

XII.—*Descriptive Sketch of the Islands and Coast situated at the Entrance of the Persian Gulf.* By Lieutenant WHITELOCK, Indian Navy. Communicated by the Bombay Geographical Society.

[As the chart of the Persian Gulf, resulting from a trigonometrical survey by the Officers of the Indian Navy, between the years 1821 and 1829, has now been published for some years, and has been made use of in all good modern maps of that region, it has not been thought necessary to reprint the portion of it here referred to.

This descriptive sketch will be found to be a useful supplement to a Memoir by Lieut. Kempthorne, of the Indian Navy, in vol. v. p. 263 of the *Geographical Journal*; and here, perhaps, it may be permitted to regret that—although this important survey of the Persian Gulf has been finished more than eight years—no complete account of it, nor any description of the coasts, has yet been published.—Ed.]

PASSING two rocky islets on the Arabian shore, which are called the Quoins, you enter the Gulf of Persia, and there are few parts within it which present a higher claim to attention than this, for the whole region on every side abounds in historical and classic interest.

On the right hand, beneath a lofty mountain, called by the Arabs *Jebal Shamál*,* which is seen towering far above the other hills on the Persian shore, with its summit clad with snow, even in the spring-season, lies the far-famed island of Hormuz; on the other hand *Lárek*; † and only a few miles further on, the town of *Gamrún*, which in opulence and magnificence was only inferior to Hormuz. *Kishm*, ‡ also, the ancient *Oaracta*, and *Mínáú*, near which took place the meeting of Alexander and Nearchus, are situated in this vicinity.

The former renown of the island of Hormuz has often occupied the descriptions of earlier travellers. My object in this sketch is to describe the island as it is at present; and this, when considered with reference to its former opulence and splendour, may not be deemed wholly uninteresting. Hormuz is twelve miles in circumference. Its form is nearly circular, and its appearance from seaward is broken and rugged. The surface, entirely denuded of soil, exhibits the various tints of its singular stratification—which, with the conical shape and isolated position of the numerous small hills composing the island, gives the former a highly volcanic aspect, and would induce us to attribute the origin of the island itself to the same agency.

* Mount North. The orthography of the names of places has been reduced to the standard adopted by the Society—(see vol. vii. p. 245).

† Or *Lárij*.

‡ Sometimes *Kishm* and *Jism*—(Niebuhr, *Besch. von Arabien*, p. 328). It seems to have been anciently called *Keís* or *Keish*—(see *Jihán-numá*, pp. 275, 532). It is also called *Jezírah tawíláh*, or *Jezírah Diráz*, *i. e.* Long Island.—(Niebuhr, l. c.)

With a pilot, Hormuz may be approached from either hand without apprehension. The harbour, situated on the N.E. side, is both secure and convenient. To this, and to its insular and otherwise advantageous position, must be attributed its former importance.

The fort, in lat. $27^{\circ} 6' N.$, long. $56^{\circ} 29' E.$, is situated about 300 yards from the beach, on a projecting point of land, which is separated from the body of the island by a moat. The position is remarkably well chosen; and the whole, with the exception of the ordnance, which has been destroyed by time and rust, is still in good condition.

A few hundred yards from this, now tottering in ruins, stands the lighthouse, which must formerly have been a fine building: its spiral staircase still exists, but it would be dangerous to ascend it. A level plain extends for some distance to the N.E. of this building, having its surface scattered over with mounds and ruins of former habitations. Several tanks and wells have also been sunk here: the former, though now out of repair, are covered over with an arched roof; they are about fifteen yards in length, and seven or eight in breadth. As there are no fresh-water springs on the island, the inhabitants are wholly dependent on the supplies which are collected in these reservoirs during the rainy season.

Across this plain, towards the rugged hills which line the eastern shore of the island, a singular phenomenon presents itself, which strikingly resembles the "Mer de Glace." The hills, for a considerable distance from their bases, are covered with an incrustation of salt, which in some places has the transparency of ice; in others its surface is partially covered with a thin layer of a dusky red-coloured earth, receiving its tinge from oxide of iron, with which the whole surface of the island is deeply impregnated.

