suppress the further spread of the pernicious doctrine. The principles of this Reformer, as well as can be ascertained (for the sect now proscribed keep their real belief carefully concealed) were Socialistic, for he advocated a community of property and women, alleging that if such were the case there would be no motives for most of the crimes committed by the human race.

The Government, at last terrified by the increasing numbers and influence of the believers in the heretical doctrines, commenced a savage persecution of all whom they suspected of having embraced its tenets. Numbers were apprehended and put to death, and a large reward offered for

the capture or assassination of the leader, who had assumed the name of "Bab," or "gate," as being the door through which to arrive at the true belief, and from him his followers were called Babees. At last the Babees rose in rebellion, but their efforts were fruitless, their small and detached parties were cut off, and after some time their prophet, the Bab himself, was taken prisoner at Tabreez, and at once ordered to be shot. He had previously declared that should he be killed he would return to life in forty days, a prophecy believed firmly by his credulous followers, who still suppose him to have been endued with supernatural qualities. By some unaccountable circumstance every shot fired at him, although he was but a few paces distant from the firing party, missed, and he fled, taking refuge with some friends, who, however, dreading the consequences of concealing him, betrayed him to the authorities, by whom he was at once put to death. Had he got clear away the result might have been very different, and a belief in his divine attributes being confirmed by the miracle, a new religion and government would in all probability have arisen in Persia.

Some of the more reckless and desperate of the Babees resolved to avenge their wrongs by assassination, and accordingly made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Shah. The would-be murderers were at once arrested and executed with the most horrible tortures by order of the "Refuge of the Universe." Tow steeped in oil was inserted between their ribs and behind their shoulder-blades, leaving portions hanging down, which were lighted, and in this condition the unhappy wretches were led, as long as they could walk, through the principal streets of the capital, reviling and cursing their tormentors, and exulting in the speedy vengeance which they foretold would fall on the Shah himself and the Mollahs, their most relentless oppressors.

A furious proscription followed this tragedy. It was

enough to be suspected of Babeism to be at once put to death, and many old feuds and injuries were avenged by denouncements, and accusations of being tainted with the fatal doctrines. No time was lost between apprehension and execution. Death was the only punishment known; the headless bodies lay in the streets for days, the terrified relatives fearing to give them burial, and the dogs fought and growled over the corpses in the deserted thoroughfares. At last the European missions remonstrated, the reign of terror ceased, and although still proscribed and put to death without mercy whenever discovered, the Babees are supposed yet to reckon many seeming orthodox Moslems among their numbers, the southern parts of the country being thought to be the most tainted with the detested heresy.

Although so bigoted and intolerant of other religions, yet a large number of the Persians in reality are free-thinkers, professing a belief called Sufecism, which seems to be akin to the Pantheism now so rife in Germany, resembling in this the Spaniards of the present day. They imagine that the spirit of the Deity pervades everything, that the soul is but a portion of it, and is reunited to the divine nature after death. Consequently they do not believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. They condemn the notion that the Koran is inspired or holy, looking on it only as a book written by a man eminent for worldly wisdom. Really indifferent to the orthodox faith, although outwardly professing it, they are the most fatal enemies to the Mollahs, whose pretensions to sanctity they scorn and deride. It is supposed that a fourth of the nation, including a number of the better educated and more learned men, are tainted with these doctrines, which are accordingly everywhere preached against as most abominable by the more rigidly righteous of the Mollahs. It is said that the Shah himself, as well as the greater part of the court, are in reality Sufees, a belief

considerably strengthened by the fact that no opportunity is lost of lessening the power and abridging the privileges of the priesthood.

The annual reception of the diplomatic corps, and chief dignitaries and officials of the kingdom by the Shah, which usually takes place on the day of the "No Ruz," had been this year deferred till the Bairam, or feast after the Ramazan, in consequence of that festival falling during the great fast. The day fixed on for the state salaam was the 12th of March, and the minister having obtained leave to bring us with him to the reception, we accordingly accompanied the mission from the embassy.

Our party was a large one ; we were, of course, all mounted, the servants of the minister and the numerous native employés following, some on horseback, others on foot, but all dressed out in their best, the older stately and grave, the younger, with their tall Astrachan caps cocked a little on one side, little locks of hair escaping from under them, and their beards carefully oiled, dyed, and curled. As a coat cut away in front is considered highly indecorous among the Persians, and as it would be impossible to appear before the Shah in such garments (which happened to be all we possessed), a general subscription was made up for us among the attachés, and we were arrayed in motley uniforms, half cavalry, half infantry, which was doubtless perfectly correct in the eyes of the ceremonious Persians, to whom a surplice would probably have appeared a new warlike costume adopted by the inexplicable Franks. The members of the mission were of course in the usual diplomatic dress.

Our procession wound its way through the crooked and narrow streets, and passing through the great square before the citadel, which was thronged with an immense crowd, crossed the bridge over the ditch, and entered the "ark" by a narrow archway. The narrow street inside was so blocked up with a dense mass, that it was with much difficulty we forced

our way though and arrived at a small door on one side of a court, where we were received by a chamberlain, and conducted to a room in which coffee, tea, and sweetmeats of various kinds were handed round. A few minutes afterwards, the Russian minister, Count Anenkoff, arrived, with the members of the Russian Legation, and they were in their turn followed by the Turkish and French ministers, or rather—for both were absent—their representatives, the first secretaries. When all the foreign missions had arrived, one of the ministers of the Shah made his appearance and chatted for a few minutes with each. At length a chamberlain having been sent to intimate that the Shah was ready to receive us, we descended into a court, whence we were led by him into a garden, in the centre of which was a tank of water, with fountains playing, surrounded by lines of poplars and plane trees. Here we were met by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who, after greeting us in whispers, conducted us into another garden in the interior of the palace, on entering which we took off the indiarubber goloshes which we wore, a ceremony equivalent to that of taking off our shoes.

This court, or rather garden, for it was laid out as such, being planted with trees and flowers, was of considerable size. Round it were the principal apartments and saloons, one of the latter open to the front being on each side. A number of Persians, seemingly of high rank, stood motionless in rows in different parts of the court. A battalion of soldiers in red uniforms were drawn up on one side, and the utmost stillness prevailed, unbroken by the slightest sound.

Turning to the right after entering the court, we advanced down a broad pathway, Count Anenkoff and Mr. Alison in front, the French and Turkish *Chargés d'Affaires* following, and the rest altogether. We were all marshalled by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was dressed in a brocade robe and wore a white turban, the court dress in Persia, which was also worn by the dignitaries who were standing

in the garden. After walking a few yards, we came in view of the Shah, standing in the open front of one of the large saloons. Our conductor, motioning to us to do as he did, stopped and bowed low, the Shah acknowledging this act of respect by bowing in return. A few yards further on the same ceremony was repeated, and again a third time at the foot of a small staircase leading up into the saloon occupied by the monarch, which we ascended. On entering the saloon, a small and simply decorated apartment, we found the Shah standing alone before a chair painted green and decorated with a few emeralds, placed in front of a throne on a small platform. The Shah was dressed in a mixture of European and Asiatic costume. He wore white trousers, and a pink silk frock coat buttoned across with large diamond buttons, each of a single stone. A swordbelt, the buckle of which was set with the famous *Deriah Noor*, or "Sea of Light" diamond, encircled his waist, and from it was suspended a diamond-hilted dagger, similar to those in use among the Circassians. Over the coat was a pink cloth of gold dressing gown lined with ermine, and on his head the usual *Astrachan* fur cap worn by all classes. He wore a large moustache, but his beard was clipped, not shaven, as closely as possible, a custom peculiar to the *Kajar* tribe, who never use a razor, and which is followed by the present king. The scissors being but an imperfect substitute for the razor, he had an unshaven look, his beard appearing dirty and stubbly, by no means improving his naturally bad expression of countenance. He was of middle height, and rather dark; his features were good, but marred by a furtive look, in which meanness and cowardice seemed struggling for the mastery.

He bowed to the ministers in succession as they entered the room, and drew up in a row opposite to him, the Russian, who had been longest at his court, standing nearest to him on his right hand, with the English minister next to him. After he had spoken a few words to each, inquiring after the

health of their sovereigns and themselves, Mr. Alison presented us to him. The Shah received us graciously, inquired how we had come to Persia, how we intended to leave it, whether we had seen his uncle at Schiraz, and whether the weather was good while we were travelling.

The audience then ended, having lasted probably ten minutes, and we backed out of the royal presence, bowing again thrice in the garden, and turning round each time for the purpose. The ministers then returned to their respective residences, while we, in company with some of the younger members of the different missions, remained behind to see the other ceremonies about to follow, for which purpose we were conducted by a chamberlain to a room overlooking the garden. Two battalions of infantry were drawn up in line opposite to the room where the Shah stood, and the great dignitaries and officers of state stood in a double row, facing each other on either side, forming as it were an avenue between him and the troops. They were all dressed in long gowns of brocade, called "Hassan Ali Khan," and also wore the white turban. The soldiers were clad, some in red, some in blue uniforms, those of the officers, which resembled somewhat the French, being covered with gold lace and embroidery. When all were duly marshalled in their places, the oldest member of the royal family, one of the numerous sons of Fetteh Ali Shah, and therefore grand-uncle to the present king, came forward and spoke for some minutes, eulogizing, as we were told, the many virtues of his nephew. To this address the Shah spoke a few words in reply, assuring his uncle of his constant solicitude for the good of his people, at which gracious statement all present bowed low to the ground simultaneously. Then the court poet came forward and recited in a loud voice a number of verses in praise of the Shah and his Government, lauding both in terms of the highest praise. His Majesty returned a suitable reply, at the termination of which the assembled courtiers again bowed

low. After a moment's interval a general salaam took place, the Shah retired, the military were marched out, and in a short time the whole court was deserted and empty. The reception, or salaam of the No Ruz, usually takes place in a more public manner, and the populace are admitted to take share in the ceremonies in honour of their monarch. This year, however, in consequence of the scarcity, the Shah feared that he might be insulted, and it consequently took place in a more private manner.

