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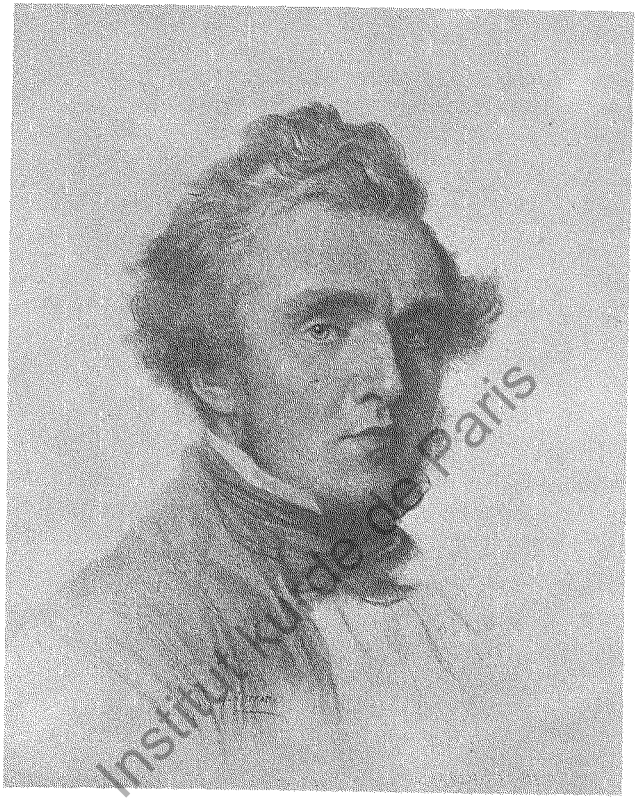
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# PERSIA SUSIANA AND BABYLONIA

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from a drawing in Chalk by G.F. Watts, R.A.

Walker & Boutall, Ph.Sc.

# EARLY ADVENTURES IN

# PERSIA, SUSIANA, AND BABYLONIA

## INCLUDING A RESIDENCE AMONG THE BAKHTIYARI AND OTHER WILD TRIBES BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF NINEVEH

By SIR A. HENRY LAYARD G.C.B. D.C.L.

AUTHOR OF 'NINEVEH AND ITS REMAINS' ETC.
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE INSTITUT DE FRANCE, ACADÉMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS ET BELLES LETTRES; MEMBER OF THE PRUSSIAN ORDER OF MERIT
TRUSTEE OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY; ETC.

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*NEW EDITION*

*WITH PORTRAIT AND MAP, AND AN INTRODUCTORY NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR BY LORD ABERDARE*

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JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
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# INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

I HAVE been asked, as one of the few surviving friends of Sir Henry Layard, to write something by way of preface to this work, which, recording his earliest travels, received his revision and last touches almost on his death-bed.

I first knew him in 1848, when he had become suddenly and widely famous by the publication of his work on 'Nineveh and its Remains.' We speedily became friends, and I can truly say that our attachment strengthened with advancing years. He was then thirty-one years of age—therefore nine years older than when he set out on the travels which form the subject of this volume. His outward appearance at that time is perfectly rendered by the portrait in crayon made, I believe in 1848, for the late Mr. John Murray by Mr. G. F. Watts, R.A.,[1] of which the frontispiece is a reproduction. His face was singularly attractive and impressive; his figure suggested strength and power of endurance, rather than exceptional activity. I have

[1] Another portrait in crayon was made by Mr. Watts, apparently a few years later, and is to be seen among the collection of his pictures at Little Holland House, to which the public is so liberally admitted. Both these portraits were made some years before the growth of that beard which, in its massive white flow, formed so striking a characteristic of his face in later life.

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vividly before me the scene of our first acquaintance, when, being on a visit to his relations Sir John and Lady Charlotte Guest, he described to the Dowlais workmen in vigorous and graphic language his wonderful discoveries of buried monuments, with—what specially interested them—their close bearing on Biblical history, and their illustrations of Bible language and imagery.

Although I do not doubt the sound judgment of the Publishers—his old and attached friends—in giving to the world an edition of the 'Early Adventures' reduced in size and cost so as to secure a still wider circulation than that obtained for the first publication in 1887, I cannot but record my regret that it was not deemed practicable to produce an enlarged, instead of an abridged, edition of those fascinating volumes. I have the assurance of a friend, who had seen the original journals from which the work was composed, that for such enlargement there exist ample materials, which in value and interest are not inferior to those portions of them which were selected by him for publication. In some respects, especially in the qualities of personal charm and interest, I do not hesitate to give the preference to these 'Early Adventures,' compiled as they were from the original rough notes taken at the time, over the more elaborate works 'Nineveh and its Remains' (1848) and 'Nineveh and Babylon' (1853). Undoubtedly the two earlier publications are far richer in historical and archæological discoveries and disquisitions, and have therefore an importance which cannot be claimed for this record of his earliest Eastern travels. Nor are they wanting in picturesque

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descriptions of ancient and remote people, almost forgotten or unknown, in adventures of breathless interest bringing into strong relief his fearlessness, often amounting to extreme rashness, his presence of mind, his resources in danger and difficulty, and his extraordinary influence over wild and semi-savage races. In the previous works as well as this last we are attracted by the same indignation at acts of cruelty and oppression, the same intense sympathy with suffering; a sympathy not satisfied with mere pity, but inciting to earnest effort for redress, often successful and of more than passing efficacy. In all alike we find the same sense of humour, which was doubtless the secret of much of his popularity and influence among those wild children of nature, whether Arabs or Kurds, and was not without its effect even upon the stately and reserved Turks; a natural gift, let me be permitted to add, which gave a peculiar charm and zest to his daily intercourse, not failing him even on his deathbed. Add to these a style manly, clear, and simple, yet lending itself to descriptions as vivid and picturesque as ever gave life to the pages of the most gifted among the glorious roll of British travellers.

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These merits are common alike to all his books of travel. But I do not think that I err in attributing much of the extraordinary attraction of the present work to the youth of the traveller, and to the vividness of the impressions made upon an eager and inquiring mind in its first associations with the East.

Born March 5, 1817, Layard[2] commenced an

[2] The family of Layard, which has produced several men of distinction in the Church, in Medicine, in the Army and Civil Service, is

expedition which lasted for nearly four years (1839–1842) at an age when most young men of his condition have hardly left the University. His education, although scarcely one which could be recommended for general adoption, was in many respects well fitted to prepare him for his future career, not only as a traveller and archæologist, but even as a statesman and diplomatist. It was highly cosmopolitan. He was born in Paris. His father, suffering from asthma, left England for Pisa in 1821, but finally removed to Florence, where he and his family remained for some years, during which his son went to a school kept by an English lady. But even in those early days the father cultivated his son's taste in literature and art. To borrow Layard's words: 'Much of my boyhood was passed in Italy,

of French origin. The first member who settled in England, Pierre Raymond de Layard (the name is found variously spelt in ancient documents—Layars, Layarde, Layardde, and Lajard), was a Huguenot refugee, one of the many victims of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. He was born at Montflanquin, in Guienne, in what is now the department of Lot and Garonne, of a noble family, connected by marriage with several distinguished families of that part of France, his mother being Françoise Savary de Mauléon et Castillan. His son, Pierre Raymond, escaped with him to Holland, entered into the service of the Prince of Orange, and crossed with him to England in 1688, fought at the battle of the Boyne, became a major in the British army, and died in 1747. His eldest son, Daniel, was an eminent physician, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and physician to the Princess of Wales, mother of George III. He married Suzanne Henriette Boisragon, from whom sprang all of the name in England. Layard's grandfather was Dean of Bristol, and his father, Henry P. J. Layard, was in the Ceylon Civil Service, and married Marianne, daughter of Nathaniel Austen, banker, of Ramsgate. It may be as well to state that, although signing himself Austen Henry in deference to the wishes of his uncle Benjamin, his right name was Henry Austen. Sir Henry married, in 1869, Enid, daughter of Sir John Guest, Bart., and of Lady Charlotte Guest.

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where I acquired a taste for the Fine Arts, and as much knowledge of them as a child could obtain who was constantly in the society of artists and connoisseurs. I also imbibed that love of travel which has remained to me through life.'[3]

Returning to England, his family settled for a while at Ramsgate, Henry, still a child, being placed at a school at Putney kept by two old ladies. In 1825 his father removed to Moulins, and his son, then eight years old, was sent to a French school, where he was much bullied by his companions, whose enmity he attributed to the hatred of the English still prevailing after the great war, as well as to his being a Protestant. From Moulins his family removed to Geneva, where he entered a boarding school. Thence his father's health caused their return to Florence, where Henry attended an Italian school, at which he commenced a lifelong friendship with Ubaldino Peruzzi and William Spence. He probably owed more to the hours spent in botanising and collecting butterflies on the hills of Fiesole than to those passed on the school-bench; and it was when so engaged that the eager and intelligent boy attracted the notice of Walter Savage Landor. Much of his time was passed in the picture galleries and among the rich collections of art in the beautiful city. About 1830 he returned to England, and went to a school at Richmond, which he left in 1833. To quote again his own words: 'When about sixteen years of age I was sent to London to study the law, for which I was destined. But, after spending nearly six years in the office of a solicitor, and in the

[3] Page 6 of first edition of *Early Adventures*.

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chambers of an eminent conveyancer, I determined for various reasons to leave England and to seek a career elsewhere.'

During this time he was articled to his uncle, Benjamin Austen, an eminent solicitor, married to a highly cultivated wife. In their house he made the acquaintance of the D'Israelis, Samuel Warren, Plumer Ward, Theodore Hook, as well as of many of the best artists of the day. Mr. D'Israeli's brother Ralph was also articled to Mr. Austen. In an article in the *Quarterly Review*, January 1889, on the Early Life of Lord Beaconsfield, Layard states:

'The earliest recollection of the writer of this article is connected with a visit to which he was taken, when quite a child, to Mrs. D'Israeli—his mother. "Ben" was sent for, and appeared in his shirt sleeves, with boxing-gloves, having been interrupted in the middle of a lesson from a professor of the noble art. In his youth he was a constant rider. He used to say, that some of his best thoughts and ideas came to him when scouring the country mounted on a good horse.'

In the same article Layard dwells upon the influence exercised by his aunt, Mrs. Austen, on the development of young D'Israeli's character and genius. 'She was highly accomplished and a proficient in music, an amateur artist of no common skill, possessed great conversational powers, and had a rare command of her own pen. D'Israeli wrote of it "the comprehensive circuit of your lively pen;" and in one of his many letters to her he says: "You appear to be the only person in the world except myself who have any energy; what would I give to

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have you always at my right hand!" She had gathered round her a circle of men of letters and artists, including some of the foremost authors and painters of the day, with many of whom she maintained a correspondence.' To her 'D'Israeli confided the secret that he was writing a novel; consulted her during its progress; received from her much valuable advice; and ultimately placed the MS. of "Vivian Grey" in her hands to arrange for its publication.' At her death in 1888, at the age of 92, the MSS. of 'Vivian Grey' and 'Captain Popanilla,' D'Israeli's second work, were found among her papers.

I have heard from Layard many interesting anecdotes of his early acquaintance with D'Israeli. I hope that I may be acquitted of indiscretion in recording one of them equally creditable to both. Soon after Layard's entrance into Parliament, he met D'Israeli, who, after a few words of friendly congratulation, invited him into the Carlton Club for a quiet talk. They entered a private room, when D'Israeli, after dwelling in flattering terms upon Layard's foreign experience and general talents, urged him to join the Conservative party, assuring him that he would be cordially welcomed, and might safely look to an official appointment. Layard, who had been returned as a rather advanced Liberal, pledged to several measures to which the Conservatives were opposed, of course declined the offer, of the sincerity and kindness of which he had however no doubt. Some years later, when acting as Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1861–6), he was often brought into sharp collision with the Conservative party, and was sometimes assailed with much personal bitterness.

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During all this time D'Israeli, leading the Conservatives, and necessarily taking an active part in debate, never allowed his political differences to pass into personal attacks, but treated his early friend with uniform consideration and respect.

With Mrs. Austen Layard kept up a close and affectionate intercourse to the very end. Is it too much to assume that the bright influence exercised by her on D'Israeli was largely shared by him ; and that the six years of distasteful study passed in her husband's office (1833-9) were, under her stimulating guidance, mainly employed in repairing the deficiencies of his desultory education ? His father, who had removed to Aylesbury—afterwards represented in Parliament by Layard—died in 1834. The Austens' house became a second home to him, and it was impossible that he should not have gained much from the cultivated society which frequented it. But, young as he was, the spirit of travel had possessed him. In 1835 he accompanied Brockedon in a tour in the Alps—which that artist recorded in prose and picture in a once popular work —in the course of which Layard made the acquaintance of Cavour and his family. In 1837 he travelled in North Italy, and met Silvio Pellico, and other distinguished Italians. In 1838 he started alone on a tour through Sweden and Russia.

It was in 1839 that he set out upon the Travels recorded in this volume. For these he prepared himself with his usual vigour and thoroughness. He had already acquired several European languages ; he had seen much of men and manners in various lands ; he was familiar with the best productions of European

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art. But he was not satisfied with this equipment. He has described in the Introduction to the first edition of this work what further steps he took to fit himself for travel in the vast, varied, and little-known regions of the East in which he was about to adventure himself.

When as a boy he pored over the 'Arabian Nights,' he had, he tells us, been inflamed with the desire of visiting Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Isfahan. As he grew older he greedily read every volume of Eastern travel that fell in his way. He made the acquaintance of Baillie Fraser, whose novels descriptive of Persian life he 'devoured with the greatest eagerness.' He had listened with the liveliest interest to the accounts by Sir Charles Fellowes of his discoveries among the ruined cities of Asia Minor, and had been inspired with an ardent desire to follow in his footsteps. The works of Morier, Malcolm, Rich, and others had given him a longing to visit Persia, Babylonia, and the wild tribes of Kurdistan. 'Having a vague notion that I might some day be able to see those countries, I had even attempted to master the Arabic characters and to learn a little of the Persian language.' From a retired captain of the merchant service he received lessons in the use of the sextant, and learned how to take observations of the sun for the latitude, and to fix the positions of mountain peaks, of towns and ruins not marked, or inaccurately laid down, in the best maps. He provided himself with a pocket sextant, an artificial horizon, a prismatic compass, a telescope, some thermometers for determining the temperature and ascertaining heights, an aneroid

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barometer, and a *silver* watch. Some idea of the dangers he was doomed to encounter must have been suggested to him by the advice of Sir C. Fellowes that this watch should be painted black, lest the sight of the bright metal should excite the cupidity of the wild people amongst whom he was about to travel, who would not hesitate to rob or even murder him in order to obtain possession of an object of seeming value. In the course of these Travels the reader will have many opportunities of observing what repeated and desperate efforts Layard made to preserve these instruments, and how, long before his journeys were completed, all, or nearly all, of these precious articles were violently taken from him, broken, or lost.

By a medical friend he was instructed in the symptoms of the diseases which he was most likely to meet with, the use of the lancet, the treatment of wounds, &c. Imperfect and superficial as was the knowledge thus hastily acquired, its value to him was inestimable, although an exaggerated conviction of his skill among his wild and credulous hosts, who firmly believed that he could cure every imaginable disease, exposed him to no little inconvenience, and sometimes even personal risk.