As we ascended the ridge, our progress was continually impeded by deep pits, on the sides of which the saline crystalizations have assumed a stalactitic form. From the summit you obtain a noble view of the whole of the lower parts of the Gulf: the Quoins, Cape Musandam (Rás Maskat*), Lárek, and the island of Kishm, are all distinctly seen.

The Imám of Maskat has possession of Hormuz at present: he farms it from the King of Persia, and retains in the fort a garrison of 100 men, commanded by an officer, who is styled Shaikh. A small sum is collected on account of the salt, which is exported in large quantities, and conveyed to different parts in the Gulf.

* Also spelt Maskat-Jihán-numá, p. 496.

When the island was surveyed in 1827, the number of inhabitants, who had no other employment than that of collecting this salt and fishing, was estimated at 300.

A few fowls and some sheep, brought from the main, may be obtained here, but no other supplies; nor is its port at any time visited by vessels for other purposes than to obtain salt, or for shelter during the prevalence of the westerly winds.

Such are the few remains that are left to denote the former opulence of Hormuz. The wretched habitations of its present occupants, and the dreary and barren aspect of the surrounding hills destitute of vegetation, would not lead us to recognise this spot as a fitting site for a city which contained 4000 houses and 40,000 inhabitants, whither merchants from every quarter of the globe resorted, outvying each other in the display of wealth and luxury.

The kingdom of Hormuz, or Hormuzeïn,* situated on the adjacent main, gave its name to this island, which, according to some authors, was previously called Jerún.† It is impossible to ascertain at what period this island was first occupied, but there are various authorities to prove that it has often served the inhabitants from the main as a retreat, when suffering either from civil commotions or foreign invasion. The advantages of its harbour, joined to its insular position, converted it from a barren rock, to which Nature has denied even water, into the emporium of the East.

Nearly opposite Hormuz, on the Persian shore, the river of Mínaú‡ enters the sea, in lat. 27° 7' 48" N., long. 56° 49' E. Following the course of this stream, which is very tortuous, we reached the town of Sháh-Bander,§ which stands on the bank, at a distance of fourteen miles from the sea by the winding of the stream, but only eight in a direct line.

To this point, which forms the extreme limit which the tide reaches, the river is navigable at high water for vessels of twenty tons; its average width being 100 yards, and its general depth about six or seven feet. At low tide, its bed is laid almost entirely bare, and it then has the appearance of a foul, muddy creek.

There is a custom-house, besides a few other houses, at Sháh-Bander, as boats either receive or land their cargoes there, which are conveyed by land carriage to and from Mínaú. Leaving Sháh-Bander, and after proceeding for about two hours over a fertile plain, we reached a small town named Hájíábád.|| Here we put up in a small house, which had been prepared for our reception by the Shaikh; but, although situated in the most

* The two Hormuzes (Hormisdases).

† Sir W. Ouseley's Travels, i. 156.

‡ Or Mínaú.

§ King's Port.

|| Pilgrim's Abode.

respectable part of the town, it had more the appearance of a store-room for grain than a human habitation, and we found the heat very oppressive, notwithstanding it was at a cool period of the year.

From the appearance of the houses, and the state of the *bázárs*, I do not conceive that this town either possesses wealth, or is of any commercial importance. The number of its inhabitants may be estimated at 600 or 700, and they are principally engaged in agricultural pursuits. Bullocks, sheep, and goats, are very numerous; and when a dearth occurs on the island of *Kishm* a great number are sent over there.

The fort of *Mínáú*, distant about a mile from the town, is situated on elevated ground on the southern bank of the river, which winds round its base. It is of a quadrangular form, flanked by round towers at the corners, in which there are a few old guns, bearing inscriptions in Portuguese and Dutch.

A draw-bridge, thrown across a moat, leads to a gate thickly studded with iron knobs and spikes on the south-western side.

The walls are strong, and the fort is generally in good condition. The garrison consists of about 100 men, well appointed, who are obliged to be constantly on the alert, in consequence of the numerous marauding bands who rob and plunder the country. The fort, however, is commanded by a hill on the N.E. side; but, in a country where the use of artillery is nearly unknown, this is of little consequence.

The river at this point is little more than a mountain stream: its width is about 130 yards, and the water is clear and deep. It takes its rise from the mountain called *Jebal Shamál*, distant about thirty miles. Notwithstanding its present insignificance, when the snow melts on the hills, or heavy rain falls, it swells into a large and rapid stream.