Having expressed a wish to be permitted to view the jewels belonging to the Shah, the treasurer invited us to return the next day, when he said he would show them to us. We accordingly went at the time appointed, accompanied by some of the French mission. We were received at first by the Treasurer, who, after a short time, was joined by the Minister of Finance. After sweetmeats and coffee had been handed round, we were brought into a room in which the precious stones were arranged on trays lying on the ground.

We sat down in chairs placed along either side of the apartment, and after some kaleouns had been smoked, the various jewels were successively shown to us by the officers to whose charge they were committed. A large number of jugs, basins, pastile burners, and perfume jars of gold and silver, beautifully enamelled, and set with diamonds, emeralds, and pearls, the designs being chiefly arabesques and scroll-work, were displayed to us in all their lustre. The larger and more valuable precious stones were mostly set in buckles for swordbelts and armlets, one of the former being composed of nine diamonds, each an inch in diameter. There were about a dozen swords in the collection, the scabbards of which seemed literally to blaze with diamonds and emeralds. One in particular, which had belonged to Fetteh Ali Shah, was covered, both handle and sheath, with diamonds as large as peas, set in a cross-bar pattern. Five or six caps or turbans

of state, of a form now disused, were ornamented, some with sprays of huge diamonds, and others with pearls of large size.

But the gem of the whole collection was the far-famed Deriah Noor, or "Sea of Light," taken by Nadir Shah from Mohammed, the Mogul Emperor of India. This superb diamond was set plainly in gold as the buckle of a sword-belt. In form it is oblong, about two inches in length, one and a half in breadth, and in thickness not quite three quarters of an inch. It is perfectly plain, not being cut in angles, as is usual with diamonds. The front is quite smooth, and it seemed exactly like a bit of very thick plate glass. This celebrated diamond is considered equal in fineness and water to the renowned Koh-i-Noor, or "Mountain of Light," now in the possession of the Queen, which, taken from India at the same time, after various adventures found its way to the treasury of Runjeet Singh, the Sikh chief, and thence into English hands.

A great number of uncut emeralds and some very large turquoises were shown to us, and also a quantity of embroidery ornamented with pearls, some of which were very large. Most of the emeralds were full of flaws, but they were of enormous size, some crystals being nearly three inches in length, and of corresponding breadth. A very beautiful kaleoun of state of green enamel, ornamented with emeralds, was no less remarkable for the simplicity and elegance of its shape than for the rich materials of which it was composed. All these treasures were handed to us without hesitation, and passed from hand to hand round the circle. We were surprised indeed at the little care seemingly taken of jewels representing such enormous wealth, the loss of one of which would infallibly have entailed that of the guardian's head.

A short time before our departure, the new Governor of Teheran having come in, the conversation turned upon the prevailing scarcity. That high official assured us that there

was no truth in the reports that it arose from speculations in grain, or monopolies of corn, adding, that at that moment the road between Teheran and Tabreez was covered with mules bringing corn to the capital. This statement was confirmed by the bystanders, who said that a telegram had been just received from the Governor of Tabreez, announcing the departure of some thousand mauns or measures of wheat, the arrival of which would at once turn the dearth at Teheran into plenty. Only a few days after this conversation this very official was himself arrested, his stores, which were the largest in Teheran, and full of grain, were confiscated by the Shah, and the corn was sold by auction to the highest bidder, in all probability another monopolist, by the father of his people.

On the occasion of the reception, a parade of troops took place in the great square, in which about 2000 men were drawn up under arms. Although under the eye of the sovereign,—and while under his supervision one would suppose better looked after than when at a distance from the capital,—yet these troops differed in no respect from the ragamuffins we had seen at Schiraz. The uniforms of the soldiers were ragged and torn, no two being precisely alike. The trousers were of any colour the wearer chose. The firelocks, which bore the Tower mark, were seventy or eighty years old. We were told that a large portion of the present army is armed with firelocks of the old Brown Bess pattern, which, at the commencement of the present century, had been shipped for the Peninsula. The ship, with its cargo of muskets and ammunition, having foundered in the Thames, the former, after they had lain for a considerable time under water, are said to have been recovered by some speculators, who sold them to the Persian Government. Many of these “*armes de précision*” were without flints, and we actually saw some in the hands of sentries without even locks.

The officers were all spruce and jaunty-looking. Those

of the higher ranks were invariably so corpulent as to be hardly able to move ; and squeezed up as they were in their tight clothes, covered with gold and embroidery, they had much the appearance of hogs in armour.

The Persian soldier's fate is indeed an unhappy one. He is taken by a conscription, which is conducted with the greatest unfairness, those who can bribe invariably escaping the levy. He is obliged to serve as long as he is able to do a soldier's duties, or until he can in some way accumulate sufficient funds to purchase his discharge from his colonel, who easily finds some pretext on which to dismiss him when so inclined. Seldom receiving any pay, and often plundered of a portion of his rations by his officers, he is obliged, when in garrison, to get his own livelihood by working for the townspeople when off duty, subsisting on the march by plundering the villages within reach. Ill fed, ill clothed, and undisciplined,—the three or four European officers whom the Shah yet employs, more for show than service, never being allowed to take a positive command,—the Persian army is nothing more than an armed mob, dreaded only by the people whom it is supposed to protect. Its fighting qualities were tested at Bushire by the late English expedition, when a few round shot served to put to flight the so-called invincibles, headed in their headlong rout by their officers.

The Persian army on paper consists of 50,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry, with a small force of artillery ; but it is doubtful if more than half of this force actually exists. The nominal pay of a private is about three pounds a year, of which sum he seldom sees one farthing, it being divided among the various officials, from the Minister of War downwards to the sergeant, each appropriating a certain portion, and leaving nothing for the poor private. The lieutenant-colonel of a regiment receives 240*l.* a year, a captain 30*l.* ; but in no case is this amount actually received, the difference

being made up by plunder and peculation. A regiment ought to consist of 1000 men, divided into ten companies, each company with a captain and four subalterns. There is no commissariat force; a donkey is allowed to every six men to carry a small supply of food, tobacco, &c., which they can only obtain by means of foraging parties sent out to plunder all the villages adjacent to the line of march. The officers are in no way superior, either in character or knowledge, to the men whom they command. Their chief object is to rob and cheat their own soldiers, by whom they are naturally despised and detested, instead of being looked up to and respected. Thus drilled, armed, and officered, the wonder is, not that the Persian army is bad, but how it is held together at all.

While many crimes, such as robbery, which in other armies are severely punished, may be committed almost with impunity in the Persian army, desertion and mutiny are visited with the heaviest penalties. A deserter is sometimes flogged so severely that death ensues. In flagrant cases he has even been mutilated of a hand or arm. The worst punishments, however, are reserved for mutiny. Recently, a regiment quartered at Teheran, half-starved and driven to desperation by the peculations of their officers, and unable to obtain redress from the Shah, turned out, and standing to their arms, announced their intention of marching off in a body to Meshed on the Eastern frontier, which town they had resolved to hold in pledge until their complaints had been redressed, and their claims for pay satisfied. It was judged expedient after some time to comply with their demands; the most solemn promises of pardon and future better treatment were made to them by the commander-in-chief, if they would return to their duty. Trusting to these promises, they returned to their barracks, and submitted to their officers. Once in the power of government, oaths and pledges were forgotten. Fifty of those who had been most

prominent in the revolt were seized and put to death with the utmost refinements of cruelty, one mode of execution being to extract the teeth, and hammer them, one by one, into the crown of the head.

At one time, when English influence prevailed at Teheran, a number of British officers were employed as drill instructors of his army by the Shah then reigning. On France becoming the favourite power, these were changed for French, but in both cases real authority being denied them, they found it useless to attempt any improvement in the drill or organization of the troops, and confined themselves to drawing their salaries, foreigners being paid regularly. There were still a couple of English officers in the Shah's service, but the Persian Government now shows an evident dislike to engage any more Europeans.

A ludicrous circumstance illustrative of the desire on the part of Oriental potentates occasionally to obtain European instructors for their troops, had lately occurred. A M. de Blocqueville, a Parisian photographer, thought he could turn his talent to more avail in the far-distant East than in his native France, and started at once for the capital of the Shah, bringing with him all the necessary apparatus.

He arrived safely at Teheran, where, being well received by the Shah, he felt assured he should soon acquire fortune and fame by the exercise of that wonderful art of which the Persians were yet ignorant. He took likenesses of his Majesty and sundry ladies of the court, and for some time things went on so prosperously that he began to consider his hopes in a fair way of fulfilment. But the moment was at hand that was to change the joy of the poor photographer into sorrow. The Turcomans of the north-eastern frontier having for some time been very unruly, it was considered necessary to send some troops to chastise their excesses. The Shah, desirous both of exhibiting his glory to his subjects and of perpetuating the remembrance of the deeds of his

armies for future generations, despatched along with the division sent against the insurgents the unlucky French artist, with orders to take photographs of the various acts of surrender, submission, &c., which were expected to be made by the Turcomans.

For some time all went well. The army marched into the country they hoped to subdue without meeting with any opposition, and it seemed as if the whole campaign was to terminate in an inglorious submission on the part of the tribes. This was not, however, to be the case. A night attack was made by an immense force of cavalry on the Persian troops, whose tents, baggage, artillery, and ammunition, after their complete rout, became the prey of the Turcomans. Two thousand stragglers succeeded in finding their way back to Meshed, but the far larger portion of the invincible force, among whom was the unhappy photographer, remained in the hands of the savage conquerors, who lost no time in fixing the price at which they were willing to ransom their captives.

The artist, regarded by the criterion of his personal strength and utility as a camel herd, was priced at seven tomauns, or 3*l.* 10*s.*, and this sum was demanded from the French Chargé d'Affaires, Mons. de Bellonay, to whom he had referred. Unwilling to submit to such an indignity, the representative of the French Government remonstrated with the Persian authorities, who commissioned an agent to procure the release of the photographer. This coming to the ears of the plundering Turcomans, they imagined that they possessed a more valuable prize than they at first supposed, and at once raised their terms to 50*l.*, a sum below which they said their prisoner should not obtain his release.