Thus accoutred, and in company with Mr. Mitford, an accomplished traveller, he started on his journey in the summer of 1839. His scheme of travel at that time included an overland journey across Asia to Ceylon, where a relation, holding a high official position, led him to hope that he would find employment either at the Bar or in the Civil Service. He proposed to reach India through Persia and

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Afghanistan, after visiting Asia Minor and Palestine and the Mesopotamian Desert as far as Baghdad; but, on the suggestion of the Royal Geographical Society, the travellers agreed to vary this plan by pursuing a less-known route to India, and endeavouring to reach Kandahar from Isfahan through Jezd and Seistan, exploring on their way the Lake or vast marsh of Furrah, in and around which ruins of ancient cities and of remarkable monuments were said to exist. But events greatly modified their intentions. They reached Jerusalem in January 1840. There they parted for a while, Mr. Mitford declining—very prudently, as the reader will find—to join in the perilous excursion to the ruins of Petra, Ammon, and Gerash, during which the younger traveller, not only suffered terrible hardships, but repeatedly incurred the greatest risk of losing his life at the hands of ferocious Bedouin robbers. They met again at Aleppo, whence they travelled together until they reached Hamadan in Persia, where, on August 8, 1840, they finally separated, Mr. Mitford to pursue his long and perilous journey to Kandahar, Layard to engage in those not less perilous wanderings in Persia which form the most interesting portion of this volume; encountering adventures which I venture to think make these Travels among the most interesting ever published. It was well for us that this separation occurred, for to it we undoubtedly owe that long residence and close intimacy with the Bakhtiyari chief and his family, so graphically described, which had so pathetic a history and ending. Throughout these Travels the reader cannot but be struck by the passionate eagerness with which, ex-

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posed to hardships of every description, weakened by fever, threatened and chased by murderous robbers, he followed up the slightest trace of any ancient ruins or monuments throwing light on the past history of what was once the mighty empire of Persia. In his indomitable courage and firmness, in his power of winning the confidence and attachment of the wild tribesmen, among whom he remained long enough to be known and appreciated, we discover the secret of that singular influence of which so many striking proofs reveal themselves in his later travels, and without which it may be safely affirmed his great work of discovery in the regions of Nineveh and Babylon could not have been accomplished. In following him throughout his career of sufferings and dangers, we are often tempted to ask ourselves whether the pain did not so far exceed the pleasure as to discourage and disenchant the youthful traveller. How little this was the case—how different the impression left on his mind—may be gathered from the following extract from his 'Nineveh and its Remains,' written five years later, in 1848:—

'During the autumn of 1839 and the winter of 1840, I had been wandering through Asia Minor and Syria, scarcely leaving untrod one spot hallowed by tradition, or unvisited one ruin consecrated by history. I was accompanied by one no less curious and enthusiastic than myself. We were both equally careless of comfort and unmindful of danger. We rode alone; our arms were our only protection; a valise behind our saddles was our wardrobe, and we tended our own horses, except when relieved from the duty by the hospitable inhabitants of a Turcoman village

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or an Arab tent. Thus unembarrassed by needless luxuries, and uninfluenced by the opinions and prejudices of others, we mixed amongst the people, acquired without effort their manners, and enjoyed without alloy those emotions which scenes so novel, and spots so rich in varied association, cannot fail to produce.

'I look back with feelings of grateful delight to those happy days when, free and unheeded, we left at dawn the humble cottage or cheerful tent, and, lingering as we listed, unconscious of distance and of the hour, found ourselves, as the sun went down, under some hoary ruin tenanted by the wandering Arab, or in some crumbling village still bearing a well-known name. No experienced dragoman measured our distance and appointed our stations. We were honoured with no conversations by pashas, nor did we seek any civilities from governors. We neither drew tears nor curses from villagers by seizing their horses or searching their houses for provisions; their welcome was sincere; their scanty fare was placed before us; we ate, and came and went in peace.' [1]

All dangers, hardships, annoyances, disappointments are forgotten after the lapse of a few short years. Nothing but the free life of adventure, novelty, and discovery is remembered.

Excellently as Layard was gifted as a traveller in his power of observation and description, I venture to think that, from the earliest to the latest of these recorded journeys, it is the *man* who constitutes the chief and central interest. On reading once

[1] *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i. p. 2.

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again these three remarkable works, what strikes me even more than his eagerness in discovery and his indomitable spirit is the fiery indignation at human suffering, which impelled him at all risks and hazards to make himself everywhere the champion of the weak and oppressed. A large part of the two memorable books on Nineveh and Babylon is devoted to the sufferings of the Nestorian Christians, to those of the Yezidi, or so-called Devil Worshippers, to the cruelties perpetrated now on whole tribes, now on individuals, and to his efforts, ardent and continuous, to have their wrongs redressed. But while, during his *first* operations at Mosul and Nimroud, he could, when expostulation with the local governors and pashas failed, appeal with the certainty of vigorous support to his friend and patron, Sir Stratford Canning, then exercising at Constantinople an influence probably never equalled by the ambassador of any country; while on his *second* expedition he was acting as the emissary of the British Museum, with the countenance of the British Government, exerting the moral weight and authority with which his previous successful vindications of the rights of these poor people against wrong and outrage had invested him—in these earlier travels such advantages were entirely wanting. He, a young and unknown man, had only himself to depend upon, in a country the rulers of which were hostile to the English almost to the very verge of war. Generally suspected of being a spy, his real objects were entirely misunderstood, every attempt at prosecuting them exposing him to dangers from which he often barely escaped with life, maltreated and stripped even of the clothes he wore.

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See his account of his final disasters on his approach to Baghdad[5]:—'We were left alone, almost stripped to the skin. I however considered myself fortunate in having escaped with my life. . . . Never having been accustomed to walk with bare feet, I suffered the greatest pain and inconvenience from the want of shoes and stockings. The ground was so heated by the sun that it almost burnt the soles of my feet, which soon began to swell, blister and bleed. . . . But the night was not to pass without a further adventure. We were suddenly stopped by two Arabs on foot armed with short heavy clubs. They demanded our clothes, and as we had no means of resistance, I was compelled to surrender my "tarbush," and my "abba," for which one of the thieves generously gave me his own ragged clothing in exchange. . . . I sank down on the ground, overcome with fatigue and pain.'

No wonder that a party of mounted European ladies and gentlemen, his own familiar friends, although they passed close to him, did not recognise him in the dirty Arab in rags crouched near the entrance. At a little distance behind them came his friend, Dr. Ross. 'I called to him, and he turned towards me with the utmost surprise, scarcely believing his senses when he saw me without a cover to my bare head, with naked feet, and in my tattered "abba.'"

Yet, even thus constantly imperilled, with no help but in his own energy, no sooner did he become aware of the cruel persecutions under which the Christian sect of the Sabæans, once numerous, then reduced

[5] *Early Adventures*, p. 312.

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to a few hundred families, were suffering, than he collected in his hut all of them he could bring together, and having heard from them the account of the oppression to which they had been subjected by the Persian authorities, he addressed himself to the false and ferocious, but all-powerful governor, Matamet, and by his earnestness and force of character obtained for them some relief from their persecutions. But his sympathy did not rest there. He appealed on their behalf to Colonel Taylor, the able and learned political agent of the East India Company at Baghdad, who exerted himself successfully in obtaining some measure of protection for them. Many years later, when ambassador at Constantinople, Layard received from the Queen a sum of money generously given for their relief; and he then obtained from the Sultan orders to the authorities in Turkish Arabia to protect from ill-usage those of the Sabæans who inhabited their territories, and to insure them full liberty in the profession of their faith and in the performances of their religious ceremonies.

Similar instances of energetic exertion on behalf of the oppressed abound throughout all his travels, and there are few pages more interesting than those which record the gratitude of the people whom he spared no pains to serve. One striking instance of the depth and earnestness of this feeling can be found in p. 40 *et seq.* of his 'Nineveh and Babylon,' describing his reception by the Yezidis in acknowledgment of the important services he had rendered to them at Constantinople. Still more striking is the incident which occurred as he approached

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Mosul:—'Suddenly a large body of horsemen appeared on a rising ground to the east of us. We could scarcely expect Arabs from that quarter; however, all our party made ready for an attack. Cawal Yusuf and myself, being the best mounted, rode towards them to reconnoitre. Then one or two horsemen advanced warily from the opposite party. We neared each other. Yusuf spied the well-known black turban, dashed forward with a shout of joy, and in a moment we were surrounded and in the embrace of friends. Hussein Bey and Sheikh Nasw, with the Cawals and Yezidi elders, had ridden nearly forty miles through the night to meet and escort me, if needful, to Mosul! Their delight at seeing us knew no bounds; nor was I less touched by a display of gratitude and good feeling equally unexpected and sincere' (p. 58).

Such instances of gratitude and devotion abound during his wanderings among the Nestorian Christians of Kurdistan, in whose cause he had exerted himself with an energy which triumphed over the contemptuous indifference or open hostility of their Turkish oppressors.

May I add that during my many years of close personal and political intimacy with Layard, I ever observed in him the same keen sensitiveness to human suffering, the same ardent desire to protect the oppressed? Animated by this feeling he went to the Crimea in order to test the truth (to use the memorable words of Lord John Russell) of the 'horrible and heart-rending' sufferings of our English soldiers. In the same spirit he visited India during the Indian Mutiny in order to ascertain for himself

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whether, or to what extent, that terrible outbreak was due to misgovernment.

I know but too well that his motives on those occasions, and his consequent action, were impugned and attributed to ambition, to political and personal passion and what not, by those—and they were many—who misunderstood his character, and failed to appreciate the strength of his sympathy with suffering. His nature was vehement, his convictions strong, and when he exposed incompetence or injustice, he smote and spared not, possibly with occasional injustice or exaggeration, which, given the man and his nature, were, I fear, inevitable. 'The horse that wins the race must gallop beyond the goal,' said Fuller, in palliation of some of Luther's words and deeds. But those who knew him well—those who, not knowing, had studied his character as unconsciously exhibited in his Travels—were able to supply more generous and truer explanations than could occur to his prejudiced and ill-informed critics. This warmth of sympathy he retained to the end of his life, and to it can surely be attributed that intense attachment and affection which the grateful people of Venice felt and evinced for their friend and benefactor during his long residence among them.

I have already referred to the irresistible attraction which the antiquities of the wild regions traversed by Layard—the scattered and mutilated remnants of a high state of ancient civilisation—exercised upon his mind. This volume records how it was strengthened, and how it received its special direction, by his meeting with M. Botta, the French Consul at Mosul, then 'meditating those excavations which

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ended in the discovery of the Assyrian ruins at Khorsabad and rendered his name famous.' How on his arrival at Constantinople Layard succeeded in interesting Sir Stratford Canning in this work of discovery, how Sir Stratford generously contributed out of his own purse 60*l.* to meet an equal sum collected by Layard, how with this modest fund of 120*l.* those excavations were begun at Nimroud Kouyunjik, and elsewhere, which made his own name famous, is told with admirable spirit in his first great work 'Nineveh and its Remains.' The testimony of many travellers establishes the fact that these vast and difficult explorations could never have been executed but for the personal influence which he exerted over the Arab tribes and the enthusiasm he aroused among those children of the desert who felt that they had among them a man born to lead, to do and to command. Nowhere is the astonishment excited by this wonderful Frank more strikingly and amusingly expressed than by an Arab chief, one of Layard's most devoted allies, in the description of the lowering of the great winged bull and its removal from the ruins of Nimroud :—

'The Arab sheikh [Abd-ur-rahman], his enthusiasm once cooled down, gave way to moral reflections. "Wonderful! Wonderful! There is surely no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet," exclaimed he, after a long pause. "In the name of the Most High, tell me, O Bey, what you are going to do with those stones? So many thousands of purses spent upon such things! Can it be, as you say, that your people learn wisdom from them, or is it, as his reverence the Cadi declares, that

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they are to go to the palace of your Queen, who, with the rest of the unbelievers, worships these idols? As for wisdom, these figures will not teach you to make any better knives, or scissors, or chintzes, and it is in the making of those things that the English show their wisdom. But God is great! God is great! Here are stones which have been buried ever since the time of the holy Noah—peace be with him! Perhaps they were underground before the Deluge. I have lived on these lands for years. My father, and the father of my father, pitched their tents here before me; but they never heard of these figures. For twelve hundred years have the true believers (and, praise be to God! all true wisdom is with them alone) been settled in this country, and none of them ever heard of a palace underground. Neither did they who went before them. But lo! here comes a Frank from many days' journey off, and he walks up to the very place, and he takes a stick"—illustrating the description at the same time with the point of his spear—"and makes a line here, and makes a line there. Here, says he, is the palace; there, says he, is the gate; and he shows us what has been all our lives beneath our feet without our having known anything about it. Wonderful! Wonderful! Is it by books, is it by magic, is it by your prophets, that you have learnt these things? Speak, O Bey! tell me the secret of wisdom."'[6]

But yet another side of Layard's character, hardly less marked than his archæological enthusiasm, is brought into strong relief before he leaves the scene of his early adventures. During his residence with

[6] *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p, 84.

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the Bakhtiyaris and his conversations with their intelligent chief, who lamented the existence of that state of society which perpetuated disorder and ennobled robbery and murder, he had become strongly impressed with the conviction that the best, if not the only, remedy for such deep-rooted evils was to be found in the appeal to their interests through the agency of commerce and the interchange of their native productions with foreign manufactures. The success of such an attempt was greatly facilitated by the access to the united waters of the Tigris and Euphrates supplied by the river Karun, which at little cost might be made navigable up to the very heart of the Bakhtiyari country. The Bakhtiyari chief and other leading men at Shuster and throughout the province entered heartily into the project, and Layard, renouncing his journey to India, no sooner returned to Baghdad than he began to take measures for ascending the Karun and testing the feasibility of his schemes, which had received the approval of Colonel Taylor. His ascent of this river in the 'Assyria' forms a very interesting episode in these Travels, and established the soundness of his views.[7]

A dispute between Turkey and Persia of great

[7] It was in this voyage that he made the acquaintance of Quartermaster Lucas, whose entry in the log-book of the 'Assyria' has immortalised him. The 'Assyria' had been left under his care near Basra, when there arose one of those violent tornadoes which occasionally sweep over this part of Arabia. The vessel was in great danger. After the storm was over, Mr. Lucas thus recorded the event:—'The windy and watery elements raged. Tears and prayers was had recourse to, but was of no manner of use. So we hauled up the anchor and got round the point.'



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importance, and turning upon the position of the past and present mouths of the Karun, led to an acquaintance with Sir Stratford Canning which soon ripened into confidence and friendship. It seemed as if the difference between these countries could only be settled by war. Layard, having thoroughly examined the locality, thought he might be of service to the British Ambassador by sending him a paper on the subject. On his arrival at Constantinople, Sir Stratford consulted him, and, adopting his views, asked him to write an answer to a despatch of Lord Aberdeen which seemed based on imperfect information. This he did; but Lord Aberdeen persisted in his opinion, and declined to act upon Sir Stratford's suggestion that Layard should be appointed as one of the Commissioners to whom the contending countries had agreed to refer the question. This refusal probably deepened the interest of the Ambassador in his young *protégé*, and he immediately employed him on a mission to the European provinces of Turkey, of which this volume contains an animated account, and, as has been already stated, led him to give Layard substantial assistance in his explorations at Nineveh. From this point may therefore be dated his career as an archæologist, diplomatist and politician, which deserves a far fuller account than is consistent with the object of this Preface, in which I propose to confine myself to his early career, leaving its subsequent development to others. I am happy to think that materials unusually ample exist for a biography extending over the whole of his active life. Not only do his Travels

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abound in biographical details, but a large amount of contemporaneous correspondence has been preserved. For many years he kept up a close correspondence with Signor Morelli on subjects mainly connected with art, as well as with Lady Eastlake, especially during the years when Sir Charles Eastlake acted as Director of the National Gallery, during which time Layard frequently travelled in Italy, and suggested acquisitions or discussed the merits of proposed purchases. During his residence in Venice, from 1880 forward, he wrote with great care that portion of his biography which related more especially to his diplomatic career in Spain and Turkey, and over all these periods his correspondence with many old friends has been preserved, vividly illustrating his 'many-coloured' life. When this biography has been worthily written, I do not fear the verdict of his countrymen. The admiration once felt for his marvellous Travels and Discoveries will revive, and the impress of his striking personality once more will rise before us.