In some parts, where the river is fordable, I observed its bed to be composed of coarse gravel, with small pebbles of primitive rocks, which have been brought during the floods from the surrounding mountains. The steep banks near the sea exhibit a succession of alluvial deposits. The district comprehended between the fort and the sea bears the general name of *Mínáú*; and to the river it owes a great portion of its fertility. Numerous artificial rills conduct the water over the face of the country, and afford near the banks a constant supply; but in tracts more remote the grounds are irrigated from wells. The water is drawn up by bullocks, either by the mote, as practised in India, or, when the wells are sufficiently shallow, it is raised by the lever, as on the banks of the Nile and Euphrates.

The soil is of a rich alluvial nature, and yields, with little labour to the husbandman, a plentiful crop. From its loose

nature it requires but little ploughing, and the instrument used is rude and simple. From Sháh-Bander to Hájíábád, the whole of the country is cultivated, yielding large crops of wheat, fruit, and vegetables. Melons are common, and onions are raised in large quantities; plums, cherries, frequently fine apples, and dried fruits, are brought from the interior. The Indigo plant is also cultivated here to a considerable extent.

Although the site of the town is low and badly chosen, yet it does not, excepting at the close of the date season, appear to be considered unhealthy; but near the fort the air is said to be very salubrious. During the hot months many of the better classes from Bander-'Abbás* and Kishm resort hither, when, in addition to its superior climate, they enjoy the luxury which its light and pure water affords, which can only be duly appreciated in such a country.

In the better parts of the town of Mínáú the houses are constructed of rough stone, cemented together with mud. In the windows talc is substituted for glass. A small open space, serving for their cattle and for various domestic purposes, is sometimes enclosed by a wall, but more generally a fence, constructed with branches of the date-palm. With the same material, the lower classes construct their huts, which are afterwards covered over with a layer of mud.

We found the inhabitants civil and obliging, but very anxious to cheat us on every opportunity. I believe this feeling, which is common in other places along the Gulf, arises from an idea that we are ignorant of prices, or indifferent to the value of money. Some individual usually attaches himself to a stranger, reserving to himself the exclusive right of taking advantage of him. They are shrewd and intelligent, and this compensates in some degree for their extortion, as they possess considerable information, which they are very willing to impart, and are very useful to a visitor when walking abroad, by keeping off the crowd, or as messengers.

Gamrún, or, as it is now styled, Bander-'Abbás, appears to have been a town of little importance until 1622, when Sháh 'Abbás, assisted by the English, drove the Portuguese from the island of Hormuz, and transferred its commerce to this port. Here, instead of being carried in ships to Basrah and the northern ports of the Gulf, a very considerable portion of the imports from India and Africa were landed, and transported by means of caravans to the interior parts of Persia and the adjacent countries; so that Gamrún became for a time the emporium of Persia.

The English, Dutch, and French had factories here. Merchants from all parts resorted to it, and it seemed destined to

* 'Abbás's Port—more correctly, Bander-'Abbásí.

attain the former opulence and splendour of Hormuz; but its commercial career was far more brief. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the internal commotions and distracted state of Persia frequently interrupted the route for very long periods, and the current of the trade became diverted to the northern ports. It should still, however, be remembered, that this route conducts by one of the natural passes into the heart of Persia; for when Bushire,* a few years ago, remained for some time in a disturbed state, commerce found its way again into this channel; and, if Bushire had not been speedily restored to peace, Bander-'Abbás would very soon have recovered a considerable portion of its former importance.

Even at present the trade is not inconsiderable, and it is said to be still increasing. In 1827 the Imám of Maskat, to whom the port at present belongs, collected a revenue of from eight to ten thousand dollars.

Persian carpets, tobacco, and dried fruits, form its exports; and piece goods, Indian cloths, and China-ware, constitute its principal imports. The annual importation of these articles at the same time was estimated at nearly three lakhs of rupees.

The town is situated on a slope, which approaches close to the sea; the houses are few, and wretchedly constructed, and the people are mostly lodged in huts. They are a mixed population, composed of Persians, Arabs, Kurds, a few Armenians, and Bedowins. Their number, though constantly fluctuating, may be estimated at from four to five thousand. Some portions of the English factory-house are still standing; but that erected by the Dutch is in better repair, and still serves his highness the Imám of Maskat as a residence during his visits to the port.