Meanwhile, rumours that a Frank had been taken among the Persian prisoners, reached the ears of the Khan of Khiva, who, on hearing that a larger ransom than usual had been demanded by the Turcomans, at once jumped to the

conclusion that the captive must be an officer of distinction. As the khan was anxious at this time to procure a drill-instructor for his troops, he sent to offer a still greater sum for the unfortunate artist, whom, from what he heard of the extraordinary instruments that had been taken with him, he supposed to be a man deeply learned in the art of war. It was no wonder, therefore, that the ignorant Turcomans, seeing the work that was made about the photographer, should imagine that they had in their grasp a prize, for which they should receive an extraordinary ransom.

The sum demanded for the ambitious painter was accordingly raised from 3*l.* 10*s.* to 1500*l.*, at which extravagant amount, the exchequer of the khan failing, or his avarice getting the better of his love of military glory, the unfortunate artist was at last ransomed by the French Government, after having for months endured every kind of hardship and privation.

The administration of justice in Persia, both in criminal and civil cases, is, as may be supposed, corrupt to the very core. The only advantage belonging to the system is, that it is prompt and speedy. The judges in Persia, as in other parts of the East, are open to bribes; but this, after all, may not be much worse than the practice in the West, where as large a sum of money is distributed among a number of lawyers and attorneys with results equally uncertain as to the attainment of real justice. The evasions consequent on the forced interpretation of a few words, which are common in English courts, are here impossible, owing to the absence of any other written law than the Koran; and as the judge, however corrupt, dare not decide against established custom in open court, in many cases justice is done in civil suits. On the other hand, in criminal causes, the utmost severity or the most culpable leniency may be shown at the discretion of the judge. Evidence may be disregarded, oaths disbelieved,

and the accused acquitted, in the face of the most direct testimony, provided the bribe has been sufficiently heavy.

The usual punishments are imprisonment and the bastinado on the soles of the feet, the latter not being considered in the degrading light that corporeal chastisement is regarded in Europe, every one in Persia being liable to it, however high his rank.

A ludicrous instance of this had occurred a short time before our arrival at the capital. The finances of the province of Mazanderan, having fallen into great confusion owing to the more than ordinary peculations of the former governor, the Shah wished to send as his successor a relative of his own who enjoyed a reputation for more than common capacity and probity. The latter, however, positively refused the offered honour, and was deaf to the continued solicitations of his sovereign, who at last, enraged at his obstinacy, sent for him to his presence and personally requested him to accept one of the highest offices in the kingdom. The office being still declined, the Shah's wrath waxed greater. He ordered the subject thus insensible to his favour to be thrown down and bastinadoed until he accepted the government. The order was at once obeyed, and the unfortunate or fortunate man's feet having been pounded nearly to a jelly, he at last gave in, and crawled out of the royal presence with a kelaat or robe of honour on his back, one of the greatest dignitaries of the empire.

Imprisonment, though sounding much more mildly, is a far more severe punishment in Persia than the bastinado. The dungeons are loathsome and confined dens, hot beyond endurance during the summer, icy cold in winter, and at all times reeking with filth and vermin. The prisoners are all locked up together, even though some of them may be afflicted with contagious diseases. They are fed upon the most wretched food, the gaoler being allowed so much for each ; and, as is

natural to gaolers, appropriating as much as he can for himself by starving the unfortunates under his care.

The sums appropriated to public works, which form so large an item in European budgets, are "nil" in Persia. From one end of the kingdom to the other, there is nothing like a road. The tracks between the principal cities are sometimes all but impracticable even to the sure-footed mules employed by the natives, and the caravanserais and few bridges have been in nearly every case erected by private individuals as a religious duty.

In the time of Shah Abbas a number of useful works were undertaken and executed by that cruel but, for Persia, most enlightened monarch. Caravanserais, tanks, bridges, and causeways built by him still exist, in a state more or less of decay and ruin, in several parts of the kingdom. In no respect, as far as interior communications are concerned, is Persia in the least improved since the days of Alexander the Great; in all probability it has retrograded. The entire revenue of the country does not quite come up to a million and a half sterling, most of which is embezzled by the various officials through whose hands it passes. Instead of augmenting, it is gradually diminishing, either on account of the increased peculations or the declining state of the country. The population is supposed to reach eight millions, the Persians themselves asserting, however, that there are double that number of inhabitants in the empire.

Isolated and cut off by her position from the civilized world, pressed on from abroad by Russia, rotten to the very core, it seems vain to hope that Persia will ever recover even a portion of her former prosperity. The Persians generally are poor, ignorant, and sunk in vice of every description. The higher classes, shameless, degraded, false, and treacherous, at once ungrateful for the benefits they receive, and vindictive on account of even the smallest injuries,

are utterly lost to any sense of disgrace. The governor of a province or other powerful officer, is allowed to rob, plunder, and oppress the people under him for a long period, until it is presumed he has acquired considerable riches, when he is seized, his wealth confiscated, and the money, wrung from the poor by every sort of despotic act, thus at last finds its way into the pockets of the father of his people.

In the midst of such universal corruption and rottenness, it seems wonderful that the country should hold together at all. The cohesive power by which its existence as a state is secured seems to be its religion. Surrounded on three sides by Sunis, and on the fourth bounded by a Christian power, the Sheah Mohammedans of Persia are kept together by a faith the most intolerant, which regards with contempt every other form of religion. But for the cohesive power of their religion, the nation, under the combined influence of bad government and the constant practice of every vice that can degrade a people, would inevitably fall to pieces. At present, owing to the internal state of Russia, enjoying a respite from the designs of that power, vain dreams of conquest on the southern frontier are indulged in; and a country that would be subdued in the course of a single campaign by 20,000 European troops, flatters itself with the hope of regaining Afghanistan, and other conquests of Nadir Shah.

Persia is in some slight degree protected by European jealousy from the encroachments of Russia and by the fact that that power has at present on her hands more territory than she can well manage. As Russian dominion on the Caspian becomes consolidated, the slight remaining independence of Persia will decline. The provinces bordering on that sea will be successively annexed, and at no distant time the head-quarters of a Russian general will in all probability be established in the palace of the Shahs at Teheran.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RATES OF TRAVELLING IN PERSIA—THE FAMINE—KASVIN—
REMAINS OF THE FORTRESS OF ALAMOOT—THE OLD MAN
OF THE MOUNTAIN — SULTANIAH — VILLAGE OF LEPERS —
THE BUG OF MIANAH — REMARKABLE STONES — PERSIAN
LEGEND—INCREASE IN NUMBER OF LEPERS—ARRIVAL AT
TABREEZ — APPEARANCE OF THE CITY — VALUE OF WATER
AT TABREEZ—EXCESSIVE COLD IN WINTER—SALT LAKE OF
OOROOMIYAH—AMERICAN MISSIONARY ESTABLISHMENT—VIL-
LAGE TRADITIONS—CITY OF KHOI—ARARAT—VILLAGE OF
ARVAJIK—LAWLESS DISTRICT OF KURDISTAN.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OUR stay in Teheran lasted for three weeks, during which time the weather became gradually warmer. The corn was some inches in height, and the trees were nearly in full foliage. We decided on travelling by post to Tabreez, as that route being so frequented, we were told we should find a sufficient number of horses at each station. The rate of posting in Persia is fifteen shials, or sevenpence-halfpenny a farsakh (or four miles) for each horse. The money in most cases is paid before starting, and an order countersigned by the Minister of the Interior, is required from the Post-master at the various stations along the road. Our number of horses was six, for which we paid forty-two tomauns, or about 20*l.* sterling, the distance being, according to Persian calculation, 93½ farsakhs, or 374 miles.

All the preliminaries for our journey having been completed, and having taken leave of our friends at Teheran, we left on the 16th of April. In consequence of the late hour at which we started, we were able to make only one stage of four farsakhs the first day. We put up in the bala khaneh of the post-house, a miserable building, where we procured with some difficulty sufficient fuel (dried cow-dung) to cook our food.

The next day we rode two stages of six farsakhs each. The horses, in consequence of the high price of corn, were very bad. The unfortunate animals were so weak as to be unable to keep their footing in the numerous small streams

through which they had to pass, and during the day we had to dismount and prop up those carrying the baggage whenever there was a brook to be crossed. Two gave up altogether, and were left behind on the road to recover, if they could, by eating the weeds that grew on the side of the track. To judge, however, from the emaciated condition and lack-lustre eyes of the forlorn animals, there was not much chance of the prolongation of their lives for many days.

The third day, with much difficulty, we got over one stage of five farsakhs, the horses being only able to crawl along at a slow walk, stopping frequently to rest. We found on inquiry at the post station where we remained for the night, that no corn whatever was given to them, their only food being chopped straw, the price of the former being appropriated by the postmaster at the station.

During this day we passed some unfortunate creatures literally in the last stage of starvation, scarcely able to ask for the alms which arrived too late. We also saw some travellers, overcome by exhaustion and want of food, lying down, probably never to rise again, by the road side, and in one instance we observed the body of a little girl, who had died from fatigue and starvation, lying on its face at no great distance from the track. It is needless to add, that we met no mules laden with grain on their way to the capital from Tabreez, or anywhere else.

The fourth day our first stage was four farsakhs to Kasvin, the second five beyond it. We had to walk a considerable part of the first stage, and distribute the baggage over the entire number of horses, the miserable animals being hardly able to creep over the ground. We passed a number of small villages, the plain around which, carefully cultivated, was intersected in every direction by great numbers of kanats, or subterranean water-courses, conveying water to the thirsty corn-fields. We found Kasvin, which was once a large city, and the capital of Tahmasp, the last of the Suffavean

monarchs dethroned by Nadir Shah, a heap of wretched houses, encircled by ruined walls. The large gardens surrounding the city are celebrated for the delicacy of their fruit, the apricots and peaches of Kasvin rivalling those of Ispahan. Repeated earthquakes had overthrown nearly the whole town, the few remaining buildings of any size being some mosques in a very dilapidated condition, the walls crumbling to ruin.