'The frame of adamant, the soul of fire' which carried him triumphantly through so many dangers; the tenacity, the energy, the enthusiasm which animated him in all he undertook; the warm affections, and generous unswerving friendships; the horror of cruelty, the sympathy with suffering, which ever made him the champion of the oppressed, the resource and hope of the miserable.

Carlyle wrote of Walter Scott: 'No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of time.' Often, when conversing

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with Layard and thinking of his place among the worthies of this century, I have felt that no words could more fitly portray this strenuous and gifted descendant of the French Huguenots.

ABERDARE.

*October* 1894.

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# EARLY ADVENTURES

## CHAPTER I

*Leave Jerusalem—Hebron—Yusuf Effendi—The bastinado—Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk—Departure for Petra—The tents of Abu-Dhaouk—Arab dentistry—Danger from Arab robbers—A sacred spot—Enter mountains — Wady Musa—Reach Petra—Difficulties with the Arabs—The ruins.*

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[THIS volume is an abridgment of a work bearing the same title published by me in 1887. I may remind my readers that in the summer of 1839 I left England, in company with Mr. Edward Ledwich Mitford, with the intention of making our way through Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, Persia, and India, to Ceylon, with a view to establishing ourselves permanently in that island. As my companion has published a narrative of our journey until we separated in the following year at Hamadan, in Persia,[1] I have omitted a description of the countries through which we passed together, and have confined myself to an account of my adventures when travelling alone.]

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I reached Jerusalem with Mr. Mitford early in January 1840. I had a longing to visit the ruins of Petra, Ammon, and Gerash, and had resolved to make an attempt to do so; but my companion declined to accompany me in what, at that time, was a very perilous journey. Notwithstanding the warnings and remonstrances of the British Consul, I

[1] *A Land-March from England to Ceylon Forty Years Ago, through Dalmatia, Montenegro, Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Assyria, Persia, Afghanistan, Scinde, and India.* By Edward Ledwich Mitford, F.R.G.S. 2 vols. London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1884.

accordingly left Jerusalem alone on the 15th, agreeing to meet Mr. Mitford at Damascus or Aleppo after I had passed through the Syrian desert. I had engaged as dragoman and servant an intelligent Arab boy from the east of the Dead Sea, who had been converted to Christianity by some Italian friars, had received the name of Antonio, and had acquired a smattering of that mongrel Italian known as 'Lingua Franca.'

I hired two mules to take us as far as Hebron, where I hoped to make arrangements for my journey in the desert. I purchased a small bell tent, old and worn, from an Egyptian soldier, and took with me a little store of rice and flour for food. These things, with my carpet, my saddle-bags containing a change of linen, maps and notebooks, a compass, and a small supply of medicines, constituted the whole of my baggage. I carried a double-barrelled gun for defence, and in the hope, at the same time, that it might enable me to provide myself with game when meat was not to be obtained.

Hebron is so well concealed in a small valley that I found myself in its streets before I knew that I had reached the end of my day's journey. The hills about it were clothed with vineyards, yielding fruit renowned in Palestine. A few olive and pomegranate trees grew here and there, but there appeared to be a general absence of wood. The place itself was in a ruined state. I observed in the neighbourhood numerous tombs excavated in the rocks, a mode of sepulture evidently at one time generally practised in this as in other parts of Syria.

I had a letter for a native Christian, of the name of Elias, who, I had been informed, was in the habit of entertaining travellers. I succeeded in finding his house, but only to learn that its owner, who had been a collector of taxes for the Government at Hebron, had been thrown into prison on account of some alleged irregularity in his accounts. Whilst inquiring my way to the house of the Muteselim, or governor, to whom strangers were then in the habit of applying for a night's lodging, I met in the street one Yusuf Effendi, a colonel in the Egyptian army, of whom I had heard at Jerusalem. Although not the governor, he was

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higher in authority. I ventured to address him, and placed the letter to the Muteselim in his hands. He received me with the polite courtesy of a well-bred Turk, and invited me to take up my quarters with him. The house in which he lived was half in ruins, like most of the others in the town, but he could offer me a room in it.

On the morning after my arrival it was filled with a crowd of screaming and gesticulating Arabs. Some were the chiefs of villages and of neighbouring tribes who had been summoned by the Effendi to pay arrears of taxes or fines imposed upon them for a recent rebellion against the Government. Others were in chains, and had been brought before him to receive their sentences and their punishment. The latter was summary enough. Several stalwart soldiers stood ready with their 'courbashes,' or whips of hippopotamus hide. The culprit who had been convicted, or the accused who could not be brought to confess, was speedily thrown to the ground on his belly and his feet passed through two nooses of cord attached to a stout pole, which, hoisted on the shoulders of two strong men, presented the soles to receive the bastinado. This was inflicted without mercy, water being constantly poured over the wounds to increase the torture, the victim either bellowing loudly or suffering his agony with suppressed groans and cries of 'Allah ! Allah !' The blows, administered by two men who were constantly relieved, fell rapidly upon his bleeding feet. After the number was deemed sufficient by the colonel the wretched sufferer, unable to walk, was dragged away by the guards.

I felt too much disgusted and horrified with these barbarous proceedings to continue to witness them. I left the house, and on my return found that my host had suspended the bastinadoing, and, having dismissed the crowd, was enjoying his 'narguilé,' or water-pipe, after his morning's work. He informed me that he had not forgotten my wish to proceed to Petra, and hearing that among the Arab sheikhs who had come to Hebron to settle their accounts with the Egyptian authorities, there was a chief of the Howitat tribe which were encamped in the neighbourhood of the ruins, he



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had sent for him to make arrangements for my journey. The sheikh soon afterwards appeared. He was a dirty, truculent-looking fellow with very black eyes and very white teeth, a sinister expression, and complexion scarcely less dark than that of a negro. He offered to hire me two camels to take me to Petra and thence to Kerak, to the east of the Dead Sea ; but he declared that the risk and danger were great, for the Arab tribes were at war with each other, and although he could insure my safety amongst his own people, he would not undertake to protect me against all Arabs whom we might meet on the road. Parties of Bedouin horsemen, he said, taking advantage of the unquiet state of the country, were known to be moving about on marauding expeditions. I might fall in with some of them on my way, and, as they would probably be his enemies, they would not respect the safe-conduct that he could give me. It would consequently be necessary to send an escort of armed men with me for my protection. Even the inhabitants of Kerak, a town to the east of the Dead Sea, were only in nominal subjection to the Egyptian Government, and had refused to receive the troops which the Muteselim of Jerusalem had sent a few days before to occupy the place. Under all these circumstances, he could not undertake, he said, to furnish me with two camels and to conduct me to Petra and Kerak for less than two thousand piastres, or 20*l*.

I was persuaded that he had greatly exaggerated the dangers and difficulties of the journey in order to justify this exorbitant demand. Yusuf Effendi expressed his indignation at it, and declared that he would send me to both places with a single Egyptian soldier, and would retain the sheikh as a hostage, holding him personally responsible for my safety. Against this arrangement Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk Haj Defallah, of the tribe of Jehalin—for such, as far as I could make out from his pronunciation of it, was his full name—loudly protested. After a great deal of threatening on the part of the colonel, and the usual guttural vociferation on the part of the Arab, in which the governor of Hebron joined, although engaged at the time in his prayers, the

sheikh reduced his demand to five hundred piastres, and further undertook to send his own brother with me as a guide, who was to return with a written declaration from the Mujelli, or hereditary chief of Kerak, that I had been delivered over to him safe and sound. He promised to call for me with the two camels on the following morning. But he returned in the afternoon, and finding me alone endeavoured to extort from me a further sum by way of 'bakshish.' A Frank, he declared, had recently been asked by another Arab sheikh no less than forty purses (about 200*l.*) to be taken to Petra, and had been compelled to pay four thousand piastres. Why should he receive less? However, I refused to depart from our agreement, and threatened to complain to the colonel, upon which he left me.

In the morning the two camels appeared with an Arab, but not with the sheikh, who sent word that he would join me on the road. Having taken leave of my obliging and hospitable host, I mounted one of the camels, first covering its rude pack-saddle with my carpet. Antonio rode the other, which also carried my tent and little baggage. We then left Hebron, accompanied by the camel-driver on foot.

Abu-Dhaouk did not join me as he had promised. I soon discovered that the camels did not belong to him, but that he had hired them to take me to his tents. Their owner, who pretended to be acquainted with the road, confessed before long that he did not know where the encampment of the sheikh was to be found. We lost our way, and wandered about for several hours over the barren and stony hills. Not having been accustomed to ride a camel, the motion fatigued me greatly. Once, when descending a steep hill, my beast, which I had been in vain urging to quicken its solemn pace, took a fancy to start off in a kind of awkward gallop. I endeavoured to check it with the halter which was fastened to its nose, but it only turned its head round as I pulled with all my might, and looked me full in the face, without stopping or even slackening its pace. I clung to the pack-saddle. My saddle-bags first fell off, my carpet followed, and, losing my balance, I slipped over the tail of the animal and came full length to the ground.

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Fortunately I was not hurt. An exciting chase then ensued, and it was some time before the driver succeeded in catching his camel.

There was every prospect of our passing the night in the open, as we had lost our way. At length, as night was approaching, we met a solitary Arab on foot. He belonged to the tribe of whose tents we were in search, and offered to be our guide to them.

The hills we had crossed during the day were steep, stony, and barren. The valleys by which they were intersected ran in the direction of the Dead Sea. In one of these valleys, called Wady Salesal, were the black tents of Abu-Dhaouk, which we reached shortly before sunset. The sheikh had not arrived. We were received, in his absence, by his brother. I pitched my small tent, which was soon filled and surrounded by men of the tribe, who collected to learn the cause of my coming. They had to be satisfied with the explanations which the camel-driver and Antonio were able to give them. As the sheikh had promised to furnish me with camels, they would be ready, they said, early in the morning. In the meanwhile I was his guest, and a sheep would be immediately slain for my entertainment.

The flocks were returning from the pastures, and long lines of sheep and camels descended from the hill-tops. The sheep were folded in the enclosure formed by the tents, and the lambs allowed access to them, bleating as they discovered their mothers, caused so much noise and confusion that the voices of the Arabs were almost drowned. I was invited to the tent of the sheikh, and soon after I had taken my seat in it, his wife appeared, as she said, to welcome me and to present her children to me—four handsome, dirty, and half-naked boys. The real object of her visit was, however, to beg for tobacco.

A great mess of rice and boiled mutton was brought to the tent about two hours after my arrival. The sheikh's brother and his friends ate with me, dipping their fingers into the large wooden bowl and picking out the savoury bits, which they presented to me. The night was cold, and I

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was not sorry to sit before a fire of blazing faggots, until it was time for me to retire to my little tent. I remained for some time at the entrance, gazing on the strange and novel scene before me. It was my first acquaintance with an Arab encampment and Arab life. A full moon in all its brilliancy lighted up the Wady, so that every feature in the landscape could be plainly distinguished. The fires in the Arab tents studded the valley with bright stars. The silence of the night was broken by the lowing of the cattle and the hoarse moanings of the camels, and by the long mournful wail of the jackals, which seemed to be almost in the midst of us.

Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk arrived in the night. He came to me early in the morning, and apologised for not having been at his tents to receive me. He had been detained, he said, at Hebron, by the governor, who had demanded a much larger sum as tribute from the tribe than the Government was entitled to, and had threatened to throw him into prison unless it were forthcoming. I had slept little, as I was suffering greatly from toothache. The sheikh declared that there was a skilful dentist in the encampment, and as the pain was almost unbearable, I made up my mind to put myself in his hands rather than endure it any longer. He was accordingly sent for. He was a tall, muscular Arab. His instruments consisted of a short knife or razor, and a kind of iron awl. He bade me sit on the ground, and then took my head firmly between his knees. After cutting away at the gums he applied the awl to the roots of the tooth, and, striking the other end of it with all his might, expected to see the tooth fly into the air. The awl slipped and made a severe wound in my palate. He insisted upon a second trial, declaring that he could not but succeed. But the only result was that he broke off a large piece of the tooth, and I had suffered sufficient agony to decline a third experiment.

After I had undergone this very disagreeable and unsuccessful operation, the sheikh, whilst expressing his sympathy for me, suggested that the sum he was to receive for the hire of his camels and for his protection was not suffi-

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cient, and that the agreement which he had made with me had been extorted from him by Colonel Yusuf Effendi. I ought therefore to make a voluntary addition to it by way of bakshish. I refused to do so, and as he began to make difficulties about finding camels and a man who was willing to run the risk of accompanying me, I threatened to return at once to Hebron and to refer the matter to the colonel. Finding that I was resolute and was preparing my baggage, he gave way somewhat sulkily. But it was already ten o'clock before the two camels were forthcoming. Instead of sending his brother with me, as he had promised to do, he brought two Arabs on foot, armed with long guns, who, he said, would accompany me as guards as well as guides, the country being very unsafe. I was under the necessity of yielding, and at length, after many delays and much squabbling, I left his encampment.

Our course was due east, and when we reached the summit of the hill which overlooked the tents of the sheikh, we came in view of the Dead Sea. As I stopped to gaze at it a party of horsemen, armed with long spears tufted with ostrich feathers, rode up to me. They looked as if they were returning from a marauding expedition. They belonged to the tribe of Abu-Dhaouk, and after saluting me and embracing my two guards, they asked some questions concerning myself and the object of my journey, and then went on their way. As we continued winding slowly over the barren and stony hills which still separated us from the Dead Sea, we frequently passed Bedouin horsemen, or observed them in the distance. Antonio, who had become a coward by having been brought up in a convent by monks, was persuaded that every Arab we saw, far and near, was a robber. After a very toilsome and weary journey, we suddenly came upon some Arabs who were on their way to the encampment we had left in the morning, with numerous camels laden with corn. They had stopped for the night, and their camels, released from their loads, were kneeling in a circle around them. I pitched my tent near them, and they went in search of water for me. They returned with some, which was so thick and muddy that, although suffering

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from thirst, as we had met with no water during the day, I could scarcely bring myself to drink, or to use it for cooking my rice.

My two guards, whose names were Musa (Moses) and Awad, declared that the country through which we had to pass was so dangerous, owing to Arab villagers who, flying from the military conscription, had concealed themselves in these wild and desolate hills, and lived by robbing travellers, that it was safer to travel through it by night. By three o'clock in the morning the camels were loaded, and we were again on our way by moonlight. Descending rapidly by a very rough and precipitous path, down which we had to lead our camels, we entered a wild and weird glen, surrounded by detached rocks of sandstone of the most fantastic shapes. The summit of one of them was crowned with the ruins of a small castle called Kalat-ez-Zoer. At its foot were the remains of an ancient building of considerable size. Hard by was an artificial reservoir, in which there was a supply of rain-water. It was a savage and desolate spot, and the dark shadows in the moonlight added to its somewhat awful aspect. It was a fit haunt for robbers.

We continued to wind through this inhospitable region, following a narrow valley formed by precipitous rocks. The solitude was undisturbed by the noiseless tread of our camels. The guards enjoined strict silence, as the slightest noise might betray our presence to the robbers who, they were persuaded, were lurking in the caves. They even went so far as to vow to sacrifice a sheep, and give its flesh to the poor, if they passed safely through the dangerous defile into which we had entered. Whether in consequence or not of this pious vow, we emerged safely from it in about an hour, and found ourselves among low sandhills about a mile from the Dead Sea. My guides proposed that we should stop to breakfast in a sheltered nook in which we could conceal ourselves.

After we had taken some rest we resumed our journey, avoiding the shores of the Dead Sea, and following a narrow gully formed by natural walls of sandstone. We continued in it for about an hour, and then, crossing the low hills, or

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rather mounds, of sand which formed its eastern side, descended to a salt marsh which appeared to have been left by the receding waters of the Dead Sea. Passing some similar sandheaps, we came to a spring of brackish, ill-flavoured water. As there was no other on our road for some hours, we were under the necessity of filling our skins from this spring.