The tombs of the former European inhabitants are just without the town. In their vicinity there are some tanks, which were excavated with extraordinary labour by the Portuguese; the length of the most extensive cannot be less than half a mile. These are intersected at right angles towards the extremity by two others, so that they assume the shape of a cross.

Between Gamrún and Linjah† there is little on the sea-coast of Persia to attract attention. The range of mountains extending from Jebal Shamál, which is distant thirty miles from the sea, gradually approaches the shore towards the latter port, where they are not more than three miles distant. The maritime plain throughout the whole distance is low and barren, though not without occasional spots of cultivated ground. Abreast of Laft, the coast is fronted by swamps, thickly covered with mangrove thickets, and within this, close to the margin of the sea, stands the small village of Khamír. In this vicinity there are mines of sulphur, which

* Properly Abú-Shehr (Father Town).

† Or Lunjeh and Lung. Nieb. p. 333.

are extensively worked, and the produce imported in large quantities to Maskat. Between Khamír and Linjah there are two small towns, one called Bandar Hallam, containing about three hundred inhabitants, who trade in salt; the other Kung, where the Portuguese had formerly a small factory established, principally with a view to command the copper-mines in its vicinity, which were worked by them.

Abreast of Básiódóh* the height of the coast range was ascertained, by trigonometrical measurement, to be 3498 feet above the level of the sea. Although the ascent is very laborious and difficult, it has been accomplished by several of our officers. Crossing over the maritime plain, which is here not more than three miles and a half in breadth, they found at the foot of the hills a mineral spring, the waters of which are highly beneficial for cutaneous eruptions, as well as rheumatism, scurvy, &c.

Of the islands which, besides Hormuz, form the group situated in this part of the Gulf of Persia, that of Kishm is the largest, and indeed surpasses in size all the islands of this inland sea. Kishm stretches along the Persian shore, from which it is separated by a channel thirteen miles in (maximum) width, but contracting in the middle of its length to three. The channel is studded with islets, and bears in the new charts the designation of Clarence's Straits.

In its form, Kishm bears a striking resemblance to a fish, the town of the same name being situated at its head, which faces the eastward; Laft and the island of Anjár† to the northward and southward of either fin; and Básiódóh to the westward, at the extremity of its tail. Its length is fifty-four miles, and its width, at the broadest part, twenty miles. On the southern side, a ridge of hills extends from one extremity to the other, while the remaining space to the northward is occupied by arid plains and deep ravines. The greater part of the surface of the island is sterile, and in some places incrustated with a saline efflorescence; but the most striking features in its structure are some singular-shaped table-hills, which occupy insulated positions in the plains. These are of a circular form, principally composed of sandstone, and are broader at the upper part than at the base. Their average height is from two hundred to four hundred feet: their surface and sides, worn into hollows by the weather, give them the appearance of having been subjected to the action of a powerful stream, an illusion still further increased by observing the plains and the sides of the hills, which, in the form of banks, bound what seem to be the beds of deserted water-courses. In a coun-

* Or Básiódó, as Niebuhr spells it (p. 329), is probably a corruption of the Portuguese Baxador for Embaxador.

† Hínjám. Niebuhr, p. 328. "The English," he says, "call it Angar." No doubt the Persians say Angár, and the Arabs Anjár.

try where earthquakes are frequent, we might infer, from the general appearance of the whole, that these isolated masses denote the original level of the island, and that the plains have sunk in every direction around them.

At Básiódh, in March, 1829, for six hours during the night, successive shocks were felt. The inhabitants were in great alarm, and even the cattle evinced symptoms of fear; nothing serious, however, occurred.

The northern part of the island is the most fertile, and on this account the most populous. The soil consists of a black loam, and on it is reared wheat, barley, vegetables, melons, grapes, &c. : dates are produced in large quantities : cattle and poultry are also reared; but, unless their crops fail them, the inhabitants are indifferent about disposing of the former. The whole number of inhabitants on the island may amount to about five thousand. They employ themselves in fishing, in cultivating the soil, and in making cloth. They reside in villages and hamlets scattered along the sea-coast.