The fifth day we rode two stages, the first being five and the second four farsakhs. During the day, we passed at a distance on the right hand among the lofty mountains parallel to which we were riding, the traces of fortifications on the summit of a high hill. These were the remains of the fortress of Alamoot, the almost impregnable refuge of the celebrated Hassan, the Scheikh el Djebel, or "Old Man of the Mountain," who, appearing in the eleventh century, proclaimed a religious mission, and succeeded in inspiring a number of adherents with an implicit faith in his divine attributes. His followers, devoted to their chief, and believing that the surest mode of securing their eternal salvation was to obey blindly his commands, did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives in his service when called upon by him to do so, and went cheerfully to execute his mandates, although certain of immediate death as the consequence.

Various stories are related of the means which he took to instil veneration for his person and belief in his supernatural powers into the minds of the savage and wild hordes who surrounded him. The neophyte was obliged to fast and perform various ceremonies, after which he drank off a potion prepared for him, and lay down to rest. He awoke in a beautiful garden, full of trees, flowers, and fountains. A number of houris, bending to him as their lord, endeavoured by all their powers of fascination to merit his approbation, while troops of slaves awaited the least sign of his pleasure. Sated with pleasure, weary of delight, he again sank to sleep,

to wake for the second time to a sense of the world and its cares, the glimpse which he firmly believed he had obtained of the joys of Paradise making him regardless of those of earth, and enthusiastic in his devotion to his divine chief. Thus, possessing a band of adherents who desired nothing more than to sacrifice their lives for their sacred leader, secure in his mountain fastness from the open attacks of his most powerful enemies, he sent out his emissaries far and wide to destroy by the dagger all those who for any reason were obnoxious to him, regardless of creed or nationality. Terrified by the mysterious power which he exercised, unable to protect themselves from an enemy whose servants might be among the most trusted and favoured of their household, the princes of the East dreaded an evil the more fearful from the mystery in which it was shrouded, and many sought security by paying tribute and making large donations to the Scheikh al Djebel.

His influence thus extended far and wide, and as from his avarice the daggers of his followers could always be purchased by a wealthy supplicant, the atrocities and enormities committed by him were fearful. His successors in the imposture continued the same course. No one who was unhappy enough to offend them long survived ; and for more than two hundred years, incredible as it may seem, a sect professing the most atrocious doctrines existed in the midst of powerful monarchies. The crusaders, as well as the natives, suffered from the purchased weapons of these fanatics, and the horror and loathing which they inspired in bygone ages is yet perpetuated in the name of assassin, a corruption of that of their first leader and prophet, "El Hassan." Their stronghold was at last captured by Hulaku, the grandson of Genghis Khan, who extirpated the entire race which had for so long been a scourge to the surrounding nations. To this day the mountains which they inhabited are reputed by the natives to be infested by the most malignant demons, or Deevs. Few

Persians would enter these recesses alone, and many are the legends related of the crimes and atrocities committed by the deluded followers of the terrible and mysterious Scheikh el Djebel.

The sixth day, our first stage was six farsakhs to Sultanieh ; and the second, six more to Sinjan. We found Sultanieh a complete mass of ruins, covering a large extent of ground. Although a few gardens were still cultivated, the city, to all appearance, would soon be totally deserted and become a wilderness. The only building of any size remaining was a large mosque, which at one time had been richly ornamented and decorated with coloured tiles, but was now sadly dilapidated. Built by Mohammed Khodabund, the first Sheah Shah of Persia, it was intended by him as a mausoleum for the bodies of Ali and Hosein, which he intended to have transported from Kerbela and Meshed Ali. He did not survive, however, to carry out his design, and his own tomb occupies the place which he had intended for those of the holy Imams.

Sinjan is a place of some size, surrounded by mud walls, flanked by towers. Some business appeared to be carried on in it, and it had not the deserted, ruinous look of most other Persian towns.

So far, for six days' journey, our road had been over a plain between two parallel ranges of mountains running north-west. There was a very gradual and gentle ascent as far as Sultanieh, from whence we began to descend in the same scarcely perceptible manner.

After leaving Sinjan the ground became very broken and rugged, intersected with deep ravines. We passed a number of very peculiar conical hills, looking, to all appearance, as if composed of dried mud placed over horizontal layers of stone. On our left hand was a small river, the name of which we did not ascertain, but whose course was the same as our own, being north-west. On the seventh day we made twelve

farsakhs and a half in three stages, the horses, according as we receded from the capital, becoming better, and the corn more plentiful and cheaper.

At a little distance after leaving Sinjan, we came to a small collection of mud hovels, huddled together at some distance from the road. When we drew near the whole population turned out and stood in a line, men, women, and children, by the side of the path, all begging vociferously for alms. These unhappy beings, thus living in habitations hardly fitted for brute animals, not to mention human beings, cut off from all communication with their fellow creatures, save such as are afflicted with the same loathsome and incurable disorder, were lepers, who by the strange customs of Persia, while prohibited from coming within a certain distance of a town or village, are yet allowed, horrible as it may seem, to live together, contract marriages, and thus perpetuate the curse through an entire race. The miserable wretches poured out of their dens like a pack of half-starved hounds, falling over each other in their eagerness to be the first to reach the vicinity of the traveller, whom they dare not approach nearer than a certain regulated distance. Their swollen and distorted features were dreadful to look at, their limbs, deformed and eaten away by the revolting malady, were held out imploringly, and in some instances the features, blackened and scorched by the virulence of the terrible disorder, scarcely retained the appearance of those of human beings.

The whole of the north-west of Persia would seem to be afflicted with this frightful scourge of humanity. During the remainder of the way to Tabreez not a day passed that we did not meet with one or more of these communities, severed from the sympathy and care of relatives and friends. No attempt is made to cure the disease. The instant it shows itself the sufferer is banished from the society of his

kindred to that of those similarly afflicted. In his misery he is supported by their offerings, and by the labour of his own hands, so long as his strength lasts. In the case of women, the severing of all family ties, and the life of wretchedness which is their only prospect, make the punishment many times more severe than in that of men, bitter as is the lot of the latter. The leper lives and dies in isolation. He is buried by those afflicted like himself; his own kindred, from whose minds long absence may not have erased all affection, standing afar off, and visiting the grave only when a sufficient time has elapsed to remove all chance of the awful infection.

On the eighth day we rode twelve farsakhs in three stages, the first two being three each, and the third, six. The second was to Mianah, a town which like many others in Persia, was formerly of considerable size and importance, but is now celebrated chiefly for its carpets and bugs. Before arriving there we passed over a range of high and rocky mountains, a spur of the Elburz, and the ancient boundary between Parthia and Media. Just previous to commencing the ascent of these hills we crossed by a brick bridge the river Kizziluzan, flowing north-east towards the Caspian Sea. The current, which was very rapid, was much swollen by the heavy rains that had fallen during the preceding night. We afterwards heard that the bridge had been carried away by the floods the day following that of our passage over it. We passed the ruins of an ancient fortress, demolished by order of Shah Abbas the Great, which is said to have been erected by Artaxerxes or Ardeshir. Perched on the summit of a crag, the extensive remains of the walls and towers show that it must at one time have been a most formidable obstacle to an attacking force. Having reached the top of the pass, we descended rapidly into a plain, and crossing by a bridge the river of Mianah or Garnegub,

swollen and flooded like the Kizziluzan into which it falls, soon after arrived at the town.

The peculiar qualities of the poisonous bug of Mianah still seem to be a problem to the medical profession. Perfectly harmless to the natives of the place,—at least its bite having no more effect than that of an ordinary insect—it is fatal to strangers, producing death at the end of some months. In this it would seem to be somewhat like the even more deadly tsetse, or South African fly, that is harmless to the native mammalia, yet inflicts certain death on everything not born in the country, save an ass, mule, or human being. The bug of Mianah is of the same shape and size as the bugs of Europe; in colour a bright red. It abounds everywhere, finding a congenial locality in the crevices of the mud walls of the close and stifling houses. There is no cure known even by the natives for the mortal bite of the insect, the effects of which disclose themselves slowly, but with a deadly certainty. All vital energy fading away from the emaciated frame, the victim perishes at the end, a prey to the fatal venom.

We lost no time in leaving behind us a place of such sinister reputation, delaying only to change our horses at the chappar khan. For the first seven or eight miles of the next stage our route lay up the valley of the river running by Mianah, continually ascending, until we at last reached an undulating table-land, which in appearance much resembled parts of Armenia that we had passed through. Some small villages were scattered here and there over the country. The elevation of the soil was clearly shown by the large snow-drifts that lay on the ice-bound ground. A bitter wind blew from the north. No animals whatever were to be seen. A few ravens hovering over the carcasses of mules which had died from fatigue or starvation, were the only signs of life on the desolate and wintry plain. We were fortunate enough to find the room in the chappar khan weathertight, not

often the case in the wretched buildings appropriated for the accommodation of travellers.

Our ninth day's journey was only ten farsakhs in two stages, the first still ascending gradually. The ground in many places was covered with snow, and the hills around were white to their bases. The second stage we commenced again to descend, crossing a number of small streams, which became larger at a lower elevation, where the increased temperature caused the snow to melt faster than on the frozen heights.

During the day, about an hour's ride beyond a village called Ticmedash, we passed some very extraordinary monuments of antiquity, consisting of rows of large hewn stones, standing upright and arranged in a circle, resembling strongly the Druidical remains found in Britain. We observed them on eminences on both sides of the road, which passed through the centre of them; on the right side some of the stones forming the circle were wanting. On the left of the path the masses were placed so as to form an oblong. Within and around these enclosures were a number of Mussulman gravestones with inscriptions in Arabic carved upon them, none of them having the appearance of much antiquity. In the vicinity are the scattered ruins of Aujan, an ancient Median town, of large size, but now utterly destroyed.

The Persian legend about these strange enclosures is that they were erected by the warriors of King Kaous, who here held their councils, each bringing a stone as a seat for himself. King Kaous is supposed to have lived in the seventh century before Christ. By some antiquaries the stones have been assigned a Druidical origin, to which theory their great resemblance to the remains yet extant at Stonehenge and elsewhere, would give much probability. At a period subsequent to the destruction of that worship they may have been used as places of consultation, and afterwards

again turned into cemeteries. Their original destination, however, still remains a mooted question among savans.