We now struck into a deep ravine running due south and away from the Dead Sea, and formed by the same barren sandhills through which we had been wandering during the morning. It was four o'clock in the afternoon before the guides found a retired spot, with a little water, in which they thought we could encamp in safety for the night. The camels were unloaded and turned loose to pick up such provender as they could find in the coarse and scanty herbage of this desolate region. They had no other food, and as they journeyed along stopped at almost every step to munch a thorny plant which grew in the sand.

Although we had selected a retired spot in which to conceal ourselves, the guards considered it necessary that incessant watch should be kept during the remainder of the afternoon, and after dark, in case we had been observed by robbers on the look-out for travellers. They called me at two o'clock in the morning, and insisted that I should take advantage of the moonlight to continue my journey through this dangerous district. Leaving the narrow valley, we emerged upon a sandy plain bounded to the east by a range of high mountains, serrated and fantastic in their outlines. I was allowed to stop at eight o'clock to get some breakfast, but was soon hurried on again. We had scarcely started when Musa, who had been acting as a scout, returned in much alarm, declaring that he had seen horsemen in the distance. From their appearance, they could only, he said, be robbers, and he recommended me to prepare for an attack. I was disposed to believe that he had been deceived, or that his fears were exaggerated, when I observed three Bedouins on horseback, with their long tufted spears, coming towards us from different directions. It was evident that they had been watching us, and, from the manner of

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their approach, that they had evil intentions. Musa made a counter-movement and took up a position to the right of the advancing Arabs, and, levelling his long gun at the foremost of them, prepared for defence. Seeing that there was apparently cause for the alarm of my guides, I threw off my cloak, and, slipping over the tail of my camel, prepared for action with my double-barrelled gun, which was loaded with ball. Awad, the other guide, also made ready to defend himself.

The robbers—for such they now proved themselves to be—seeing that we possessed firearms, whilst they had only spears, commenced a parley. Awad opened a conversation with them, whilst Musa and I remained at a distance ready with our guns. After the usual salutations had passed and some questions had been asked and answered, the Bedouins declared that they had no intention of molesting us, and told us that we might proceed on our way. They then begged for a little bread, saying they were hungry, and, in order to encourage us to approach, one of them dismounted and handed his spear to Awad. I directed Antonio to give them some bread. We then sat down and ate and smoked together. I asked them their names, and noted them in my pocket-book.

Antonio declared that these Bedouins were enemies of his tribe, and would certainly have cut his throat if they had recognised him. He was almost paralysed with fear, especially when he overheard them, as he pretended, proposing to my guards to join with them in plundering me—for, they maintained, Franks never travelled with less than fifty purses in their pockets, and if they could only get rid of me they would be rewarded by a rich booty. However, my Arabs, either from fear of the consequences or because they were too mindful of the duties of hospitality to betray me, resisted this appeal to their cupidity. After a short delay I remounted my camel, and we proceeded on our journey. But Awad, who was not satisfied as to the intentions of the Bedouins, warned me to be on my guard, as they might dog our steps and endeavour to take us by surprise. He lingered behind for some time on the watch, and it was only

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when he was satisfied that they were not following us that he rejoined me.

When he came up to me he lifted both his hands to heaven, exclaiming 'Allah ! Allah !' and, drawing one of his fingers across his throat, gave me to understand what my fate would probably have been had I fallen into their hands.

Leaving the sandy plain, we entered a range of lofty hills. The country continued to have the same savage and desolate appearance. It would be difficult to imagine a more wild and inhospitable region than that to the south of the Dead Sea. It is called the Wady Ghor. Water is rarely to be found in it. The soil is barren and stony, and without vegetation. In summer the heat, radiated by the parched and burning ground, and the hot sultry atmosphere are almost fatal to life. No human habitation is to be seen, and no living creature moves during the day on the face of the earth.

In a sheltered valley we came upon a running stream, with a few bushes and stunted trees upon its banks—a sight that rejoiced man and beast, as we had now been for three days without drinkable water. The Arabs called the spot Fédan.

Some masses of rock, detached from the overhanging cliffs and blocking up the narrow valley, had formed, lying one above the other, a natural doorway about three feet high, through which my guards crept. This appeared to be a kind of religious observance. The spot was evidently considered holy by the Arabs, as there was a heap of stones hard by to which every one who passed added, and pilgrims stuck, as ex-votos, in the crevices bits of rag torn from their garments—practices common in other parts of the East. Awad could only explain that a saint or dervish had once inhabited the place ; but who this saint was and whence he came he did not pretend to know. He informed me that those who invoked the holy man's aid when creeping through the opening were cured of every kind of disease. He even went so far as to declare, after he had performed this simple feat, that he suddenly felt himself greatly relieved from some rheumatic pains in the leg from which he had been long suffering.

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After we had refreshed ourselves at this cool and grateful stream, we recrossed the hills, and found ourselves again in the sandy plain. My guards begged me to cook my dinner before dark, as a fire at night might betray our camping place. It appeared to me that the smoke might have the same result in the daylight. However, I stopped as they requested, and boiled some rice—my only food. By three o'clock we were again on our way. Awad and Musa sought, by deviating from the regular track and by keeping among the low hills, to conceal our movements from the Bedouins whom we had met in the morning, and who, they were persuaded, had not abandoned their intention of falling upon us, and had probably been joined by other horsemen. They would not permit me to pitch my tent, as it might be seen from afar, and, although the night was bitterly cold, I was compelled to lie, wrapped in my cloak, in the open air.

I had not much sleep, as we had to keep watch, and at midnight I had to remount my camel, as my guards, although we had had no alarm, could not be induced to remain any longer in a place which they considered specially dangerous. An hour before sunrise we found ourselves again on the beaten track leading to Petra. I felt so much exhausted from want of sleep and the fatiguing motion of the camel, that after we had entered a sheltered valley I dismounted, and was soon in a deep slumber. Refreshed by this rest, and after eating a little bread, I commenced the ascent of a steep, rocky mountain. In the distance to the south could be distinguished the lofty summit of Mount Hor—the Jebel Harun, or Mount Aaron, of the Arabs—and to the north three remarkable granite peaks rose from the serrated range of mountains into which I had entered.

After toiling up a very steep and stony track for about two hours, the camels, unaccustomed to such mountain ascents, appeared to be much fatigued. Leaving them to rest for a while under the care of Antonio, I ascended on foot, with Awad and Musa, a high peak in the neighbourhood. The day being cloudless, I anticipated a fine prospect from it, and was not disappointed. The scene was wonderful,

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and magnificent from its savage desolation. Range after range of barren, naked hills of the most varied and fantastic shapes, like the waves of a sea which had been suddenly arrested when breaking and curling, stretched before me. Beneath me lay the inhospitable valley of the Ghor. In the extreme distance, to the north, could just be distinguished the Dead Sea.

We continued, during the afternoon, the ascent of the remarkable and picturesque range of mountains we had entered in the morning. They were of sandstone, and had been worn into the most fantastic shapes, such as domes, pinnacles, and pyramids, which looked as if they had been the work of human hands.

We then entered a long, narrow gorge, formed on either side by lofty cliffs. Through it ran the bed of a torrent, then dry and filled with trees and shrubs. I was desirous of pitching my tent, as I saw many excavations in the rocks which I wished to examine; but my guards declared the place to be specially dangerous from robbers, and hurried me through it as fast as the camels could go.

I pitched my tent for the night under a huge projecting rock, by which we were completely concealed. As I sat by it in the calm evening, large red-legged partridges[2] swarmed around me, loudly cackling and crowing. They offered tempting materials for an excellent supper, after the privations of the previous days, when my only food had been boiled rice and cakes of unleavened bread baked in the ashes; but my Arab guards implored me not to use my gun, as they were still haunted by the fear of robbers, and its report would disclose our hiding-place.

On the following morning we entered the Wady Musa, or Valley of Moses, and in an hour and a half I found myself amid the ruins of Petra. Everywhere around me were remains of ancient buildings of all descriptions, whilst in the high rocks which formed the boundaries of the valley were innumerable excavated dwellings and tombs. As I had intended to visit the ruins leisurely, I did not stop to examine them, but, passing through them on my camel,

[2] The red, or Greek, partridge (*Caccabis saxatilis*).

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ascended to a spacious rock-cut tomb, in front of which was a small platform covered with grass. There I made up my mind to pitch my tent.

I dismounted and spread my carpet. I had scarcely done so when a swarm of half-clad Arabs, with dishevelled locks and savage looks, issued from the excavated chambers and gathered round me. I asked for some bread and milk which were brought to me, and Antonio prepared my breakfast, the Arabs watching all our movements. Their appearance was far from reassuring, and my guides were evidently anxious as to their intentions. They were known to be treacherous and bloodthirsty, and a traveller had rarely, if ever, ventured among them without the protection of some powerful chief or without a sufficient guard.

They remained standing round me in silence, until they perceived that I was about to rise from my carpet with the object of visiting the ruins in the valley. Then one of them advanced and demanded of me in the name of the tribe a considerable sum of money, which, he said, was due to it from all travellers who entered its territory. I refused to submit to the exaction, alleging that I was under the protection of Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk. I was, ready, I added, to pay for any provisions that might be furnished to me, or for any service of which I might be in need.

This answer gave rise to loud outcries on the part of the assembled Arabs. They began by abusing my two guides, whom they accused of having conducted me to Wady Musa without having first obtained the permission of their sheikh. A violent altercation ensued, which nearly led to bloodshed, as swords were drawn on both sides. An attempt was made to seize my effects, and I was told that I should not be allowed to leave the place until I had paid the sum demanded of me. As I still absolutely refused to do so, one, more bold and insolent than the rest, advanced towards me with his drawn sword, which he flourished in my face. I raised my gun, determined to sell my life dearly if there was an intention to murder me. Another Arab suddenly possessed himself of Musa's gun, which he had imprudently laid on the ground whilst unloading the camels.

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I directed Antonio to inform the crowd, which was now increasing in numbers, as men and women issued from the rock-cut tombs like rabbits from a warren, that I was under the protection of Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk, who had made himself personally responsible to the Governor of Hebron, and consequently to Ibrahim Pasha,[3] for my safety. If any violence were offered to me he would lose his head, unless his tribe took full vengeance upon those who had committed it, and the Egyptian Government would not be satisfied until they were exterminated.

The tribe inhabiting the Wady Musa had not long before been at war with that of Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk, who had inflicted considerable losses upon it, killing some of its best warriors and carrying off a large number of its sheep and camels. It had reason, therefore, to fear that an outrage upon a traveller who was under his protection might lead to serious consequences. A consultation took place among those who appeared to have some authority over the crowd, which ended by my being informed that if I agreed to pay about half the sum at first demanded I should be allowed to remain as long as I liked in the valley, and to visit the ruins without molestation. What they asked, they declared, was far less than had been paid by other travellers, and it was only out of consideration for a guest and friend of Abu-Dhaouk that they would be satisfied with so small a sum.

I still refused. In the first place, I thought it right to resist this attempt to blackmail a traveller; and, in the second, had I been even disposed to yield, I had not enough money with me to give what was asked. I therefore directed Musa and Awad to reload the camels and to prepare to accompany me. Seeing that I was determined to carry out my intention of visiting the ruins without their permission, the Arabs formed a circle round me, threatening to prevent me from doing so by force, gesticulating and screeching at the top of their voices. With their ferocious countenances,

[3] Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Mehemet Ali Pasha, was then in Syria at the head of the Egyptian Army, and governed the country with a rule of iron.

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their flashing eyes and white teeth set in faces blackened by sun and dirt, and their naked limbs exposed by their short shirts and tattered Arab cloaks, they had the appearance of desperate cut-throats ready for any deed of violence.

In this juncture, and when an affray which might have led to fatal results seemed imminent, the Sheikh of Wady Musa, who had been absent from the valley, made his appearance. Having somewhat calmed his excited tribesmen and obtained silence, he inquired into the cause of the disturbance. Having been told it, he announced that he had a right, as chief of the tribe in whose territory the ruins were situated, to the sum originally demanded, and that unless I paid it he would not permit me to visit them. He was a truculent and insolent fellow, tall, and with a very savage countenance ; rather better dressed than his followers, and armed with a long gun and pistols, whilst they only carried swords and spears.

I repeated my resolution not to submit to this imposition, and warned him that if any injury befell me he would be held personally responsible by Ibrahim Pasha, who had given ample proof that he could punish those who defied his authority. Abu-Dhaouk, moreover, I said, was a hostage for my safety. I then rose from my carpet and, directing Awad and Musa to follow me with the camels, which they were loading, prepared to begin my examination of the ruins.

The sheikh, seeing that I was not to be intimidated, and fearing the consequences should any violence be offered to me or to my guides which might lead to a blood-feud between his tribe and that of Abu-Dhaouk, ordered his men to stand back, and I went on my way without further interference. As I descended into the valley he called out to me by way of benediction, 'As a dog you came, as a dog you go away.' I gave him the usual Arab salutation in return, and threw him a piece of money in payment for the bread and milk which had been brought to me on my arrival. This return for hospitality would have been resented as an insult by a true Bedouin, but he picked up the silver coin, and as I left I saw him crouching down on his hams



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surrounded by his Arabs, evidently discussing the manner in which I ought to be dealt with.

Awad and Musa were a good deal alarmed at my reception, and feared that the sheikh and his followers would find some means of avenging themselves upon me for having defied them. They urged me, therefore, to leave the valley as soon as possible. But I was convinced that, notwithstanding the chief's threats, he would not venture to rob or injure me. The name of Ibrahim Pasha was at that time feared throughout Syria, and the sheikh could not but be well persuaded that Abu-Dhaouk, to save his own head, would execute summary vengeance upon those who had plundered or murdered a traveller under his protection. I was determined, as I had come so far to visit the ruins of Petra, to examine its principal monuments leisurely, and I spent the whole day in doing so. I was not molested, but I observed Arabs watching all my movements.

I had sufficient time to visit the principal ruins—the great amphitheatre carved out of the rock, the various temples and public edifices, and many of the tombs sculptured in the precipitous cliffs forming the sides of the valley. These tombs, some of which were elaborately ornamented with pediments, friezes, and columns, were mostly used as habitations by Arab families, and their spacious chambers were filled with smoke and dirt.

The scenery of Petra made a deep impression upon me, from its extreme desolation and its savage character. The rocks of friable limestone, worn by the weather into forms of endless variety, some of which could scarcely be distinguished from the remains of ancient buildings; the solitary columns rising here and there amidst the shapeless heaps of masonry; the gigantic flights of steps, cut in the rocks, leading to the tombs; the absence of all vegetation to relieve the solemn monotony of the brown barren soil; the mountains rising abruptly on all sides; the silence and solitude, scarcely disturbed by the wild Arab lurking among the fragments of pediments, fallen cornices, and architraves which encumber the narrow valley, render the ruins of Petra unlike those of any other ancient city in the world.

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The most striking feature at Petra is the immense number of excavations in the mountain-sides. It is astonishing that a people should, with infinite labour, have carved the living rock into temples, theatres, public and private buildings, and tombs, and have thus constructed a city on the borders of the desert, in a waterless, inhospitable region, destitute of all that is necessary for the sustenance of man—a fit dwelling-place for the wild and savage robber tribes that now seek shelter in its remains.

Towards evening, yielding to the urgent entreaties of Awad and Musa, who declared that it would not be safe for me to pass the night among the ruins, I left them by the valley through which we had arrived. We encamped some time after nightfall in a narrow wady. But we had little sleep, as we had to keep watch, fearing that the Arabs of Wady Musa might have followed us with evil intent.