The only towns on the island are Kishm (the largest), Laft (next in importance), and Básiódh.

Kishm. The town of this name is situated near the sea at the eastern point of the island, its site being remarkably well chosen. A wall flanked by turrets surrounds it, and affords the inhabitants security from robbers or pirates. Some of the houses are large, and, for this country, neatly fitted up; the roofs are flat, and the apertures for light are partially filled with curious devices formed of a fine cement.

Kishm has the appearance of having been formerly of greater commercial importance than it is at present. Even when I first visited it, in 1821, the bázár was abundantly supplied with vegetables of various kinds, fruits, apples, and pomegranates from the interior of Persia. Very good wine and every description of dried fruit could be then obtained, as well as silk and cotton cloths; together with very fine carpets soft as silk, and of the richest pattern and dye. These latter we purchased at the rate of twenty dollars each; they were six or seven feet long, by three feet broad. At this time, the British force was encamped near the town, and the demand was in consequence considerably increased; yet the supply was in general fully equal to it.

Kishm is frequently visited by native vessels, which touch here for wood and water, or to engage pilots for the Kishm channel, and the town has, in consequence, a bustling appearance. A few bagalahs* are constructed here with timber brought from the Malabar coast.

* Coasting-vessels.

Captain Brucks computes the number of inhabitants at two thousand. In the plains to the westward of the town there are several patches of cultivated ground, interspersed with clumps of date-trees. Our force encamped about one mile from the town, in a strong position, on an elevated tabular ridge, which presents a steep face on either side. The situation was found to be so hot and unhealthy, that, after losing several men from fevers, they were obliged to quit it.

Laft, when in the possession of the Juwásimí* pirates, was a place of considerable strength, to which they resorted, and the tortuous nature of the channel and numerous shoals (then unknown) in Clarence's Straits rendered it very difficult to follow them. During the expedition under Colonel Smith and Captain Wainwright in 1809, these Arabs beat back, with considerable loss, a storming party, but surrendered when the vessels came close in, and had battered their walls. The town is at present in a miserable state, built on the slope of a hill on the northern side of the island and surrounded by a wall.

Básidóh, in latitude $26^{\circ} 39'$ N. and longitude $55^{\circ} 22'$ E., at the western extremity of the island, was formerly in the possession of the Portuguese, and the ruins of the town and fort which they erected may be still traced. This station has been happily selected; for the British, after various attempts to fix on other spots, were compelled to abandon all, and finally to settle here; and, after similar attempts to establish a rendezvous at other ports, the naval squadron became also finally stationed here.

On account of its salubrity, and the local advantages it enjoys, this is the most eligible spot which could have been chosen in the lower part of the Gulf. An hospital and storehouse, a guard-room, cooperage, &c., have been erected at the public expense. Five or six private houses, a billiard-room and fives-court, erected by subscription by officers of the Indian navy, were soon afterwards raised, and a very respectable bázár was subsequently established.

The few vessels now stationed in the Gulf, from being constantly employed in various parts of it, visit Básidóh less frequently than formerly, and the place is in consequence going to decay.

The bázár affords some scanty supplies from Mínáú and Linjah; a few merchants, who emigrated hither from Bushire when the place was more flourishing, still remain. They contrive to increase their income by hiring out jaded horses and asses to our seamen. Some Indian washermen derive a more

* Jawáthimí, or Jawásimí, i. e., belonging to the Jawásim or Jasúms, the aboriginal natives of the country.

certain profit; for within the Gulf, with the exception of Bushire, this is the only place where clothes can be washed well. Some Jews also reside here; they are principally goldsmiths, and occupy themselves in making rings and bangles for the females.

Básidóh is scantily supplied with water. The wells dry up in April or May; and the few tanks, which are similar in construction to those of Hormuz, and have, it is supposed, the same origin, although kept in repair by the English, do not afford more than is sufficient for the station, and the ships fill up either on the opposite coast, or further up the channel.

Although nothing can exceed in barrenness the appearance of the country in the vicinity of Básidóh, yet there are several places, only a few miles distant from it, which often exhibit all the verdure of more fertile regions; such are the plains contiguous to Góri and those near Dastagán. The former cover a space of eight miles in length, and three in width, and contain groves of the date-palm, verdant plots of cultivated ground, and, after the rains, a luxuriant crop of high grass.