On the tenth day two short stages of four farsakhs each brought us to Tabreez. The first stage was over two ranges of steep and rugged hills, with a dark and gloomy-looking lake lying in the plain between. The second was over a series of ridges of low hills. The colour of the mountains had now changed from what they had hitherto been, a brownish grey, to a dull red, and they assumed a more rocky and savage character. The unfortunate beings suffering from leprosy, of whom we had met some every day since we had quitted Teheran, seemed to have largely increased in numbers as we approached Tabreez. On the last stage before arriving at that city, they in some places literally swarmed out of their miserable hovels, like hounds from a kennel, at the approach of a traveller.

We descended from the mountains into Tabreez, passing through a very large cemetery and numerous well-kept gardens and orchards. The town lies at the foot of a red, bare, rocky mountain, and spreads out from its base like a fan over the adjacent plain. Built in a straggling manner, it covers a great deal of ground. Passing through a number of streets, which seemed cleaner and kept in better order than those of the capital, we rode to the Consulate General, where we were very kindly received by Mr. Abbott, who had heard of our being on our way to the city. His house was a large one, with a courtyard of considerable size, laid out as a garden in the centre, and with another garden of some extent in its rear. Like the other houses of Tabreez, it was only one story high, the frequency of earthquakes making it dangerous to erect buildings of greater elevation. The side opposite to the entrance gate had in front an arcade supported on low stout pillars. In width it consisted of but one room.

The city of Tabreez, the capital of the province of Azer-

bijan, the ancient Media, is a place of the most remote antiquity, being supposed by some antiquaries, before recent discoveries had rectified their error, to have been the ancient Median Ecbatana, the ruins of which have been discovered at Takht i Suleiman, upwards of a hundred miles to the south-east.

Its ancient name was Ganzaca, under which it is mentioned so long ago as the fourth century, and in the sixth it was captured by Heraclius, who found in it the treasures of Khosru Purveez. It was formerly of much greater size and importance than it now is, but the general decline of the country, wars, pestilences, and earthquakes, have reduced it to its present state. By the last-mentioned calamity it has more than once been almost totally destroyed, many thousands of the inhabitants having been swallowed up and whole districts turned into heaps of ruins in a single instant. Nevertheless the inhabitants have clung with obstinacy to the spot. New houses have arisen on the ruins of those destroyed; and notwithstanding its reiterated misfortunes, the city yet exists. It seems difficult to discover what reason there could have been for building a town on the site of Tabreez, as a more unsuitable situation could not well be found. At an elevation of 4500 feet above sea level, surrounded by bleak, bare, and desolate hills, water very scarce and bad, with a climate during winter of great severity, the snow remaining on the ground often as long as three months, it is difficult to imagine what motive could have determined the choice of its founders. The present population is supposed to be 80,000. The greater part, in fact nearly all the public buildings, baths, and mosques, are in ruins. Yet in Chardin's time, not quite two centuries ago, it contained 15,000 houses, as many shops, 250 mosques, and that old traveller estimates the inhabitants to have reached at that period 550,000, though reputed at double that number by the people themselves. Of the numerous mosques but three now remain, in a sadly

shattered and dilapidated condition. The new fortifications, erected only in the commencement of the present century, and consisting of walls and towers built of sun-dried bricks, are already crumbling away; and although still a place of stir and activity, perhaps the busiest town of Persia, Tabreez yet shows only too plainly the symptoms of decline common to all the cities of that desolate and unfortunate country.

To the east of the town, upon one of the hills bounding the plain, are the remains of a very ancient and extensive fortress, many of the massive towers and walls of which, built of stone and mortar,—a remarkable circumstance in this country of mud architecture,—yet exist, though shattered and riven. Chardin says that it was repaired about fifty years before his time, by Shah Abbas the Great, after his successful wars with the Turks, but that the successors of that monarch had neglected and suffered it again to fall to ruin. He calls it by the name of Kaleh Reschid, and says it was built in the thirteenth century of our era by Reschid, a vizier of a king called Kazan. We remained for a week in Tabreez, during which time, as there were no objects of antiquity or curiosity likely to interest ordinary travellers, we spent the greater part of the day in riding about the city and its environs, in company with our kind entertainer Mr. Abbott.

The view of the town from the neighbouring heights is very striking, surrounded as it is by the bare and desolate plains, from which, as if by magic, the gardens suddenly arise. The internal ruin and decay is not visible at a distance. The whitewashed houses shine brightly, and contrast well with the trees by which they are encircled. Whenever, as in all the rest of the kingdom, water can be procured, fertility immediately follows. In the neighbourhood of Tabreez, however, the price of the precious liquid is so high that a stream a foot in width and an inch in depth* is worth from 200*l.* to 300*l.* per annum. It may therefore be supposed with what care every drop is cherished.

The bazaars are not so large or spacious as those of Teheran. Having been recently rebuilt they have not the same tumble-down, neglected appearance. They seemed busy, and were full of purchasers making their bargains at the highest pitch of their voices. Owing to its vicinity to the Russian dominions the inhabitants are more accustomed to the presence of Franks than those of most other Persian towns, with the exception of the capital, and European men, but not ladies, ride and walk about the streets, accompanied by servants or *ferashes*, without being molested or insulted. European ladies residing in the town adopt the native costume for shopping, &c., and we were more than once astounded at being addressed by women in the bazaars, completely covered by long white veils, with no part of their persons visible save the eyes, who, although apparently Persians, turned out to be acquaintances.

During the whole of our stay at Tabreez there was a prevalence of high winds, which are very common during the winter and even in summer. A fresh breeze almost always sets in from the north in the afternoon. Owing to the elevation, the climate in summer is never very hot, but in winter the cold is intense, instances having occurred in which the natives have been frozen to death.

To the south-west of Tabreez, at a distance of about thirty miles, lies the great salt lake of Ooroomiyah, the waters of which are said to contain one-third more salt than those of the sea. It is somewhat larger than that of Van, and near its shores is the principal American missionary establishment, where many native teachers are educated and trained for the work for which they are intended.

From all we could hear, these missions were very flourishing, and had ceased to be regarded with dislike by the native Christians, who at first contemplated them with suspicion. We took the opportunity of inquiring whether there was any truth in what we had been told at Teheran, that corn

had been bought in Tabreez for transportation to the capital, but were assured that this had been a pure fabrication of the fertile brain of our informant.

We left Tabreez on the 2nd of May, taking leave of Mr. Abbott, who accompanied us for about half a mile from the town. We crossed the river Angi by a crooked, narrow, brick-built bridge of some length, near the other end of which lived, in their misery, a colony of lepers who were not permitted to approach nearer to the town.

After riding for some miles we passed, on the left hand, at some distance from the road, a large hill composed of loose sand, which constantly varied its form according as it was blown about by the winds. Our road lay over a plain, partially cultivated, intersected by numerous water-courses. A few villages were scattered about, more or less ruinous and decayed. In the evening we arrived at a small village, surrounded by a few gardens, called Sophianah, the first stage from Tabreez, the distance being reckoned at six farsakhs.

The second day we rode twelve farsakhs in two stages, the first five being to Marande. The road for some time lay through hills of no great height, but abrupt and steep, from which we descended into the plain of Marande, fertile, and dotted over with small villages with their gardens. The native traditions assert that here Noah planted a vineyard, and that his wife, whose name was Mariamne, died and was buried not far from where the village now stands, from which circumstance it takes its name. We were told that on a clear day the summit of Ararat was visible from Marande.

The second stage was seven farsakhs to Djenjireh, a small but very prettily situated village in a nook at the foot of the range of hills which we had crossed in coming from Sophianah to Marande, and which lay to our left as we rode along through the plain. A stream of water ran through it, the waters of which, intercepted by numerous channels, were carried off to irrigate the gardens by which it was surrounded. A

number of poplars had just commenced putting out their leaves, and the place had a thriving appearance. The mountains around were covered with verdure of the most brilliant emerald green, a striking contrast to the arid and parched look of all the hills we had seen since we had been in Persia, and we joyfully hailed the sight as heralding our approach to a country more favoured by nature than that of Iran.

Since we left Tabreez we had heard no more complaints about scarcity of corn. The harvest of the past year had been good, and the horses were strong, well fed, and up to their work. Between Marande and Djenjireh we parted from the high road to Erivan by Nakshivan, and took one running in a more westerly direction towards Erzeroum.

Our third day's ride was fifteen farsakhs to Zorabad, the first stage being seven to Khoi. The road, for the greater part of the way, lay through hills, from which we descended into the plain bearing that name. Khoi, which is now a small town, bears, like all other Persian cities, numerous traces of its former greatness. It is still surrounded by walls and towers built of mud, and contains a bazaar which seemed populous and busy. A large manufacture of socks, called "tifteck," which are much esteemed in Persia, is carried on, and as we rode through the streets, the shops seemed filled with both native and foreign goods. On most of the latter that were exposed for sale Russian letters were visible, showing them to have been sent from that country. A considerable number of small villages were dotted over the plain in the vicinity. The town was surrounded by gardens and orchards, and, on the whole, had a more prosperous and thriving appearance than any place we had seen for a long time.

The second stage, which was eight farsakhs, crossed a range of high hills, on which the snow still lay in drifts wherever the sun's rays had not full power. These mountains were dreary, desolate, and bare. No human habitations

could be seen, and save a few ravens, no animal life appeared to vary the dull monotony of stony and barren ridges. At the foot of these mountains lay our halting-place, Zorabad, which we found to be a very small and poor village, with the worst chappar khan, or post-house, we had yet met with. Our fourth day's ride brought us to Arvajik, the frontier station, the first stage being seven farsakhs to Karaaina, across another ridge of hills of the same monotonous character as those of the day before. There was absolutely nothing to vary the scene. One hill succeeded another, which it exactly resembled, and a weary sameness pervaded the whole landscape.