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## CHAPTER II

*Leave Petra—Danger from Arabs—The Seydi'in Arabs—The Dead Sea—The Mountains of Moab—Plundered by Arabs—Arrival at Kerak—The son of the Mujelli—Recovery of my property—The Christians of Kerak—Its ruins—My Christian host—Sheikh Suleiman-Ibn-Fais—Departure for the Desert—Encampments of Christian Arabs—The country of Moab—The Beni Hamideh—Remains of ancient towns—Meshita—An Arab banquet—The tents of Suleiman-Ibn-Fais—Reach Ammon.*

WE were on our way again long before daylight, and, crossing the same desolate and arid sandhills and ravines which we had passed on our way to Petra, stopped for the night on the stream of Wady Fedan. During the whole day's journey Musa and Awad had been in sore fear of robbers, and never ceased praying for our safe arrival at Kerak, vowing to sacrifice a sheep on their return to their tents if no accident befell us. These two men proved unusually good specimens of the Arabs who, encamping on the borders of Palestine, have been corrupted by contact with the Turks and by injudicious travellers. They served me zealously and faithfully, and did their best, in the face of many difficulties and no little danger, to see me safely through my venturesome expedition. They were handsome, well-made men, with open, intelligent countenances, hardy and able to bear great fatigue, and, as far as I could judge by their conduct, by no means deficient in courage. I felt that in the somewhat perilous position in which I was placed I could trust them.

Although the fear of attack from the Arabs of Petra had somewhat decreased, my guides would not permit me to travel after dark in the sandy plain upon which we were about to enter, on account of the venomous serpents which, they

vowed, came out from their holes at night, and were much to be dreaded by those who went on foot. Next morning they pointed out what they assured me were the traces of these reptiles in the sand.

We followed the valley of El Ghor during the day, in the direction of the Dead Sea. The mountains of Moab, their summits covered with snow, bounded the horizon to our right.

As we approached, on the following morning, the foot of the high land of Moab, which rises to the east of the Dead Sea, we came upon rivulets of fresh water. In the distance were flocks of sheep and camels grazing. We soon arrived at an Arab encampment. The black tents, pitched near a clear stream and in high brushwood, which concealed them entirely from view until we were almost in the midst of them, belonged to the tribe of Seydi'in, under Sheikh Mahmoud Abu-Rueri. These Arabs were known to my guides, who suggested that I should spend the remainder of the day with them, promising me an hospitable reception. I accordingly pitched my tent, and, having purchased a sheep for twelve piastres, ordered half of it to be at once boiled. Neither my companions nor myself had seen meat since we had left Sheikh Abu-Dhaouk's tent. I had eaten of the rice which I carried with me; but they had lived entirely upon cakes of unleavened bread which they had baked in the hot ashes. We were consequently happy at the prospect of a meal which would satisfy our hunger. But it was from the want of water fit to drink that I had suffered most, and I drank with exquisite delight from the bright sparkling stream which descended from the overhanging mountains of Moab.

As it rained in the evening, I moved into one of the Arab tents—my own not keeping out the wet. A large wooden bowl filled with camel's milk, flour, melted rancid butter and pieces of unleavened bread, was brought to me for supper. The men made balls of this mess with their dirty hands, and then presented them to me to eat—a mode of showing attention to a guest which would not be altogether agreeable to a person choice as to his food. The tent was

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filled with Arabs who came to look at the stranger and to gossip. An open space in the midst of the encampment was reserved for the camels, which were driven into it at sunset, and made to kneel down, grunting and growling the while.

The Arabs I had hitherto seen were fine and well-proportioned men. But their sparkling eyes, their white teeth, which they constantly showed, their long tails of plaited, well-greased black hair, their swarthy complexions and freely exposed limbs, gave them a savage and forbidding appearance. The women, as far as I could judge of them, were less handsome than the men. They took no great care to conceal their faces, only the lower part of which they slightly covered with a piece of dark linen of a triangular shape, fastened by a cord or by a metal chain to a headband or turban. Round their arms and ankles they wore many bangles of silver, and of blue opaque glass made at Hebron. The children of both sexes were generally without clothing of any kind. The tents were dirty and abounding in vermin.

Ibrahim Pasha had succeeded in depriving most of the Arab tribes living near the Dead Sea of their firearms ; but had failed to establish his authority permanently over them, although they had consented to pay a small annual tribute to the Egyptian Government. They were consequently, with few exceptions, only armed with swords, knives, and spears. Some had not even these weapons, but only thick wooden clubs with a big knob at the end.

I had no reason to complain of our hosts, who treated us hospitably, and did not clamour for money as others had done. We left them early in the morning, and, descending to the shore of the Dead Sea, continued along it by a very rough and stony track, leading over the detritus washed down by the winter torrents from the mountains, which rise almost abruptly from the water's edge. We crossed several of these torrents, which were almost dry. In some the water was sweet and agreeable to the taste, in others brackish and scarcely drinkable.

Shortly after crossing the Nahr Assal (the Honey river)

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we fell in with a tribe changing their encampment and seeking for fresh pastures. They were accompanied by large flocks of sheep and goats and herds of camels. Their sheikh was a handsome young man, named Ibn-Rashid. He had on his saddle before him his little son, whom he gave over to one of his attendants soon after meeting me, saying that he meant to accompany me until he had seen me safely through his people. He was courteous and obliging, and did not ask for a present, which surprised me. He was surrounded by a number of horsemen carrying spears tufted with ostrich feathers, and by armed men on foot. Amongst his attendants was a huge and ferocious-looking negro, wearing a long robe of red silk and a white turban, which added to the hideousness of his countenance.

After I had parted with the sheikh and his attendants, I dismounted and bathed in the Dead Sea. I found the water as buoyant as previous travellers had described it to be, but its extreme saltness caused an unpleasant irritation of the skin. When I was about to resume my journey Musa begged me to permit him to leave me, as there was a blood-feud between his family and the Arabs in the neighbourhood of Kerak. He proposed to wait in the tents we had left in the morning until Awad, who had no quarrel with the Kerak Arabs, returned with the two camels. I parted with him with regret, as I believed him to be trustworthy, and thought I could rely upon his courage and presence of mind in the event of danger.

Awad, who, notwithstanding his miraculous cure at Fedan, was still suffering from rheumatism in one of his legs, got up behind Antonio on his camel. He suddenly slipped off the animal's back and disappeared amongst the reeds of a marsh between our track and the Dead Sea. Returning after some time, he explained his disappearance by declaring that he had seen some one lurking among the rushes who had fled on being discovered. I was disposed to treat his suspicions lightly, but as we continued our journey I perceived a man on the rocky declivity above us, who was evidently watching our movements with no good intentions. Awad was so persuaded that we were about to

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be attacked and robbed that, after I had pitched my tent in a narrow gully, he remained on the alert all night.

Nothing, however, occurred to disturb my rest. An hour before sunrise I was again on my camel. We now began to ascend rapidly, in the direction of Kerak. After reaching a considerable elevation, which commanded a view of the Dead Sea and the opposite heights towards Jerusalem, I directed the camels, which were much fatigued by the steep and rocky ascent, to be unloaded and some breakfast to be prepared, whilst I walked to a higher point from which I could better enjoy the prospect.

We had been joined by an Arab on foot, whom Awad recognised as one Mahmoud, the sheikh of a small tribe encamping in the neighbourhood of Kerak. On my return to breakfast I perceived this man struggling with Awad for my saddle-bags. I seized him and asked for an explanation of his conduct. His answer was to the effect that he had many followers, and that he demanded a considerable sum of money for permission to pass through his tribe. He then relinquished his hold upon my saddle-bags and was going away, when, as Awad sought to detain him, the struggle between them was renewed. Thinking that he might carry out his threat of attacking us, I determined to keep him as a hostage. I pointed my gun at him and threatened to shoot him if he attempted to leave us. In abject fear, as my gun was levelled at his head and not far from it, he begged for mercy. I directed Antonio to disarm him, and in his fright he gave up his pistols, knife, and club without attempting to offer any resistance.

Having disarmed the sheikh, I sat down on the ground to eat my scanty breakfast of boiled rice, keeping my eye upon him the while and my gun ready across my knees. I then invited him to eat bread with me. He at first refused, but ended by dipping his hand into the dish. The camels were reloaded, and I directed him to lead the way to Kerak, repeating my threat to shoot him if any attempt were made to attack and plunder me on the way. That he might be persuaded that I would do so, I walked close behind him.

In about an hour we reached a part of the ravine in

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which there was an Arab encampment below and another above us. Mahmoud wished to take me to the upper tents, saying that he wanted water to drink, and that as they belonged to his people I should be his guest, and he would kill a sheep for my entertainment. As I suspected that he wished to get me into his hands, I ordered him to continue on the direct track to Kerak.

I was walking behind him, about two hundred yards in front of the camels, when two Arabs, armed with spears, came running down the slope. I directed Mahmoud to order them back. They, however, approached Awad, and whilst one of them gave him the usual salutation the other snatched away my cloak, which I had left on my pack-saddle, and ran off with it as fast as his legs could carry him. Mahmoud offered to pursue the thief—an offer which I peremptorily declined to accept.

This first theft was the signal for a general attack upon my property. Arabs appeared, as if by magic, from above and below. I dragged Mahmoud, whom I had seized by the arm, towards the camels. Thinking that I intended to shoot him, he entreated the robbers, who had almost surrounded me, to draw back. Seeing the danger to which their sheikh was exposed, they hesitated to fall upon me. A wild-looking fellow, whose name I afterwards learnt was Beshire, however, approached me, menacing me with a spear which he raised above his head as if to throw at me. Awad seized him by the arm. A struggle ensued between them, in which his 'keffiyeh'—the kerchief which the Bedouins wear on their heads—fell off. With his many plaited tails of black hair, half concealing his face, and with his expression of mingled stupidity and ferocity, and his loud, guttural cries, he seemed a very devil. Releasing himself from Awad, he sprang upon an overhanging rock and again raised his spear, as if about to hurl it at me, swearing at the same time that he would have my blood.

Dragging the sheikh after me, and with my gun still at his head, I gained a small open space out of Beshire's reach. The other Arabs, fearing for their chief, who was loudly calling out for mercy, still hesitated to fall upon my camels

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and my little baggage. At this juncture, the sheikh of the tents which were in the valley below—the encampment above belonged, it now appeared, to Mahmoud—arrived on the scene. He approached me unarmed, and appeared to be desirous to put a stop to the attack upon me. Awad, who was known to him, explained that I was travelling under the protection of Abu-Dhaouk, who was responsible to Ibrahim Pasha for my safety, and that I had letters for the Mujelli, or governor, of Kerak, who would also be answerable to the Egyptian Government should any injury befall me.

This explanation appeared to have a good effect. The Arabs sheathed their swords, which they had drawn when the *mêlée* began, and I expected to be allowed to continue my journey without further molestation, when the sheikh who had interfered in my behalf asked me to deliver up my gun. This I refused to do, and we were discussing the matter, which promised to be amicably settled, after he had read the letter to the Mujelli, when the ferocious Beshire, who had been watching his opportunity, suddenly threw himself upon Awad and seized his gun. A struggle ensued, the issue of which I watched with some anxiety, determined to shoot Beshire should he succeed in possessing himself of the weapon. In the excitement of the moment, I had relaxed my hold upon Sheikh Mahmoud, who endeavoured to make off. But running after him, I again seized him by the arm, and, holding my gun at his head, dragged him to some distance.

The struggle between Beshire and Awad led to a renewal of the affray. The Arabs began throwing stones, and Beshire, who had not succeeded in wresting the gun from Awad, hurled his spear at me. Fortunately it glanced by me. My assailants again drew their swords, and one or two fired their pistols at me; but they were too far away to reach me. I exerted myself with all my might to drag Sheikh Mahmoud towards Kerak, menacing him with death when he attempted to stop. The camels had become restive with the noise and confusion, and had turned back, so that there was, by this time, some distance between me

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and them. Some Arabs followed them, and began to plunder my effects. The others, probably fearing that they would not have their share of the booty, instead of pursuing me, joined their companions, and I could see them, as I hurried on with the sheikh, dividing the contents of my saddle-bags and my other property.

Antonio had taken to his heels, and was calling to me to follow him, but I felt that my safety depended upon keeping my hold on Sheikh Mahmoud, whom I hurried onwards as fast as I was able.

The Arabs, having taken possession of my effects, over which they were quarrelling, did not seem disposed to renew the attack upon me. After a long and toilsome walk I came in sight of an encampment not far distant from the road. Antonio, who had left me in his fright, expecting that the Arabs would pursue us, returned to meet me, and informed me that the tents belonged to some dependents of the Mujelli of Kerak, and that I should be in safety if I reached them. I soon afterwards perceived Awad driving the two camels before him. When he came up to me and confirmed what Antonio had said, I released Sheikh Mahmoud, who lost no time in making the best of his way back to his friends.

The sheikh of the encampment, to whom I showed my letter to the Mujelli, invited me into his tent, and ordered coffee to be prepared for me. I was soon surrounded by a group of Arabs, to whom Awad related, in all its details, my morning's adventure. They congratulated me upon my escape, the Arabs who had plundered me being, they said, the most notorious robbers and cut-throats to the east of the Dead Sea. I owed it entirely, they were convinced, to the fact that Sheikh Mahmoud had been in my power and was afraid for his life, and they examined with the greatest interest my double-barrelled gun, which had inspired him with so much fear.

The sheikh offered to conduct me in person to Kerak. Leaving Awad with the camels to take the beaten track, we ascended on foot the precipitous side of a mountain, on the summit of which we could distinguish the walls of the ancient

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castle frowning over the valley. We entered it by a long, narrow, vaulted passage cut through the rock, and I found myself in the midst of a mass of ruins, through which we had to make our way to reach the house of the Mujelli. He was absent, but we were received by his son, a handsome youth, with ringlets of black hair falling from beneath his keffiyeh. I placed in his hands the letter from Colonel Yusuf Effendi to his father, and, relating what had befallen me, asked for his assistance in recovering my stolen property. The room in which he received me was small and dirty, and crowded with Arabs. The letter was read and discussed, and great indignation expressed at the conduct of the people who had threatened my life and plundered me, especially when it became known that Sheikh Mahmoud had eaten bread with me in the morning. It was decided that Ahmed, the young chief, should himself proceed at once to the tents of the robbers with some horsemen to recover my effects, even by force if necessary. His mare was soon saddled and brought to him, with his gun, sword, and pistols. A number of his attendants were ready to accompany him, and he requested me to go with him to identify my property. A mule, with a roomy pack-saddle, was procured for me, and I mounted it, with Antonio behind me. I carried my gun, thinking that it might prove useful should the Arabs offer any resistance.

After we had issued from the castle, Ahmed dismounted to say his afternoon prayers, and we then descended rapidly to the encampment of Sheikh Mahmoud. Giving our beasts to some men who came out to meet us, we entered the tent of the sheikh, who was there to receive us. It was soon filled with Arabs, amongst whom I recognised some of those who had attacked me in the morning. Coffee was handed round, and we sat smoking our chibuks for about half an hour, without any words being exchanged except the usual salutations. Judging from the countenances and appearance of the men surrounding us, I argued ill of the attempt of Ahmed to recover my property, for I had never set eyes upon a more ferocious, forbidding set of ruffians than those who were glaring at me.

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At length Ahmed, having drunk his coffee, smoked his pipe, and duly rested himself, addressed the assembled Arabs in a set speech, which, if Antonio's translation could be understood and trusted, was to the following effect. This Frank, said he, had been the guest of Abu-Dhaouk, and was under the protection of that sheikh, who was the friend and ally of the Arab tribes of Kerak. Men of the Jehalin[1] had been sent with him so that he might go his way in security. He had, moreover, letters from the officers of the great Ibrahim Pasha, recommending him to the Mujelli of Kerak, of whom he was consequently to be also considered the friend. He had passed in safety amongst the robbers of Wady Musa and El Ghor, but when within two hours of the place where he expected to be welcomed and hospitably entertained he was robbed, and his life threatened, by those who ought to have honoured him as the Mujelli's guest, and to have given him help. And, what made matters still worse, Sheikh Mahmoud, the chief of these malefactors, had partaken of this stranger's bread, and it was the sacred duty of the Arab to protect at all cost him with whom he had eaten. He concluded his oration, which was delivered with the accustomed Bedouin eloquence and gesticulation, by exclaiming, 'This man walks with God whilst you walk with the devil!' and calling upon them to restore my stolen property without delay.