The few productions of this island do not differ from those to be found on the main: a few grapes are grown in wells, or the vines are permitted to climb around the branches of the banian (*ficus indica*); a few mangoe-trees are also found at Dastagán, but in no other part of the island. Salt is found on the southern side, rising up into hills, or formed into caves. In the centre of one of these caverns, about fifty yards in length, and twelve in height, flows a stream of water; and from the roof and sides hang stalactites of salt, which are sometimes eighteen or twenty inches in length. The surrounding plains are covered with a saline crust, which the natives collect and convey to Dastagán. Towards the centre of the island there is an insulated rock about three hundred feet in height, which is steep on every side, and seems to have formerly served the purpose of a retreat to some bands of pirates or robbers. The summit can only be gained by climbing up through a narrow aperture resembling a chimney. Some of our officers, who ascended by this way, found at the top the ruins of several houses and two tanks.

The natives have a tradition, that this singular spot was formerly taken possession of by the crew of a Portuguese ship wrecked on the island, who for a long time resisted the attempts of the inhabitants to destroy them.

Sandstone appears the predominant rock on the island. On many of the arid plains in the centre of Kishm are found fragments of mica, varying in size from three or four inches to even a foot square.

Good hunting is obtained in several parts, and a small and very beautiful description of antelope is found during the day on

the plains. At night they retreat to the hills. They are very shy, and, in order to give the greyhounds any chance of success, a party must be stationed to turn them from the hills, for which they invariably make upon the slightest alarm. They are sometimes taken after a run of two or three miles, completely tired, and unable to proceed further; but they more generally escape. I have known them in the former case to be taken alive and unhurt, the dog standing over the poor animal, but unable from fatigue to harm it. Their flesh in the cold weather is much esteemed, but in the hot season it is lean and tasteless. Hares and small rabbits are also found on this island. Jackalls and foxes afford occasionally a good chase, but, as they are favoured by the country, they more frequently take to earth. Camels and asses are employed as beasts of burthen: in the rutting season the former are very savage.

The principal birds are vultures, cranes, grey partridges, hawks, pigeons, the kingfisher, houppoe,* and jay. There are several others remarkable for the beauty of their plumage. Several varieties of fish are caught on Básiðóh bank: prawns, lobsters, and large crabs are also abundant. There are several varieties of snakes; some of the most venomous kind. I have seen death follow in two hours after the person had been bitten.

From the irregular outline of the island, and the existence of numerous banks and islets, the direction of the channel which separates Kishm from the main is varied and tortuous.

Commencing from the westward, about midchannel between Básiðóh and the main, there is a sandbank with about ten feet water on it. Across this, towards the Persian coast, you carry a depth of two or three fathoms; but towards the Kishm side the channel varies both in its nature and depth. In some places you have soft mud over hard rocks, in others a mixture of clay and mud very tenacious, and in other parts a clear bottom of sand. Proceeding up the channel towards Gorún† the deepest water is near the island, and its depth is indicated by the appearance of the shore; if the cliffs rise up boldly from the beach, the water is deep close to the shore: on the other hand, where the plain slopes down to the sea, extensive mud flats run off it to a considerable distance. Beyond Gorún, approaching towards Laft, two channels branch forth; one near the Persian shore used by ships, and another, although more narrow and winding, preferred by boats, on account of its being free from rocks or banks: the space included between these two channels is nearly blocked up with mud flats dry at low, and but partially covered at high water. Narrow streams intersect these flats, and form them into groups

* Upupa.

† Garún for Jarún(?).

of islets. These islets are covered with a dense thicket of mangrove-trees; and the lively green of their foliage, in a country so destitute of vegetation, presents a refreshing and pleasing effect.

During our stay amidst these islets we were apprehensive, from the close nature of the woods, and the thick fogs which we observed hovering over them, particularly after sunset, that severe sickness would have prevailed amongst us; but, notwithstanding that we were three weeks engaged in surveying this part of the channel, suffering much, though in the winter season, from exposure and fatigue, we had not a single case of fever.