The second stage was also seven farsakhs, the route crossing a high range of mountains, on reaching the summit of the pass over which we were greeted by a glorious view of the lofty cone of Ararat. The great mountain, clothed as far as we could see down its flanks in its wintry garb, towered high over every other eminence, the adjacent ranges being dwarfed by comparison into mere hillocks. It appeared through the clear and rarefied air quite close to us, but we were at a distance of at least thirty miles, a large range of mountains, on the other side of which was Bayezid, to which we were riding parallel in a westerly direction, intervening between us and it. The whole scene formed a panorama seldom excelled, the wild and desolate character of the landscape adding to its grandeur and magnificence. The surrounding country was covered with a snowy sheet; the outlines of the mountains were broken and irregular, and from the midst of the confused masses rose in its lonely sublimity the mighty dome of the giant Ararat.

Arvajik is a small but prosperous-looking village at the foot of some low hills, which at this season of the year are covered with grass, on which pasture large flocks of sheep and goats. Possibly its proximity to the frontier line, and the facilities which its inhabitants consequently possess of

escape from the hands of the native authorities, may have had some influence in producing this state of comparative wealth and comfort.

The first stage the next day (5th) was to Diadin, nine hours by a short cut across the mountains—along the plain, round which ran the caravan road, a journey three hours longer. We began to ascend the hills immediately on leaving Arvajik, and soon attained a considerable elevation, crossing the frontier about an hour after starting.

We were now in what is generally reputed one of the most lawless districts of Kurdistan, the vicinity to the frontier, and the protection afforded by the officials of either country to the criminals of the other, on receiving a sufficient bribe, rendering it often impossible to travel unless accompanied by a strong escort. This want of security had made the whole region, although at this season of the year affording abundant pasture, and clothed with grass and flowers, a complete waste, on which not even a solitary sheep was to be seen. We passed at the back of the range of hills, on the northern slope of which stood Bayezid, and close to the quarantine station between it and Kara Kend, the village where we slept the first night after leaving the former for Van the preceding October. The plain presented now a very different aspect to what it then did, covered as it was with the freshly-springing grass, and carpeted with flowers of all colours. The two little paths, not more than a foot each in width, the only roads between such towns as Erivan and Van, and Tabreez and Erzeroum, clearly and sharply defined, crossed each other; and we halted for a moment on the point of intersection where we had passed seven months previously. On crossing the plain, we began again to ascend a range of snow-capped hills, through which, over a rugged and broken path, we rode for some hours, but did not encounter a single passenger, this desolate and robber-haunted district being usually shunned by lonely travellers.

From these mountains we descended into Diadin, which we found, although marked on maps as a large town, to be a wretched village of a few miserable huts surrounded by heaps of ruins. The greater number of the inhabitants formerly consisted of Armenians, who mostly returned with the Russian troops into the dominions of the Czar after the campaign which ended in the cession of the province of Erivan. The present population, which cannot exceed a couple of hundred, is chiefly Kurdish. The village is situated on the bank of a ravine, through which, at a great depth below, flows the Muradtchai, or eastern branch of the Euphrates, the sources of which lie at some distance to the south-east. The sides of this ravine are rocky and perpendicular. The water of the small stream seemed clear and pure, and we were told that at no great distance from Diadin two natural bridges spanned the river. The ruins of what must once have been a strongly fortified fortress hung over the craggy bank. Its erection is attributed to the Genoese, but little of it now remains, as it has served for centuries as a quarry from whence the materials for building the adjacent village were obtained. The inhabitants, wild, half-savage, rough, and independent as they are, we gazed on with delight after being so long among the mean-looking and effeminate Persians, for though as great rogues, they take what they want by the strong hand, and not by cheating and lying.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OUCHKLISSA, OR THE THREE CHURCHES—KARAKLISSA—ERZEROU—TOWN OF HASSAN KALEH—CIRCASSIAN IMMIGRANTS—A ZEALOUS MUSHIR—THE CITADEL OF ERZEROU—THE MEDRASSY, OR COLLEGE—FORTIFICATIONS AND MOSQUES—GIANT PARTRIDGE—SEVERITY OF THE CLIMATE—SUBTERRANEAN ABODES—MOURAD KHAN—GENOESE TOWERS—SIGANA DAGH—ALPINE VALLEYS—ENCHANTING SCENERY—CONCEALMENT OF CREED BY A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY—TREBIZOND—FIRST VIEW OF THE BLACK SEA.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE next stage to Diadin was Karaklissa, or Black Church; but, as this was twelve hours distant, we remained for the night at Ouchklissa, or Three Churches, an Armenian convent, founded, by the accounts of the monks, early in the fourth century, and containing the body, or at least some of the bones, of John the Baptist. The place is consequently esteemed by the Armenians as possessed of a peculiar sanctity. Pilgrimages are made to it by devotees, and in former times rich gifts were presented to the shrine of the saint. The church of the convent was one of the largest and most massively built of any we had seen in Armenia, composed of large blocks of sandstone, in the same style and form as those at Etchmiadzin and Akthamar. It was in excellent preservation, being nearly as perfect as when just finished. It, as well as the surrounding buildings inhabited by the monks, is enclosed by lofty and strong walls, with towers at short intervals, both alike in a ruinous condition. A small chapel on the left hand of the entrance to the church is shown as the burial-place of the Baptist. The only ornaments of the interior are a few wretched pictures of saints falling from their frames, which seem to have been painted at a very remote age.

A board hanging near the door of the church answered when struck by a mallet the purpose of a bell to call the religious to their devotions, the bells of the monastery having been carried off in some of the frequent plunderings it has undergone at the hands of the Kurds. The interior, though

of considerable extent, is very low and dark, the solid and massive walls adding by their sombre colour to the gloomy appearance. Only three monks inhabited the convent. A few boys, the children of the villagers near, prowled about the deserted rooms, and were, we were told, the pupils of the monks; but to judge from the ignorance of the latter, the amount of instruction they received must have been very small.

Only the preceding year a party of Kurds had attacked the monastery, killed the bishop who is usually resident within its walls, and beaten so severely a Russian who happened to be staying there, that he died soon after at Bayezid. No successor had as yet been appointed to the bishop. The Turkish Government, in consequence of the strong remonstrances of the Russians, had sent for a short time a small body of soldiers to protect the few remaining monks; but even they were soon withdrawn. There were no books or manuscripts whatever remaining of what had once been a large library. All had been carried away by the Kurds, who, the old monk who acted as our cicerone over the place told us, had tried often to set the convent on fire, but owing to the small portion of woodwork and the solidity of its construction, had failed. A couple of Russian deserters who had married Armenian wives, resided near the convent in a small village chiefly inhabited by Armenians. Seen from a distance, the monastery, surrounded as it is with embattled walls and towers, has a very imposing appearance, rendered the more striking by the contrast with the miserable huts of the village. No traces, we were told, exist of the two other churches which once stood near; the place deriving its name of Ouchklissa from the three. The monks were wretchedly poor, their only means of sustenance, besides their own labour, being the voluntary offerings of the villagers. We spent the night in a small room, the walls of which were several feet in thickness. The old monk, with

many apologies for the scantiness of our fare, produced after some delay a supper of bread and eggs, the best he could offer.

The first stage on the sixth day was the remainder of that to Karaklissa, crossing the Euphrates, not far from the monastery, by an ancient Armenian bridge of two arches. The road lay along a plain between two ranges of hills, of no great elevation, but covered with snow; in some places the mud was so deep and of such tenacity, that it was with difficulty we could make our way through it, the mules floundering about as if in a snow-drift.

Karaklissa is a miserable village of mud hovels, with a wretched half-ruined church standing near, the few inhabitants being poverty-stricken and half-starved. We were detained some time by the postmaster, who tried to make us pay five piastres, or tenpence an hour, for each horse, instead of three and a half piastres, or sevenpence, the authorized charge on this road. After a short time, however, seeing we would not yield, he gave in, and before we left begged us not to say anything about his little attempt at imposition.

Our second stage was seven hours to Mollah Suleiman, a small village at the foot of the Kusseh Dagh (?), a lofty range of hills covered with snow. Our path still lay over the same plain, deep in mud, through which we toiled and splashed for the remainder of the day, our tired animals being unable to get on faster than a smart walk. The seventh day we rode but one stage, a very long one of fifteen hours, and halted at a small village called Khorassan. The first half of the day's ride was over a very high pass, across the Kusseh Dagh (?), the snow lying in deep drifts across the path in many places, through which our horses made their way with much difficulty, the baggage having often to be removed to let them extricate themselves. From the summit we had a glorious parting view of Ararat, on the glittering cone of which, far away to the east, the sun was shining with

dazzling brightness. Seen from whatever point, it always stands solitary and lonely, its great height, far exceeding that of the surrounding hills, dwarfing them all into comparative insignificance. The mountains around us were completely bare of timber, not even a bush was to be seen, and far and wide as the eye could reach, although at such an advanced period of spring (May 8), the wide expanse was covered with a dazzling sheet of snow. Our road for the remainder of the day, after crossing the mountains, lay down a valley with a gentle descent; again rising to pass some low hills, we rode through a fertile and well-cultivated country, studded with good villages, to Khorassan, into which our sturdy little horses bore us at a gallop, in spite of their long and severe day's work.

During the day we saw large flocks of the ruddy shel-drake, a bird in size between a duck and a goose, and which we were told is very common in these regions during winter. It seemed very tame, constantly perching on the flat roofs of the houses in the villages, and taking its opportunity to pick up any food lying about.

The eighth day from Tabreez brought us to Erzeroum, the first stage being eight hours to Hassan Kaleh along a rolling plain by the banks of the Araxes, which at this season of the year presented, owing to the melting of the snow, a very different appearance from what it did the preceding autumn, when we had crossed it lower down in the plain of Erivan. We passed over the swollen and turgid current by the bridge of Tschaban Kiupristi, a fine one of red stone, and four or five arches, of which that on the side next Erzeroum had been blown up by the Turks during the war of 1829, and had been replaced by a wooden one. Various redoubts commanding the road to this bridge from the east side had been erected by the Turks, but as they were often commanded from eminences near, it seemed difficult to conjecture what could be their object, for it would

be necessary to abandon them successively on the approach of an enemy from the Russian frontier.