When he had ended the Arabs turned upon Sheikh Mahmoud, crying out, 'Why did you not tell us that you had eaten bread with this Frank, instead of joining with us in robbing him?' He seemed somewhat ashamed of himself, and began by denying that he had either eaten my bread or been in any way concerned in the robbery; but, finding that the evidence against him on both points was conclusive, he pretended that I had prevented him from interfering in my favour by seizing him and threatening to shoot him. Had I released him, he declared, he would have explained to his people that I was under his protection, and I should not only not have been molested, but should have been welcomed as a guest in his tents.

[1] Abu-Dhaouk's tribe was so called.

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After a stormy discussion it was decided that, under the circumstances, such part of my property as could be found in the encampment should be restored to me ; but the remainder being in the hands of the Arabs from the tents lower down in the valley, who had joined in robbing me, I must seek it from them. Sheikh Mahmoud then insisted that it would be an insult to him were we to leave without partaking of his hospitality, and a sheep was slain for our entertainment. Some men were then ordered to collect from the tents, and to bring any articles that might be found in them belonging to me. In the meanwhile a young Arab was brought to me who was writhing from excruciating pains in his stomach. I was told that it was in consequence of having swallowed some liquid he had found in my saddle-bags, which had poisoned him. I was entreated to cure him by giving him an antidote. Observing that he was no doubt punished by Allah for having robbed me, I pointed out that, unless I knew what he had drunk, and until I had my medicines, which were contained in a little case which had no doubt fallen into his hands, I could do nothing for him, and that he would probably die. His mother, who had accompanied him, then disappeared, and returned immediately with my small medicine-chest and a bottle containing a mixture with creosote, which had been given to me at Jerusalem to assuage the pain I was suffering from toothache. He had taken a gulp from this bottle, believing that it contained some kind of Frank brandy. I administered an emetic, which soon had the desired effect ; but I inwardly rejoiced that the fellow had been well punished.

My things came in one by one. Those that were not returned were of little value. My money, watch, and compass, which were of the most importance to me, were on my person, and had consequently been saved. Antonio had snatched my small carpet from the camel when we were first attacked, and had carried it off on his shoulders. My little tent had not been taken by the Arabs, as it was probably of no use to them. The first object that appeared after the medicines was Antonio's sack, which contained all his worldly goods, consisting of a few old clothes, from which,

however, one or two articles had been abstracted. Next came one half of my saddle-bags with my maps and note-book, and other things which I was not sorry to recover. Ahmed took them out one by one, examined them curiously, and then handed them round for general inspection. The other half of the saddle-bags, containing some clothes and my Levinge bed, had not been found, but I was promised it for the following morning.

It was now late, and large wooden platters were brought into the tent, with the boiled flesh of the sheep which had been killed in our honour cut into bits and placed, hot and smoking, upon a mess of flour and bread soaked in the gravy. The hungry Arabs gathered round them, and the meat disappeared in a very short time. Melted butter, very rancid, was then poured over the kind of paste which remained, and which the Arabs kneaded with their hands into balls. These they handed to their guests or swallowed.

I had to pass the night in the crowded tent in a very uncomfortable position. My cloak had not yet been restored to me, and the air was very cold and keen, notwithstanding a blazing fire which the Arabs kept up. I could not sleep much, as I could but reflect upon the events of the day and the perils I had run. From what I had learnt I was persuaded that, if it had not been for the fear of my gun, and from having had Sheikh Mahmoud in my power, I should have been murdered by these lawless robbers. It was fortunate that I had not been under the necessity of using it, as if blood had been once spilt my life would unquestionably have been taken. But I was now entirely in the hands of the people of Kerak and of the Mujelli, who bore a very evil reputation, and were not to be trusted. It seemed to me very doubtful whether I should be able to reach the ruins to the east of Jordan without running very serious risk, whilst, on the other hand, an attempt to return to Jerusalem would be attended, after what had occurred, with considerable danger. At length, exhausted, I fell into a doze, from which I was, however, soon roused by the Arabs, who were on foot long before daylight.

As the sheikh had promised, the other half of my saddle-

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bags was brought to me early in the morning, but emptied of the greater part of the contents. I was assured that nothing whatever remained belonging to me in the tents, and that anything which I missed would be found in the other encampment. We accordingly descended the mountain side to it, after having drunk the usual coffee. The sheikh who had offered to protect me when attacked by the Arabs on the previous day, and had endeavoured to persuade me to deliver up my gun, received us. Ahmed addressed him and his followers in a speech somewhat similar to the one he had made to Sheikh Mahmoud. But it had not the same effect. The Arabs who had assembled scowled at me, and seemed disposed to resent his interference. Amongst them I recognised Beshire, the stupid savage who had thrown his lance at me. 'Who is this, man,' he exclaimed, 'who calls himself a Frank and the guest of Abu-Dhaouk? How do we know that he is not a Jew? By what law is the Arab compelled to restore that which he has once taken? Are we not entitled after what has happened to have his blood? And who is the Mujelli and his son, that we are to obey them and to give up at their bidding that which of right belongs to us?' At these words an old man, who had been very active during the attack upon me the day before, drew his sword, and flourishing it over his head, declared that he would retain what he possessed of my property whether the Mujelli's son wished it or not. Other bystanders also then drew their swords, and all of them began gesticulating violently and screaming at the top of their voices like madmen.

During this scene Ahmed remained silent and apparently indifferent, quietly smoking his short chibuk. When the noise had somewhat subsided, he ordered one of his attendants to bring him his horse, and was preparing to leave without making any answer to the speeches in which his authority and that of his father had been defied. The sheikh of the encampment, who had continued seated by his side, and had hitherto taken no part in the tumult, now interposed. I had come to Kerak, he said, under the protection of the sheikh of the Jehalin, and as the guest of the

Mujelli. Had this been properly explained to his tribe, I should not have been molested. What had occurred had been the consequence of a misunderstanding, and my property ought therefore to be given back to me. The majority of the bystanders appeared to agree with him. After an animated discussion the old man who was the first to draw his sword, which he had continued to flourish at me in a menacing manner, was induced to sheath it, and Beshire was compelled to yield. He went sulkily to his tent, and returning soon after with my cloak threw it in an insolent manner to me, and, swearing by the Prophet that it was all he had belonging to me, retired, muttering curses upon me. Various articles of clothing appeared one by one and slowly; but some of them had already been turned to account by the robbers. My second shirt had been cut up into three to clothe some naked children, and an Arab had ingeniously converted my only spare trousers into a jacket.

It was midday before a mess of bread soaked in gravy and melted butter was brought to us for breakfast, and as it became evident that I should be unable to recover the few articles of little value which were still missing, I proposed to Ahmed to return to Kerak, well pleased that I had succeeded through his assistance in getting back the things which were of most importance to me, such as my medicines, maps, and books, and a few indispensable articles of clothing. Before leaving the tents I learnt that the three horsemen I had met in the desert before reaching Petra belonged to this tribe. They were returning from a plundering expedition, and would have followed and attacked me in the night had I not written down their names. This appeared to have alarmed them, as they fancied that I must have had some mysterious object in doing so.

As we rode back to Kerak, Ahmed informed me that the Arabs who had plundered me were notorious robbers; that they refused to pay taxes or tribute; and were only kept in something like subjection by their fear of the superior force of the Mujelli, who had on more than one occasion inflicted severe punishment upon them for their misdeeds.

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I was sent by Ahmed to lodge with a Christian named Ibrahim—an obliging fellow, who sought to do his best to entertain me, but who was miserably poor. His dwelling was a wretched hovel, dirty and swarming with vermin. The Mujelli's son presented me with the carcass of a small lean sheep, which my host boiled and of which he was glad to partake, as he had scarcely even a bit of dry bread to give me. No provisions were to be obtained in the town, which was a mere heap of ruins. The few Christian families of the Greek faith who still lingered among them were reduced to an almost starving condition. Ibrahim pathetically described their sufferings to me. Neither their lives nor the little property they possessed were secure, and, whilst cruelly oppressed and taxed within the walls, they dared not venture outside of them for fear of being murdered, or plundered, by the lawless tribes which inhabited the surrounding country.

The Christian inhabitants were then about three hundred in number, and possessed a small church served by a solitary priest. The whole population only amounted to between eight and nine hundred souls.

I spent the greater part of the day after my arrival in visiting the ruins, accompanied by Ahmed. I was greatly struck by the commanding position of the castle, and by its massive walls, which had resisted the attempts of the Egyptian troops to destroy them. One tower constructed of solid masonry still remained uninjured. The rock upon which it was built had been scarped, and the mountain side had been coated in parts with slabs of stone, like the artificial mounds upon which stand the castles of Aleppo and Harem. The only access to it had been by the vaulted passage cut through the rock, by which I had entered the town. The position, which is not commanded from any of the surrounding heights, must have been one of great strength. Amongst the ruins I discovered the remains of an ancient Christian church, upon the walls of which were still to be seen some rude religious paintings.

I was anxious to proceed without delay on my journey. But Abu-Dhaouk's camels had returned to his tents with

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Awad, and I was unable to obtain others to take me to Rabbath Ammon and Jerash. Those who possessed any, or who had horses or mules, refused to hire them to me. The desert through which I should have to pass was exposed, they said, to constant forays from the Bedouins, and without the protection of one of their sheikhs and an escort of horsemen, it would be impossible for me to travel in it. I should be plundered and perhaps murdered, and they would lose their camels. I soon discovered that there was an intrigue at the bottom of these difficulties. Ahmed, who had professed to be my friend and to consider it a sacred duty to recover the property of his father's guest, was not so disinterested in the matter as he appeared to be. If he had enabled me to recover the articles of which I had been robbed, it was only with a view to secure the best part of them for himself.

He began by begging for money, which I refused to give him. He then suggested that I might make him a present of my gun, and on my telling him that I would not part with it, asked for my pistols instead. Being still unsuccessful, he wanted my sword, then my carpet, and, lastly, my cloak. He had some good reason to give for each of these requests. He was going to be married, and wanted a carpet such as mine. He had to make a present to his brother, and my sword would exactly suit him. Finding that he could get nothing out of me, he tried to extort something from Antonio, asking in turn for his 'tarbush' or red cap, his jacket and his sash. The poor boy, alarmed at finding himself at the mercy of the Kerak Arabs, whom he greatly dreaded, was about to give way ; but I peremptorily ordered him not to part with any of his garments.

Ahmed had secretly forbidden the inhabitants to furnish me with camels or horses. Hence the difficulty I experienced in obtaining them. I learnt these intrigues from my Christian host, who behaved loyally to me, and gave me all the help in his power. A whole day was spent in wrangling and quarrelling. High words passed between Ahmed and myself. I reproached him for conduct so unworthy of an Arab who had boasted of his respect for the sacred rights

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of a guest, and ended by threatening to return at once on foot to Hebron, and to lay a complaint before Colonel Yusuf Effendi, holding him personally responsible for anything that might befall me on the way.

Finding that I was determined not to yield to the imposition which he sought to practise upon me, and fearing that his conduct towards me might bring his father into trouble with the Egyptian authorities, he came to me in the night to inform me that he expected one Suleiman-Ibn-Fais, a sheikh of the Beni-Sakk'r Bedouins, to pass through Kerak on the following day, on his return to his tents, which were probably pitched among the ruins of Ammon or in the neighbourhood. He would place me under the sheikh's protection, and would obtain his consent to my accompanying him. I should have to find the means of reaching his encampment; when we had arrived there, he would, no doubt, provide me with camels to perform the remainder of my journey. Ahmed offered to hire two mules for me, for which I should have to pay 120 piastres to the owner, with whom, I afterwards learnt, he was to divide the money. To avoid further altercation I consented to give this sum, and the mules were to be ready on the arrival of the Beni-Sakk'r chief.

Sheikh Suleiman-Ibn-Fais was a tall, handsome man of very dignified appearance, with regular features, bright, restless eyes, and a long bushy black beard, such as is rarely seen amongst Arabs. He wore the keffiyeh, from under which fell several long plaits of black hair. Under his striped Arab cloak was a robe of rich Damascus silk. In his girdle he carried a pair of silver-mounted pistols.

The sheikh stopped to eat bread at the house of Ahmed, who introduced me to him. He received me courteously and offered to take me to his encampment, which, as I had been informed, was near the ruins of Ammon. I should be his guest, and he would provide me with camels for the rest of my journey, which, under his protection, I should be able to perform with perfect safety. When the time came for our departure, instead of the two strong mules that I had been promised, I was offered a half-starved one for myself

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and a donkey for Antonio. I remonstrated, protesting against this fresh act of dishonesty and duplicity on the part of Ahmed. But he vowed that he had failed in his endeavours to obtain other animals, as the inhabitants of Kerak had been so completely pillaged by the Egyptians that they no longer possessed a horse, mule, or camel amongst them. As Suleiman-Ibn-Fais was in a hurry to leave, I was under the necessity of yielding, fearing to lose the opportunity of accompanying him.

Amidst all the troubles and vexations I suffered from the knavery of the son of the Mujelli, it was not a little pleasing to me to experience from the poor Christian, Ibrahim, a disinterested kindness and hospitality which were quite unexpected. When I offered to pay for my entertainment he absolutely refused to receive any remuneration whatever. Nor would his wife take the money I offered her. It was even with much difficulty that I prevailed upon him to allow me to give his little son some small silver coins. When the flour and butter which Ahmed had promised to procure for me as provisions for my journey were not forthcoming, the worthy pair insisted upon my accepting a small bag of the former out of their scanty store. They appeared to sympathise sincerely with my somewhat forlorn condition, and warned me of the danger that I was running by putting myself in the power of people whom they believed capable of every perfidy and crime. When I left them they devoutly offered up prayers for my safety, and earnestly entreated me to be on my guard during my journey.

Suleiman-Ibn-Fais was accompanied by a brother and by some horsemen. The party was joined by one Isaac of Hebron, a Jew pedlar, who traded in small wares with the Arabs of the desert between Kerak and Damascus. He had availed himself of the protection of the Beni Sakk'r chief to visit the encampments of the tribe for the purpose of selling his goods. We assembled at the entrance to the fortress. Ahmed sent a couple of armed men to see me safely through the Aranat Arabs, who might be disposed to revenge themselves for having had to restore to me what they considered their lawful property, fairly acquired after

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the Arab fashion. I descended the steep declivity on foot. Before crossing a small stream at the bottom of the valley my companions stopped for a few minutes to water their horses and to say their afternoon prayers. As I was making an effort to climb the high pack-saddle of my mule, upon which my carpet and other effects had been placed, I accidentally struck the hammer of one of the barrels of my gun, which went off. The ball with which it was loaded struck a rock hard by, and a splinter from it wounded in the face a deaf-and-dumb man who was among the sheikh's attendants, and drew blood. He was almost an idiot, and could not be made to understand that this slight wound was the result of an accident. Persuaded that I had purposely fired at him, he drew his sword and made towards me. Had not the sheikh been between us and hastened to seize him, he would probably have cut me down. During our journey he was constantly watching me with a very sinister expression, and I had to be on my guard against him, as I was convinced, as were my companions, that if he could find the opportunity he would do me some mischief.

We ascended by a very steep and stony path the hills which formed the opposite side of the valley, until we reached a platform upon the same level as Kerak, whose massive and picturesque walls and towers rose in front of us. The country upon which we had now entered was a barren undulating upland, the western edge of which, from the opposite side of the Dead Sea, presents the appearance of a ridge of mountains, known as those of Moab. It is a great plain which, considerably above the level of the Mediterranean, and overlooking at a great height the Dead Sea and valley of the Jordan, stretches far to the east towards the Euphrates—a desolate wilderness only frequented by wandering Arab tribes, yet with a soil capable of cultivation. At nightfall we reached an encampment. To my surprise I learnt that the tents were those of Christian Arabs, who, coming occasionally to Kerak, pasture their flocks, which are numerous, in the desert. I was informed that there were four similar encampments of Christians to the north-east of the town. We were hospitably received,

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two sheep being killed for our entertainment. I spent the night in the tent of the headman, who, finding that I was a Christian and a European, showed me much civility.