Beyond Laft the forest disappears, but for about sixteen miles the channel continues equally intricate: from this point it runs along the Kishm shore, and eventually opens out into the Gulf of Hormuz, where all is clear.

There is a point of some interest connected with the set and direction of the tide in this channel; the flood enters at both extremities of the channel, and meets at Laft, where the rise and fall is about fourteen feet. This affords great facility in navigating the straits; for a vessel quitting the town of Kishm with the first of the flood may reach, and start from Laft at high water, and have the whole of the ebb tide to carry her to Bâsidôh.

The Island of Anjár is situated on the south side of Kishm, opposite to the town of Laft, which stands on the northern shore. This island was formerly inhabited, but since the destruction of the town by the pirates, it has been deserted. Vessels occasionally seek shelter here from north-westers. Water also can be procured from wells and reservoirs situated near the anchorage.

A ruined mosque, which stands near the site of the former town, is still conspicuous. We found its geographical position to be, latitude $26^{\circ} 41' N.$, longitude $55^{\circ} 56' E.$

This island is formed of bare rocks, and has the volcanic appearance which is commonly observed in the other islands of this Gulf.

About twenty-four miles to the south of Bâsidôh there are two uninhabited islands, called the Great and Little Tomb.* The former is well stocked with antelopes, and much resorted to by the officers stationed at Bâsidôh, for the purpose of hunting. In the winter months the island is well covered with grass, and the water is very good.

Lárek is the last island to be mentioned. It lies in latitude $26^{\circ} 53' N.$, longitude $56^{\circ} 23' E.$ It is of a volcanic character, and in size, as well as in the colouring of its strata, is very similar to Dálmah,† one of the islands near the Arabian coast, called by us Maud's Group.

* Tunb and Tūnb Námíyúh. Niebuhr, p. 328. Námíyúh or Námíyóh is a corruption of some European or Hindí word.

† Dálimah or Zálimah, 'dark.'

A rocky ledge, extending to the average width of half a mile, surrounds Lárek; beyond that the water suddenly deepens over a bottom of rocks and sand to eighteen or twenty fathoms. The island has neither harbour nor any secure anchorage near it, so that, from whatever quarter the wind may blow, the sea rises and breaks with much fury over the rocks which gird its shore. It is therefore highly dangerous to land in unsettled weather, and for these reasons Lárek is rarely visited.

We found it inhabited by a few fishermen, who, to the number of about 100, reside in wretched huts, within the walls of an extensive fort. They live together as one family, and are a poor and insulated race, bearing some resemblance to the tribe (to be described hereafter) who reside in the vicinity of Rás Musandam, with whom, and in this they are singular, they maintain a friendly intercourse. They have a great aversion to mixing with their neighbours, and rarely ever visit the town of Kishm, though only six miles distant.

They subsist on fish and dates. No part of the island is cultivated, and the few cattle they rear, for the sake of their milk, partake in general of the same food as their masters.

I shall now conclude this sketch with a brief description of the land about Rás Musandam, and of the inhabitants who are found residing on the shores of the deep inlets and coves in its vicinity.

Rás Musandam lies in latitude $26^{\circ} 23' N.$, and longitude $56^{\circ} 35' E.$ It forms the outer point of an island bearing the same appellation, but the true promontory of the coast is called Rás Gabr Hindí,* or Rás el Jebal.† From this the island is separated by a deep and narrow channel.

The Cape is about 200 feet in height, and rises abruptly from the sea. It is composed principally of basalt, which gives it a black and gloomy aspect.

On both sides of this promontory the coast line is indented in a most singular manner into deep coves and inlets, extending as far as Rás Sheikh Mas'úd on the western side, and to Rás Haffár to the southward. The two most remarkable of these inlets are named in the new charts after Mr. Elphinstone and Sir J. Malcolm: the former inlet lies on the western side, and runs in a most tortuous course for nearly eight miles. At the bottom it is separated from Malcolm's inlet, which lies on the opposite side of the promontory, by a mountain ridge which is 500 feet high, and difficult to ascend, but only 100 yards broad at the summit.

The depth of water in the coves varies from thirty to forty

* If rightly spelt, this name signifies Cape Hindú Pársí or Gabr.