The town of Hassan Kaleh, which seemed once to have been a place of considerable size and importance, situated as it is near the banks of a large river, and on the edge of a fertile and well-watered plain, was more than two-thirds in ruins; the walls had been destroyed, and the houses, though solidly built of stone, were crumbling to ruin from neglect, even where inhabited. The fortress on the rocks above was destroyed by Prince Paskievitch, who captured it without any difficulty on his march to Erzeroum in 1829. Before the invention of gunpowder, it must have been a place of great strength—its erection is attributed to the Genoese. In the town we were surprised at seeing the Circassian dress, and on inquiry found that a number of immigrants, who had preferred abandoning their homes and native land to living under the hated rule of a Christian, had been located here by the Turkish government. We afterwards heard that many other such colonies had been established in these regions by the Turks, who from all we could discover by no means hailed the arrival of the immigrants with delight, having, as they often had, to feed and clothe them for a long time after their final settlement in the dominions of the Padishah.

Although it at first sight appears an act of patriotism and self-sacrifice seldom equalled thus to abandon their country with all its home ties, rather than bow to the yoke of a foreign invader, yet when looked into more closely, this emigration from the Caucasian provinces under Russian rule assumes a very different aspect, resolving itself into what has long been the bane of the East, religious fanaticism. Not because the Russians are aliens in race, language, and customs, nor because of any tyranny or oppression exercised by them, their rule over the conquered provinces being light and easy—but because they profess themselves, and are the acknowledged champions of the hated, despised, yet

feared religion of the Cross, they are opposed with such stubborn obstinacy by the fanatic followers of the Prophet. Schamyl and his predecessors preached a religious, not a patriotic war, in the sense in which we understand the term. They called on the people to fight for Islamism threatened by Christianity, and at this moment the mountaineers would gladly submit themselves to the Turks, a foreign race, if by so doing they could uphold the fading supremacy and brutal sway of Mohammedanism.

In the lately subdued districts of Circassia, no taxes have been imposed, no conscription levied, no acts of oppression that we could hear of were alleged to have been committed. The lower classes are secure from the capricious power of their chiefs, who, nevertheless, are in most instances continued in many of their privileges, acting as judges save in cases of life and death, and ruling their tribes as they did prior to the conquest; yet in spite of the many advantages gained by the substitution of a fixed and powerful government for a state of turbulence and internecine war, the people, led by their Mollahs, abandon their homes, and seek a land where they can practise the savage intolerance so dear to their priesthood.

Once set in operation, this movement seems latterly to have assumed gigantic proportions. The exodus, carried on as it chiefly is, by sea, is attended with appalling sufferings to the miserable fanatics, who thus encounter horrors worthy of the middle passage in their desire to flee from the detested system under which a Mohammedan and a Christian are equally looked on as deserving the same treatment and respect. Vessels, often of only a few tons burden, laden with as many of these unfortunate creatures as they can stow away on their decks, set sail from Kertch and other ports on the east coast of the Black Sea, often to arrive at their destination after days of tossing about and exposure to the weather, with the loss of one half of their miserable cargo. Even then their sufferings are far from ending, a long period of privation

must elapse before they can finally settle down in the district and establish themselves in the new homes allotted to them by the Turkish Government, and it yet remains to be seen by their future history whether they have done wisely in preferring the rule of a Turkish pasha, even with the delights of undisputed religious supremacy, to that of a Russian governor, coupled with the more substantial benefits of civilization.

From Hassan Kaleh the distance was only six hours to Erzeroum, two-thirds of the way being along the flat ground by the river, and the remainder over a low range of rugged and broken hills, from which we descended to the town, lying at the foot in a large and grassy plain. On approaching the city from the east, the first view is not obtained until within a short mile's distance; an ancient Armenian tower, with conical roof, is first seen, and then behind it appear by degrees the minarets and domes of the many mosques.

We rode into the town through some narrow lanes, and passing into a wide and straight street, with stone houses built in a semi-European style, and two stories high, put up at a very comfortable little hotel for such a place, kept by a Greek, Madame Riva. It was strange, how as one receded from Persia the condition of the country had improved, showing how low indeed must be the state of that nation, in comparison with which, the civilization, if so it can be called, of the Turks could appear to such advantage. We arrived at Erzeroum on the 9th of May, the weather still continuing excessively cold, and the inhabitants almost universally still clad in their fur coats.

The distance from Tabreez, according to the posts, deducting the three hours, or nine miles, short cut between Arvajik and Diadin, was 359 miles, and probably, in reality, was not much short of that number.

The plain on which the city is situated is 5730 feet above the sea level. Some large patches of snow still remained on it,

and the tops of the hills around were still white. The few trees in the town were struggling into leaf, the grass was beginning to spring, and the four months of summer, which, at such an elevation, compensate for the eight dreary ones of winter, were about to commence. For seven months of the year there is often snow on the ground at Erzeroum, and during all this time the inhabitants have nothing to do, but endeavour to keep themselves warm, in their semi-underground houses, by burning dried cow dung, the only fuel they possess—wood, which has to be brought from the neighbourhood of the sea-coast, being too expensive on account of the carriage.

Our stay at Erzeroum lasted only for a couple of days, which we spent in seeing as much of the town and principal buildings as was possible in so short a time. An old bazaar, which had lately been burnt, had been well and solidly rebuilt; but as the principal trade of the town is a transit one between Trebizond and Persia, the shops are small and insignificant. The apothecaries, of whom apparently there is a great profusion, seem to drive a flourishing trade with the Kurds, who have a most implicit faith in the efficacy of the drugs of the Frank Hakims. We saw wild and savage-looking fellows bearing away parcels of physic, the value of which they apparently estimated by their bulk, and probably, as the remedies were doubtless of the simplest kind (although supposed by them to be capable of healing every disorder that flesh is heir to) they were not far wrong.

We accompanied Mr. Dalyell, the English Consul, on a visit which he paid to the Mushir, or marshal, commanding the troops of the province, of whom there were about three thousand in garrison in Erzeroum. We found him an old man, upwards of eighty, but still full of life and vigour. Although he had but recently arrived, he had already greatly exerted himself in providing proper accommodation for his soldiers, whose condition had been greatly ameliorated, as before the changes made by him they were wretchedly lodged,

no provision whatever being made for their reception. He had fitted up sundry empty buildings as barracks, the rooms in which were clean, pure, and free from the close and musty smells common even in the best Turkish houses. The soldiers had lately received new clothing, and looked very well. The old Mushir, a miraculous exception to the general run of Turkish officers, also took care that they should be properly fed, and should receive their full allowance of rations, although they had not been paid a piastre for eighteen months. They were all riflemen, and we were told were picked troops, a battalion being detached from each regiment (which consists of four) and trained for this particular service. Their rifles, which bore the Lille mark, and were on the Miniè principle, were clean and kept in excellent order. Their accoutrements were new, and their whole equipment seemed to leave little to be desired. Some store-rooms had been converted into shops, in which a number of workmen, principally soldiers, were employed in making shoes, and nothing could seem better or stronger than the workmanship and quality of the articles they produced. In other apartments, harness, &c., for artillery was hanging up on racks, all kept neat and clean, ready for immediate use. After all the rapacity and peculation on the part of Turkish officials, which had come to our knowledge, it seemed difficult to credit the existence of a general officer who did not rob his soldiers ! !

We visited the citadel, an enclosure surrounded by walls similar to those of the town. In it were some brass cannon, which had been rifled some years previously by Hafiz Pasha, who, however, as he had omitted to adapt the iron balls which he used to the grooves of his ordnance, did not attain the success he anticipated from his invention.

Near the principal entrance to the city are the ruins, for at present they are very little else, of a very beautiful Medrassy or college, called from the two minarets on either

side of the gateway, the "Ikki Chifteh." These minarets, which are built of brick, are very beautifully ornamented with enamelled tiles, and although neglected and decayed, still presented a light and graceful appearance, the light blue of the enamel glittering in the sun's rays. The Medrassy itself is very solidly built, ornamented with some very curious and elaborate tracings and arabesques, the careful execution of whose workmanship, remarkable for its delicacy, it was impossible not to admire. The roof having either fallen or been destroyed, the building had been deserted and left as a habitation to pigeons, which on our entrance flew about in dismay, at an invasion so little expected. On the whole, ruined and neglected as the building was, enough remains still uninjured to show what the beauty of the edifice must have been in its perfect state.

The city itself, square in form, is surrounded by a double wall of masonwork, with towers at equal distances, the whole embattled and presenting a mediæval appearance. In many places these walls have crumbled away, and although the Turkish government has at various times signified its intention of fortifying it according to modern ideas and requirements—the city, which is the key to the greater portion of their Asiatic dominions, yet remains utterly defenceless against a regular force.

There are a number of mosques, mostly low and solidly constructed buildings with flat roofs, covered like the houses with thick layers of clay. There are also some strange-looking towers with conical roofs of cut stone, in the ancient Armenian style, erected some centuries ago as tombs. These present a curious appearance, and are prominent objects whenever the city is viewed from a short distance. A few Greek and Armenian churches, the latter of very small size, but of considerable antiquity, still remain. These buildings, the roofs of which are of stone, are of great solidity, but plain and devoid of any decoration.

Mr. Dalzell showed us the feathers of a very large kind of partridge which had been brought to him only a few days before our arrival, and which, living at the tops of the highest mountains in the vicinity of Erzeroum, is seldom met with. According to his description, this specimen was seven pounds in weight, and in size must have equalled a small turkey. The plumage which he showed us resembled exactly that of the common partridge of England. Its favourite haunts are the snowy summits of the loftiest mountains, to which it retreats during the day, descending during the night to feed on berries and grain that it may pick up on lower ground.

The inhabitants were all busily occupied in preparing for the coming thaw. Numbers were shovelling the snow off the roofs into the street, in which it lay piled up in heaps and ridges, through and over which the passers-by carefully wound their way. Every one seemed cheerful at the approach of summer, a feeling which could be thoroughly entered into by any one with the least experience of the awful climate in which they are compelled to live, and which, among its other effects, seems to have that of dwarfing the animals to an extraordinary degree, the cattle having the appearance of calves and the sheep of lambs. All the inhabitants of the town, both men and beasts, live in their subterranean burrows during the entire winter, kept warm by their mutual heat and by the aid of fires of dried dung, here called *tezek*.