The night was bitterly cold. The tent was full of lambs and kids, which, walking and jumping upon me and alighting occasionally on my face, prevented me from sleeping. When I was ready to start I found Sheikh Suleiman-Ibn-Fais quietly drinking his coffee and smoking his chibuk, no preparation having been made for our departure. I asked him when we were to resume our journey. He replied that he could not take me to his tents, having business in another direction, unless I was prepared to pay him a sum of money, amounting to about thirty pounds, for escorting me. I refused to do so, and protested against the demand, threatening, if he persisted in it, to return at once to Kerak. He alleged that it was the invariable custom for Frank travellers to pay for the privilege of passing through the territory of the Bedouins when visiting ruins in the desert, and that the son of the Mujelli had assured him that I was a rich Englishman, and was willing to give the sum he required for affording me his protection. In consequence he had actually paid Ahmed a thousand piastres, in order to obtain the usual reward for conducting me to Ammon and Jerash.

I denounced Ahmed as a rogue and unworthy of the name of an Arab, as, having failed in his attempt to rob me himself, he had sought to induce the sheikh to do so. I declared that I would not, and in fact could not, pay what he asked, and that if he persisted in claiming it I must return to Kerak. Suleiman-Ibn-Fais insisted that at any rate I must repay him the thousand piastres he had given to the Mujelli's son. This I absolutely refused to do, and ordered the man who had accompanied me with the mule and donkey to saddle them and to take me back. But he replied that he had agreed to go with me to the sheikh's tents, where he had business, and that he would not, having come so far, return to Kerak. It was evident that he was in the plot for extorting money from me, and that I was entirely in the power of the Bedouin chief to whom Ahmed

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had, to all intents and purposes, sold me.[2] The Christian Arabs with whom we had passed the night were unable to assist me against a powerful sheikh, of whom they stood in fear; but their chief informed me secretly that I might remain in his tent until an opportunity offered for me to reach Kerak or Jerusalem. He assured me that as long as I was in his encampment I might consider myself in safety.

I accordingly told Suleiman-Ibn-Fais that he might recover, in the best way he could, the money of which he had been defrauded by Ahmed, and that, as the owner of the mule had refused to return with me to Kerak, I had made up my mind to remain where I was until I could communicate with the Egyptian Governor, or the British Consul at Jerusalem, who would no doubt find means to enable me to return to that place. I offered, at the same time, to pay a fair price for two camels to take me to Jerash, and hence across the Jordan to Tiberias, or any other place where I could be under the protection of the Egyptian authorities.

Seeing that I was determined not to pay the sum that he had demanded of me, he said that, as I was his guest, I might accompany him to his encampment and should enjoy his protection, leaving it to my generosity to give him such recompense as I thought fit. Then, cursing Ahmed very cordially, and denouncing him as 'a dog, the son of a dog,' for having cheated him, he ordered his mare to be brought to him and his attendants to mount. It was nearly midday before we left the tents, the whole morning having been spent in wrangling and disputing with him about money. Although he pressed me hard to pay him what he asked, or at any rate a part of it, he abstained from threats, and was courteous in his manner. His anger was chiefly directed against the son of the Mujelli, upon whom he swore to be revenged.

Our progress was slow, as Antonio and the Jew pedlar

[2] Canon Tristram and his party were, many years later (in 1872), the victims of the intrigues and roguery of the then Mujelli of Kerak, who was no other than my friend Ahmed. See *Land of Moab*. Canon Tristram informs me that Ahmed has since been killed in a marauding foray.

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were mounted on donkeys, which could not keep pace with the horses. Moreover, Arabs are rarely in a hurry. Early in the afternoon we reached another encampment of Christian Arabs. Suleiman-Ibn-Fais again announced his intention of stopping there for the night. It was useless to remonstrate, and I had to submit to a further loss of time. Two sheep were slain, and in addition to the meat a huge caldron, filled with prepared wheat boiled in camels' milk and saturated with rancid butter, was placed before us for supper. I observed in the morning that the sheikh no longer wore the handsome silk robe which I had remarked at Kerak. He explained to me, when I asked the reason, that he had given it to Ahmed in addition to the thousand piastres for the privilege of conducting me to the ruins, and he again broke out in curses upon the grasping and cunning youth who had outwitted him in so shameless a manner.

On the following morning, at a little more than an hour's distance from the tents at which we had passed the night, we found another encampment of Christian Arabs. Suleiman-Ibn-Fais dismounted there to breakfast. The chief, an old man, came out to meet him. They embraced each other after the manner of the Arabs, throwing their arms round each other's necks and kissing each other's shoulders. The sheikh, perceiving that I showed surprise, observed that they were old friends, and that, although his host was a Christian, he was an honest and upright man, which could not be said of some Musulmans—alluding to Ahmed, against whom he again broke out in invectives. We had to stop for nearly three hours, whilst two sheep, which had been dragged to the front of the tent, to be slain in our presence, were cooked for our entertainment. Our track then lay over barren undulating hills until we descended into a deep valley, or gully, called Wady Mojeb, through which a torrent, swollen by recent rains, rolled impetuously. We had to ford it. In the middle of the stream my mule—a weak, emaciated beast—was carried off its legs. It rolled over and I with it. I was entirely immersed in the water, and, with my carpet, and my saddle-bags and their contents, thoroughly drenched. We had to ascend the opposite side

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of the valley, and about nightfall reached an Arab encampment on a small plateau at a considerable elevation, where we stopped for the night.

I was wet through, and had no change of clothes. The night was cold, and rain began to fall, and soon penetrated through the tent. The Arabs lighted a fire and crouched round it, silent, and glaring at me with their bright glistening eyes. After some time they began whispering to each other, and finally to Suleiman-Ibn-Fais. It was evident that I was the subject of their conversation, and I learnt afterwards that they wished to know who the stranger was, whether I had money with me, and whether they had not a right to a share in it. They were of the tribe of Beni-Hamideh, and arrant robbers. When gazing on their swarthy and ignominious countenances, lighted up by the flaming logs, accustomed as I had of late been to the wild and savage inhabitants of this part of the desert, I thought that I had never before seen such a ferocious set of villains. I was by no means persuaded that I should be allowed to leave their tents with impunity, and what with the cold and my wet clothes and carpet, and with keeping watch the greater part of the night, with my gun ready in my hand, I had but little sleep.

I was not sorry when daylight appeared and Suleiman-Ibn-Fais gave orders for us to resume our journey. During the previous day he had been constantly pressing me to give him money—at any rate, enough to repay him what he had been cheated out of by the son of the Mujelli, and something in addition for the service he was rendering me in protecting me at no small risk, he declared, from the lawless tribes through which we were passing. He began again upon the same subject almost as soon as we were on our way. If I had no money with me, as I pretended, could I not give him a written order upon the Consul at Jerusalem for, say, 2,000 piastres? He would send one of his own men with it, and I should remain in his tents and visit the ruins until the messenger returned with that sum. I told him that I had no funds with the Consul, and that, if a ransom were exacted for my release, Ibrahim Pasha, upon the demand of

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the British Government, would inevitably have to find it, and would not fail to take measures to obtain its repayment, with a considerable addition for himself, so that in the end he, the sheikh, and his tribe, would probably be the losers. I advised him, therefore, as a friend, not to press me any further for money which I was unable to pay him, and to get rid, as soon as possible, of a troublesome guest, by accepting what I had offered him for the hire of two of his camels to Tiberias or Souf.

When we stopped early in the day at another encampment of Beni-Hamideh Arabs for breakfast, Suleiman-Ibn-Fais led me to a little distance from the tents, and, out of hearing, continued the discussion about money. He threatenened to leave me and to withdraw his protection unless I consented to his demand. As I still refused, and a somewhat warm altercation ensued, the dumb man whom I had accidentally wounded when leaving Kerak, and who had been constantly watching me, seeing me return, fancied that I had satisfied the sheikh. He took aside a cunning and brutal-looking fellow who had just arrived—a sheikh of the Salati, a small tribe of very evil repute. By signs he made this man understand that I had a large sum of money in my possession, and that if they could put me out of the way they might share it between them. The sheikh, however, questioned Suleiman-Ibn-Fais as to the property I was alleged to have with me, my appearance and the manner in which I was travelling not tending to confirm what the dumb man had told him. Suleiman-Ibn-Fais replied that I was under his protection, and that any money I might have with me of right belonged to him. But the sheikh endeavoured to convince him that he could contrive my death so that no blame should fall upon him, and that they could then divide the spoil. However, Suleiman-Ibn-Fais, although greedy for money like all those Arabs who have been brought into contact with Europeans, had sufficient sense of his duty as a Musulman not to rob or betray a guest who had eaten bread with him. Moreover, he probably feared lest, having accepted the charge of me from the son of the Mujelli, to whom I had been recommended by the

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Egyptian authorities, he would be held responsible by them for anything that might befall me.

He came, therefore, to me, and related what had passed between the Salati sheikh and himself. He warned me, at the same time, against the dumb man, who, he said, was a desperate madman, and had resolved to have my blood in return for his own which I had shed. Particularly at night, he said, I ought to be on my guard. I replied that I had been on the watch, and had determined to shoot the fellow if I had any reason to suspect that he was about to attack me. Suleiman-Ibn-Fais gave me to understand that he had no objection whatever to my doing so, but that, on the contrary, I should be rendering him a service if I freed him from a troublesome follower.

We had to waste several hours, as the women were obliged to go to some distance to fetch water to boil the sheep which had been killed for us. It was three o'clock before we were again in motion. At sunset we descended into another of the deep ravines, between lofty precipitous cliffs, through which the waters of Moab are drained into the Jordan. In it we found a few tents of the Salati Arabs.

Next day the ruins of Um-Rasas, an ancient city with Christian churches, were visible in the distance, marked by a great solitary tower rising from the undulating plain. I could not persuade Suleiman-Ibn-Fais to deviate from his route in order that I might examine them, and I could not, without exposing myself to some danger, leave the party and go to them alone. Any Arabs that I might meet would assuredly have robbed me, and the sheikh warned me that he would not consider himself responsible for what might happen to me.

We made a very short day's journey, stopping at every encampment we saw, and winding amongst the low hills without following any direct track or going in any particular direction. I again remonstrated with the sheikh. He replied by making fresh attempts to extort money from me. It was evident that he was leading me about the country and purposely avoiding his tents, which could not be far distant, in the hope of getting from me in the end what he

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wanted. I threatened to leave him and to proceed alone to the ruins of Ammon. But a fresh difficulty then arose. The Arab, with the mule and donkey from Kerak, declared that he would go no further unless I gave him some money by way of bakshish. Irritated beyond measure by the vexatious proceedings of Suleiman-Ibn-Fais, and losing all patience, I pointed a pistol at the head of the man, menacing to shoot him if he interfered with Antonio, whom I ordered to load the animals. I then drove them before me, leaving the owner to follow us.

We passed during our short day's ride several ruins of ancient towns or villages, which the Arabs declared had formerly belonged to the Jews. The houses, many of which were still well preserved and of considerable size, were constructed of solid stone masonry, and contained low vaulted chambers. The entrances to some of them were formed by stone slabs carved with ornaments.

On the following day we came to a massive dike, about fourteen feet thick, built of large dressed stones across a small valley, so as to form a spacious reservoir, which was then empty. There was an opening in the centre where there had apparently been a flood-gate or sluice, and on either side of it square outlets, on the sides of which the grooves for raising and lowering gates for regulating the supply of water could be traced.

The next ruins we passed were those of Ziza. They consisted of remains of buildings stretching far into the desert, and probably situated on the ancient highway which I had remarked two days before. Soon afterwards we crossed the broad, well-trodden track followed by pilgrims to Mecca. We spent the night in some Arab tents which had been pitched near the remains of a spacious and magnificent building in a style of architecture unknown to me. Ornaments of great delicacy and beauty, carved in the solid stone masonry, covered a part of its façade, decorated the doors and windows, and were carried in bands round the walls. I passed the morning wandering about the ruins, lost in admiration and astonishment at these remains, and speculating as to the origin and history of this mar-

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vellous palace thus rising in the midst of the desert. The extreme solitude and desolation of the site was only broken by the occasional appearance of a half-naked Arab, who was curiously watching my movements, persuaded that I was searching for treasure. The suspicion with which I was regarded prevented me from making even a slight sketch of these ruins, which the Arabs called Sheta, or Mashita.[3]

We were now at no great distance from Suleiman-Ibn-Fais' tents. Being at last satisfied that he could get no money from me by further delays, and perceiving that I seemed rather pleased than otherwise by the opportunity which his erratic movements gave me of seeing something of the desert, he thought it better to lose no more time. He learnt from some Arabs, whom we found moving to fresh pastures, where his family and immediate followers had encamped, and made up his mind to join them. After some hours' ride we came in sight of a multitude of camels, and, in the distance, flocks of sheep feeding on the hill-sides. The sheikh recognised his own herdsmen, and a number of Arabs soon gathered round him to welcome him back. Accompanied by a crowd which rapidly increased as we went along, we rode to his spacious black tent. As I was to be his guest, I alighted at it, whilst the remainder of the party sought their own homes or were received elsewhere.

The following day one of the principal men of the tribe gave a banquet to celebrate Suleiman-Ibn-Fais' return. I was invited to it. Several sheep were killed, and their boiled flesh, hot and steaming, was brought in large caldrons, accompanied by the usual wooden bowls containing bread soaked in the gravy, over which sour curds and melted butter had been poured. One of the sheikh's cousins from a neighbouring encampment, with about a hundred armed followers, and as many more Arabs, had

[3] In 1872 these ruins were visited and described by Canon Tristram, *Land of Moab*, chap. xi., and the drawings and photographs he made of them enabled the late Mr. Fergusson to identify them as the remains of a palace of the Persian kings of the Sassanian dynasty, whose vast empire extended over Palestine to the Mediterranean Sea.

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been bidden to the feast. The guests squatted on the ground in a semicircle outside the tent. The sheikh and I sat in the place of honour within, and the most delicate morsels were put into a bowl specially reserved for us. After those who had been invited to the feast had satisfied themselves, a promiscuous crowd of men gathered round the caldrons, and when they had eaten the children were allowed to have the few remaining fragments and to pick the bones. The Arab who had given the entertainment walked, with some of his relatives, round and round the seated groups, superintending the distribution of the viands and inviting his guests to partake of them. Coffee was then served to all, and after they had smoked their pipes they dispersed.

I had now become the guest of the Beni Sakk'r sheikh. He discontinued his attempts to extort money from me, dropped all reference to the subject, and treated me with civility and distinction. His wives made savoury dishes for me. He gave me all the information I asked for concerning him and his people. Even when he was persecuting me for bakshish and presents, I had found him far more liberal and less prejudiced than other Arabs I had met. He did not appear to entertain any suspicion as to my object in travelling in the desert, helped me in obtaining the names of places, and even went out of his way to point out any ruins that he thought might have some interest for me. With the exception of the annoyance to which I had been subjected during our journey by his unceasing demands for money, I had every reason to be satisfied with him. Having persuaded himself that there was none to be obtained from me, and that I had placed myself entirely in his power relying upon the respect which every true Arab should feel for a guest, the better part of his character showed itself, and he sought to justify the good opinion which I endeavoured to make him understand that I had formed of him.[4]

[4] In my subsequent intercourse with the Bedouins I had frequent occasion to observe this double character in the Arab. The same man who at one moment would be grasping, deceitful, treacherous, and cruel,

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Suleiman-Ibn-Fais was a Bedouin chief of some power and importance. His encampment was by far the largest I had yet seen. He possessed several well-bred mares, and could command a considerable body of horsemen. In war he was accustomed to wear a suit of chain armour, which he showed me, and which he informed me had been handed down from generation to generation in his family. Many other sheikhs, he said, possessed similar suits. His gun and his pistols were of English manufacture. He had four wives, and was the owner of several herds of camels and of large flocks of sheep and goats, whose wool and hair formed his principal wealth, being sold to the wandering pedlars who acted as agents for merchants over the Syrian border. He was renowned among the Arabs for his hospitality, and the portion of his tent set aside for guests was always full.