† Cape Mount.

fathoms in the centre, shelving towards the rocks on either side over a bed of branching coral and fine sand. The water is exceedingly clear, and the various kinds of rock-fish may be seen sporting amongst the coral in eight and ten fathoms' depth close to the shore.

At the entrance, and inside the coves, there are several curious rocky islets; some of them with deep water close to their base.

The hills, in general, rise perpendicularly from the sea, and average in height from 200 to 800 feet; they are extremely rugged and barren, and in some places deep caverns have been formed at their base by the action of the waves. They are principally composed of basalt and granite, in a state of decomposition, which renders it dangerous to ascend in many places, as, by the slightest pressure, large masses of rock are detached. Quartz is met with very commonly, and likewise slate-stone. Some stunted shrubs and grass grow on the side of the hills, and likewise the senna plant.

Khasáb* bay (the fort in latitude $26^{\circ} 13' N.$, longitude $56^{\circ} 20' E.$) is the only one of these inlets in the vicinity which differs sufficiently from the others to merit a separate notice. Nature appears less forbidding in this spot, for at the bottom of the bay there is a plain of considerable extent, which is covered with a rich soil, and yields a tolerable crop of wheat, barley, and onions, besides dates; and the verdure, which is everywhere surrounded by naked rocks, produces a pleasing effect.

The fort is large, and strongly built of the usual form, with turrets at the corner; but it is considerably out of repair, and will soon fall into ruin. Good water is plentiful, and easily procured; and we obtained some cattle and other supplies from the natives.

Fish is procured in great abundance in all the coves: mullet, sár-fish, and the different kinds of rock-fish, are the most common; oysters are found attached to the cliffs, and are very good. The natives procure a beautiful large conch-shell from a great depth, and eat its fish when cooked.

The isolated condition of the inhabitants of these hills and coves has rendered them remarkable for their primitive state of ignorance and poverty, which is, however, compensated in a great measure by their love of home, and general contentment. They are principally found residing in the little sandy bays situated at the extreme end of the inlets, living in small stone huts, and surrounded by a few palm-trees: they subsist on fish, barley, cakes, goat's milk, and dates. They are badly clothed, but their dress is not otherwise remarkable.

They profess the Mohammedan religion, and practise its laws

* Khasáb, *i. e.* Butcher (?). Casaab in the charts of the Persian Gulf.

as far as they understand them. They speak Arabic, a corrupt jargon certainly, and difficult to be understood even by Arabs; but I do not believe that they have a distinct language, for, when Mr. Wellsted put the question to the Imám of Maskat, he decidedly said they had not; that he had seen a few of them at Maskat, but he believed it was very seldom that they ever left their native hills, and they were a singular, but a poor and inoffensive race.

It is impossible to say what their number may be, as they shift about at different seasons, and sometimes quit their valleys and live on the summit of the hills. At a place called Limah we found them residing in natural excavations on the side of a steep hill, the front part only being partially built up with loose stones. It had a most singular appearance. The caverns were in ranges one above the other; the children were usually seen tied with cords, to prevent them tumbling down the precipice.

They are too ignorant to be even inquisitive; and when some of them were induced to come on board, idiotic surprise for a moment, and indifference immediately afterwards, formed the principal characteristic of these poor people. Watches, pictures, and looking-glasses were shown to them, which they had evidently never seen before; but the chain-cable and the pigs were the only objects that fixed their attention. Their interest in the cable arose from the following circumstance. We anchored in the first deep cove, about ten o'clock at night, in forty fathoms, and the chain in running out of the hawse certainly made a noise, which reverberated amongst the hills to such a degree that the inhabitants fled in terror with their wives and families, and could not be induced to return again, until the cause of their alarm was explained to them.

The natives are very indolent and slovenly, and never work more than is necessary for their maintenance; fishing and making nets are their only occupations. The women do the house work, and milk the goats, which ramble about the hills. We conceived at first that their goats were wild, indeed they were so to us, and afforded some good sport; however, it was explained by the natives that they were individual property, and we paid liberally for our mistake. We found the people exceedingly civil and good-natured, and they seldom allowed us to leave a village without inviting us to feed on dates and milk.

The men possess the faculty of pitching the voice to a remarkable, shrill note, which can be heard over the hills and valleys to a distance which would be considered incredible.