Erzeroum has been identified by some writers with Theodosiopolis, a city founded by Theodosius the Second to keep the Armenians in subjection. It was much enlarged by Anastasius and Justinian.

Having been told that we should find much difficulty in procuring a sufficient number of horses on the post route to Trebizond, we decided on going by our old method of *charvadar* or *cavaran*. Accordingly, having engaged animals from a muleteer on his return to Trebizond from Tabreez, at the rate of 200 piastres or about 33 shillings a head, the distance

being seven days' journey, we left Erzeroum on the 12th of May, and rode in three hours across the plain to a small village called Kuras. We passed on the way numbers of the ruddy sheldrake, and also large flocks of wild geese, which seemed preparing for their return to the remote regions of the north, wheeling round in wide circles high in the frosty air. Our second day's ride was along a plain skirting the lofty range of hills called Khoshapunar, parallel to which we waded through the mud for eight dreary hours.

The thaw now seemed to have fairly begun. Numberless small streams descended from the sides of the mountains into the plain, over which they spread, converting the stiff clay into a sticky and fat-like compound, of wonderful tenacity. The snow on the lower elevations was melting rapidly. The tops of the hills, however, were still covered, and all around the whole scene had still the appearance of mid-winter. We stopped for the night at the village of Khoshapunar, of which, although a place of some size, very little could be seen above ground. The greater part of each house being subterranean, the inhabitants seemed to issue from and re-enter their abodes like rabbits.

Our third day was across the range of the Khoshapunar, bounding the great plain of Erzeroum to the north-west. For some time after we commenced to ascend the mud lay so thick on the track, that we made way very slowly, the baggage horses sinking in it up to the knees, and having frequently to stop to recover their breath and strength before continuing their efforts. We soon reached snow level, and for some hours continued riding through it. The elevation of the summit of the pass was the greatest we had yet crossed. The path was a mere goat track, wide enough only for a single animal. In many places where the snow was hard, it was worn by the feet of the horses passing over it into holes a foot deep and about twenty inches apart, into which the well-trained beasts placed their feet with the greatest care,

withdrawing them slowly and with equal prudence. The road passed sometimes by the edge of precipices and along steep declivities, the sides of which, opposed to the mid-day sun, which partially melted the snow, were covered with ice. A false step once made, nothing could save either horse or rider from a descent of hundreds of feet. The whole scene was one vast expanse of snow, save where it had been blown by the winds from the rocks and crags, which stood out, bleak and desolate, amidst the waste. On descending the other side of the hills they began to be dotted with dwarf cedar, cypress, and oak, a sight we gladly hailed, as they were the first wild trees we had seen since we left the neighbourhood of Bushire. In eight hours after leaving Khoshapunar we arrived at a small village called Masat, situated on the spur of a hill jutting out into a valley, and like most of the others, half underground. Our spirited little beasts, in spite of their hard day's work, were fresh and lively, and seemed to care but little for their exertions.

The fourth day was to Herkend, a ride of nine hours, passing through, at six hours' distance from our starting-point, the town of Baiburt. A short time before arriving at it we passed some small copper-mines, situated high up on the side of a valley, along the bottom of which we were riding. Baiburt is a very pretty town, placed under some lofty rocks, on the summits of which are the ruins of a fortress destroyed by Paskievitch, in 1828-1829. The houses are built of stone. Some new buildings were rising from the ground, and the town had a thriving and prosperous appearance. The trees just coming into leaf, by which it was surrounded, had a pleasant effect.

Herkend is a small village, with a mixed population of Armenians and Turks. The former were building a church, a fact which spoke much for either the tolerance or indifference of their Moslem fellow citizens. During the day our road lay over a succession of low hills divided by small valleys,

along the bottom of which, wherever it was possible, the path wound its narrow way.

The fifth day brought us to Mourad Khan, a distance of eight hours, the first three of which were over a country very similar to that over which we had travelled the preceding day. We then entered the head of a valley, the sides of which soon became wooded with pines. An hour before arriving at Mourad Khan, we passed through a gorge, the rocks above which were crowned with the shattered towers of what had once been a very large and extensive fortress, built by the Genoese, and which must have completely commanded the defile. Flanking walls from the keep at the summit connected it with the different towers, which occupied every commanding position. Flights of steps hewn out of the rock led up to the stronghold from the valley below. Many of the towers were much shattered, but others seemed to have defied successfully both the ravages of time and the inclemency of the weather, and appeared likely to remain yet for a long period, a proof of the vigour and energy of the rival of Venice in bygone ages.

As we descended the weather began to get sensibly milder. The few trees were bursting into leaf, and the birds were singing merrily on the branches. Mourad Khan, a pretty village situated on the right bank of the stream, which flows at the bottom of the valley, is built of stone, and seemed a clean and thriving little place.

Our sixth day's stage was to Ardesseh, a very small village at the foot of a crag, on which were perched the ruins of a small Genoese fort. Our road lay down the course of the same valley, frequently crossing the stream and cypresses. The slopes of the hills were clothed with the same stunted brushwood, among which grew a few pines by small bridges.

The seventh day's journey was a long one, being eleven hours to a village called Keramit. For the first two, we

continued to descend the same valley we had ridden down the day before, after which we turned off up another ravine, ascending it for some eight or ten miles. Its sides were wooded with oak, underneath which were scattered patches of yellow azaleas and peonies, both just coming into flower. As we got higher, the oak changed to pines, and at last, on reaching a considerable elevation, the trees came to an end, and we found ourselves ascending the steep slopes of a bare and rugged mountain, the top of which was dotted over with patches of snow. At last we reached the summit of the pass called Sigana Dagh, where was a small hut, inhabited during winter by a few men employed to give assistance to benighted or exhausted travellers, who would else perish in the snows.

After crossing the Sigana Dagh, we descended into another valley, running in a northerly direction, down which we continued to ride for the remainder of the day. Some pine-trees soon appeared, the ground underneath being covered as if with a mat of rhododendrons, which were just beginning to come into flower. The rich green of their leaves and the dark foliage of the pines were very refreshing to eyes accustomed for so long to the burnt plains of Persia and the snowy wastes of the Armenian mountains. As we rode on, the valley assumed by degrees more and more of a Swiss appearance; and gradually expanding, the sides became dotted with chalets, round each of which were little pasture fields, carefully irrigated and cultivated, on which were tethered cattle, sheep, and goats. The pines changed into beeches, these again into oak and ash, all of great size. Acres of yellow azaleas, in full blossom, vied in rich tints with the rhododendrons, also covered with flowers, the perfume of the former being borne far upon the air. A multitude of little streams flowed down the sides of the valley, sometimes hidden from view by the dense thickets, and at others tumbling over the rocks in miniature cascades. The chalets,

built of mingled wood and stone, with balconies and shingle roofs, presented an appearance closely resembling those seen in alpine valleys; and were it not for the rhododendrons and azaleas dyeing the ground with masses of their gorgeously coloured flowers, the resemblance would have been complete.

The little patches of corn and water meadows, all of the most brilliant green, were divided from each other by low brushwood fences, scarcely observable amid the luxuriant vegetation. The forest was peopled with countless singing birds, whose notes coupled with the cooing of doves filled the air, blending harmoniously with the brawling of the torrent far below. From that of midwinter, the climate had as if by magic changed in a few hours to that of fresh and early summer. The air was warm and soft, and myriads of butterflies and other brightly coloured insects fluttered joyously in the sunbeams. A more enchanting scene could not be witnessed, its calm beauty and peaceful loveliness contrasting vividly with the utter desolation of the howling wilderness above. This district our charvadars told us was peopled by Christians, who having carefully concealed their religion during the many years that elapsed from the time of the Turkish conquest to the year 1828, had then thrown off the mask which they had for so long worn, and openly professed their ancient faith. If true, this is a very remarkable instance of the successful concealment of creed; the fact, according to the muleteers, never having been suspected by the Moslems, who, had they discovered it, would have made short work of the seeming professors of Islam. Keramit, a hamlet and caravanserai, presented nothing worthy of note.

The 19th of May, our eighth and last day's journey from Erzeroum, brought us to Trebizond, our road being for six or seven hours down the same valley, and through the same lovely scenery as the day before. The warm and moist air was heavily loaded with the perfume of azaleas and other

flowers. The path wound its way along the slopes amid groves of apricot, peach, and almond-trees. Each turn brought into view a scene, if possible, more beautiful than the last, the stream at the bottom, which had now received numerous tributaries, assuming the dimensions of a river, and rushing swollen and turgid over its rocky and uneven bed. The houses and chalets were placed closer to each other, and their owners, with natural taste, seemed to have selected for their situations the most beautiful positions.

At length, after having for a long time continued by the water's edge, the path commenced to ascend the left side of the valley, and on reaching the top of the hill, we beheld all at once the wide and placid expanse of the Black Sea. The sensations we ourselves experienced on beholding the calm water, made us easily realize the feelings of the harassed, exhausted, and toil-worn Greeks, when, after their long and weary march and endless skirmishes, they at last beheld the sea, the termination to their sufferings.

From our feet the mountains sloped gradually down to the water's edge. The ground was broken into little valleys divided from each other by orchards and fields of corn, and dotted over with trees and prettily-built villas. The town lay close to the water at the foot of the hills, the houses peeped out of groves of trees with here and there a cypress towering aloft above all the others, and the ruins of an ancient fortress crowned a rock hanging over the city. At the base lies what is called the harbour, in reality only a part of the open sea.

The day was calm, not a breath of air ruffled the surface of the dark blue water, and but for a drowsy hum, that arose from the countless insects, everything seemed sleeping in the sunshine. The scene somewhat resembled the neighbourhood of Algiers, but besides possessing greater natural beauty, was much more wooded and brightly coloured. We rode for an hour down the hills, passing by a number of villas built for

summer residences by the wealthier citizens. We wandered through lanes shaded by orange and lemon-trees, which had not quite lost all their blossom. Houses began to appear, at first isolated, then connected in scattered groups, and we found ourselves at last in the streets of Trebizond.

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