I was awoke early one morning by a general movement among the Arabs. They were about to go further into the desert in search of pasture. The greater number of the tents had been already thrown down ; the boys were driving away the flocks with loud cries ; the women were busy collecting their property, screaming and gesticulating ; and the men were placing loads of tent furniture and domestic utensils upon the groaning camels.

As I had no wish to accompany the tribe further into the desert, and was anxious to reach Ammon, which I knew to be in the opposite direction, I begged Suleiman-Ibn-Fais to let me have the two camels which he had promised to furnish me with. After some time spent in searching for them, he returned to say that two camels could not be procured, as they were all required for carrying tents and loads, as the tribe was moving and would probably be on the march for two or three days. But he offered me instead one of his own horses, and a camel for Antonio and my little baggage, and begged me to accept some rice, coffee,

would show himself at another generous, faithful, trustworthy, and humane. The very opposite opinions which travellers, and those who have been brought into contact with the wild independent inhabitants of the desert, have been led to form of them, may be accounted for by this singular mixture of good and bad qualities.

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and sugar as provisions for my journey. He proposed to accompany me to the tents of a sheikh under whose protection he would place me, and who would conduct me to Ammon and Jerash. We left together the moving mass of human beings, flocks and herds, and took a north-westerly course across some low hills.

We passed during our ride several ruins. Near the remains of an ancient town, which the sheikh called Leban, we came upon a spacious and well-constructed reservoir, which still contained a supply of water and was surrounded by sheep and camels, which had been brought there to drink. At midday we stopped at some tents for breakfast. Taking me aside, he informed me that he was compelled to leave me, as he was required to superintend the removal of his tents and to choose a new site for them. He would, however, he said, make arrangements with the sheikh of the encampment, who would furnish me with camels to continue my journey. But no camels were forthcoming, and I had to be satisfied with a wretched horse for myself and a donkey for Antonio. I remonstrated with Suleiman-Ibn-Fais at being thus left by him after he had promised to conduct me to Ammon, but without avail. He assured me that the sheikh under whose protection he had placed me was entirely to be trusted, and it was understood that I was not to be charged for the animals with which he had furnished me, as I had already paid for camels as far as Souf.

He then embraced me after the Arab fashion, and we parted good friends. He mounted his mare and galloped off in the direction of his moving tribe. Accompanied by the sheikh to whom he had confided me, and whose appearance was far from prepossessing, and by Isaac of Hebron, who still believed that under my protection he could reach Damascus, I took the track to Ammon. On our way we passed several ruins, amongst them a large reservoir, on the summit of a hill; an extensive square building of stone masonry, with a cornice and an ornamented gateway; the remains of a small Ionic temple, of which two columns were still standing, surrounded by the shafts of others, and fragments of architraves; and the walls and foundations of

various edifices. The name assigned to these ruins was Zug. At a short distance from them I observed some extensive quarries, from which stone for building purposes had been anciently taken.

It was dark before we reached the ruins of Ammon. We could see among them the fires of some Arab tents, which we had, however, some difficulty in reaching, as the ground was encumbered with fallen masonry and rubbish. We were hospitably received, and the customary sheep killed for our entertainment.

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## CHAPTER III

*The ruins of Ammon—Sheikh Suleiman Shibli—Fortunate escape—A funeral—The plague—Reach Jerash—Description of the ruins—Isaac of Hebron—The plague at Remtheh—Irbid—A Bashi-Bozuk—Cross the Jordan—Maäd—Deserted by my guide—Tiberias—Hyam, a Jew—His generosity—Safed—The Jew Shimoth—Effects of the earthquake—An Arab muleteer and his wife—Start for Damascus—Robbed by deserters—Kaferhowar—Evading the quarantine—Escape from arrest—Arrival at Damascus.*

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At daybreak on the following morning I began my examination of the ruins. They were very extensive, of great interest, and very picturesque, and occupied a long narrow valley enclosed by precipitous rocks, and a second and much smaller ravine leading out of it. Solid walls of dressed stone built across the valley formed the boundaries of the city, which was divided into two parts by a small stream. I was able to make a rough plan of it, indicating the sites of the principal buildings. They consisted of a small temple of a highly florid Corinthian order—the façade of which was almost entire and the vaulted interior elaborately sculptured; a building of which the walls, the arched entrance, and a square tower were standing still; a second large edifice, with sculptured doorway; a third, still more extensive, on the bank of the stream, with remains of two stories, and containing several vaulted rooms, and part of a portico, with the shafts of four lofty columns; and the great temple, of the Composite order, of which ten fine columns, with cornice and pediment, and many elaborately sculptured ornaments, still existed. The theatre was the most magnificent and best preserved building that I saw at Ammon. It was partly cut out of the side of a cliff, through which some of the vaulted passages leading to different parts of it were

carried. It had three rows of seats or gradines, with a recess in the upper row, to which there was access by a square doorway, and which, with two small apsides, richly decorated, formed the box or tribune for the president of the games, or of the Roman governor of the province. Eight columns, a part of the proscenium, were still standing. The height of the whole building, as far as I could ascertain from hasty measurements, was about 112 feet on the outside. On either bank of the stream, which was still crossed by a Roman bridge, were the remains of quays and streets paved with large square flags. Other ruins of temples, monuments, and public and private buildings, among which sheep were feeding, were to be seen on all sides. The city was dominated by a spacious castle, of which the massive stone walls and numerous excavated passages and vaulted chambers still remained. It stood upon the lofty cliff at the junction of the two valleys. Walls and fortifications were also to be traced on the heights around.

The ruins of Ammon could not fail to impress me, both from their extreme beauty and picturesqueness and from the strange character of the surrounding scenery. At the same time they enabled me to form some conception of the grandeur and might of the Roman Empire. That a city so far removed from the capital, and built almost in the desert, should have been adorned with so many splendid monuments—temples, theatres, and public edifices—afforded one of the most striking proofs of the marvellous energy and splendid enterprise of that great people who had subjected the world. Such remains as these show the greatness of Rome, and the influence she exercised wherever she could establish her rule.

It is remarkable that the original names of such cities as Ammon, Jerash, and Baalbec are still retained by the wandering Arabs who encamp among their ruins, although they were occupied and probably rebuilt, and owed all their splendour to the Romans, who gave them the names by which they are best known in history—Philadelphia, Gerasa, and Heliopolis—thus affording a valuable proof of the vitality of traditions in the East.

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The sheikh in whose charge I had been placed by Suleiman-Ibn-Fais followed me closely during my exploration of the ruins, and expressed great anxiety that I should bring it to an end as soon as possible. As I perceived several suspicious-looking fellows, who carried firearms, watching my movements, I deemed it prudent to follow his advice. Having spent some hours in examining the remains of the city and in making notes, I returned with him to the tents, and after having eaten continued my journey to Jerash.

We left the narrow valley of Ammon, and entered upon an undulating country, bounded to the east by the range of Gebel Hauran, now covered with snow. The soil appeared to be fertile and capable of cultivation, and I observed here and there green patches of corn and barley, and there were groves of trees in the distance. Peasants, too, were to be occasionally seen driving the plough. I felt as if I were leaving the desert and entering a country with settled inhabitants, and under some kind of government, and that I should no longer have difficulties and dangers to apprehend from the lawless tribes which infest the Syrian borders. I was doomed to disappointment.

We had reached the ruins of an ancient reservoir and of a large building near some trees, when I observed a party of Arabs seated on the grass. Their tufted spears were fixed upright in the ground, and near them were picketed their mares. My guide recognised the men, and coming to me in great alarm told me that they were a certain Sheikh Suleiman Shibli, of the Adwan Arabs, and some of his followers. They were, he said, notorious robbers, and would certainly not respect the protection which Suleiman-Ibn-Fais had given me. I must make up my mind, therefore, to be plundered of all that I had.

It was too late to retreat. As I had been perceived, it appeared to me that my best course was to advance without showing any signs of distrust. I accordingly went towards the seated Arabs, and, giving them the usual salutation, dismounted and took a place in the circle which they formed. My guide placed himself next to the sheikh, who imme-

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diately began to question him about me. I could judge by the expression of fear on the countenance of Antonio, who was near enough to overhear what passed between the two, that what the sheikh was saying boded no good to me. When the conversation came to an end I was informed that Suleiman-Ibn-Fais exercised no authority over the tribe to which the country I had entered belonged. The sheikh then demanded the immediate payment of a thousand piastres for permission to proceed on my journey. As resistance would have been impossible in the face of some twenty armed men, I endeavoured to diplomatise, and replied that I was under the special protection of the Egyptian authorities, and notably of Suleiman Pasha (the well-known French Colonel Seve), and that I consequently declined to pay what he asked. I added that even were I disposed to do so, I had not the money with me, and that he would have to answer to Ibrahim Pasha should any attempt be made to rob me. At the same time I handed him a letter which had been given to me by Suleiman Pasha for the Mudir of Acre, but which I had not delivered, thinking that he would be unable to read it, and that an official document with a big seal upon it would make some impression upon him.

Unfortunately there was a Mullah of the party, to whom he gave the letter, and who read it out in a loud voice. As it simply recommended me to the good offices of the Mudir, it did not produce the effect that I had expected. The sheikh renewed his demand in peremptory terms, threatening not only to seize my effects, but even 'to cut off my head,' as Antonio translated his menace, unless I at once paid him the money he asked for. He had that mien of mingled suspicion, greed, and cunning which seems peculiar to the Arabs who live on the confines of the Syrian desert and have been corrupted by their intercourse with the Turkish authorities, European travellers, and the village settlers in the adjoining districts. He appeared fully capable of putting his threat into execution, and his followers looked as if they were eager to assist him in doing so.

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I repeated that I had no money with me, and I told him that my little baggage was absolutely valueless, as he might satisfy himself by examining it ; that to rob and illtreat me would inevitably get him into serious trouble, as the Egyptian authorities would surely call him to account for any injury that might befall me ; and that, if he would accompany me to Sheikh Abdu'l-Azeez, whose tents were near Jerash, and for whom I had a letter, I might succeed, by the help of that chief, in coming to some arrangement with him. He asked for the letter, which I gave him. He passed it on to the Mullah, who opened it and read it aloud. When Sheikh Suleiman Shibli heard its contents his manner suddenly changed. He said that it concerned himself, as it was an answer to a request that he had made through Sheikh Abdu'l-Azeez, who was his uncle, to the English Consul at Jerusalem (from whom I had received it) for his intervention in some important matter. He then thanked me for bringing the letter, and said that I might now consider myself under his special protection, and invited me to his tents, which were not far off. I should remain for a day or two his guest, and he would then send an escort with me to Jerash, and even as far as Damascus, if I desired it.

Matters having thus been amicably settled, the sheikh and his followers proceeded to the business which had brought them to the spot. I then perceived that they were seated in a Musulman cemetery. They had come there to bury a dead Arab. The body, which was that of an old man, had been covered with rushes, which were removed. It was then washed and wrapped in a winding-sheet of white linen, the Mullah, who had been brought there for the purpose, repeating the customary prayers and going through the prescribed ceremonies. The corpse was then laid in a shallow grave, and covered with earth and loose stones. A woman, the widow of the dead man, began a dismal moaning and howling, striking her breast and tearing her hair.

I was struck by the appearance of the body, which had a livid aspect, as if the man had met with a violent end. I asked Sheikh Suleiman Shibli the cause of his death.

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'The plague,' he answered, 'and he is the third who has died of it in my tents since yesterday' (pointing to two other fresh-made graves). This was said with the careless indifference which is characteristic of Musulman fatalism in the presence of this most dire disease and almost certain death. But I felt that it would be better to hasten away from the polluted spot, and I declined as civilly as I could the invitation to his tents—an invitation which my guide had counselled me not to accept, as my host, he declared, was not to be trusted.

When the burial was over the sheikh took aside Isaac of Hebron, who still followed me on his ass, and whispered something in his ear. Returning to me, he abruptly informed me that the road to Jerash was open, and that I could proceed thither in safety, and that he was unable to give me an escort as he had promised. Although somewhat surprised at this sudden change, I was by no means displeased with it. As he could not furnish me with an escort, I asked him to give me a written document which I could show to any Arabs of his tribe whom I might chance to meet on the way, and who might be disposed to molest me. After some demur he consented. He directed the Mullah to write a kind of certificate of my being under his protection, to which he affixed his seal. I was not sorry to give him the parting salutation, and to hasten away from the plague-infected party.

Isaac of Hebron explained to me the cause of the sheikh's sudden change of manner. Suleiman Shibli had called him aside to question him as to the property that I had with me. Having satisfied himself that I was really without money, and that my effects were not worth having, he no longer wished to have me as a guest in his tent, and withdrew the offer of an escort, for which he had hoped to be paid, or at least to receive an adequate present. Isaac and my guide told me that I might consider myself fortunate in having escaped from a most notorious robber. I congratulated myself most on having escaped passing a night in an encampment where the plague was raging.

The greater part of the day had been spent in these

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discussions, and soon after we had resumed our journey night set in. Although my guide had learnt that an encampment of Arabs was near, he was ignorant of its site. We wandered about, uncertain which way to go. At last we perceived a distant light, and, striking across the rough country, we reached some Arab tents. Before entering them my guide suggested that I should give over my saddle-bags to him. He placed them in a bag of his own, as the owners of the tents, he said, were well-known thieves, and would pilfer anything within their reach. We found a group of wild-looking Arabs gathered round a blazing fire. We dismounted and seated ourselves amongst them, and had no reason to complain of any want of hospitality, for we were welcomed to the fire, which gave an agreeable warmth in the cold, keen air of the desert, and, although our arrival had been late and unexpected, a sheep was slain and cooked for us before we lay down to sleep.

I learnt in the morning that the plague had appeared in the encampment, and that it prevailed among all the tribes in this part of the Syrian desert. But what was still worse news, I was told that the Egyptian authorities had established a strict quarantine on the Syrian frontier, and that a line of guards prevented all communication with the country to the west of the Jordan. As I was now only within two hours and a half of Jerash, I determined to proceed there at once, and to decide upon my future plans after I had visited the ruins.

I left the Arab tents before daylight, and early in the morning entered a narrow valley, through which wound a clear stream. Upon its banks, and reaching the steep hills on either side, rose the ruins of Jerash. I was enchanted by the wonderful beauty of the scene, and surprised at the extent and magnificence of the remains. On all sides I saw long avenues of graceful columns leading to temples, theatres, baths, and public edifices, constructed of marble, to which time had given a bright pinkish-yellow tint. Battlemented walls with square towers encircled the city and were carried over the heights above. Outside them were numerous tombs of richly decorated architecture, and

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sarcophagi which at some remote period had been opened and rifled.

Leaving my Arab boy and Isaac of Hebron to find a night's resting-place for me, I commenced at once an examination of the ruins. They were divided into two parts by a broad street, ending in a triumphal arch at its southern, and a fine gateway at its northern extremity. It was paved with large flags, upon which the marks of chariot wheels could still be traced. On either side of it there had been a double row of Ionic and Corinthian columns, of which 153 remained erect. This colonnade opened at one place into an oval of large dimensions, formed by pillars of the Ionic order—probably the Forum; and at others into squares and circles, whence streets branched off leading to public buildings. I counted altogether about 250 columns still standing in different parts of the ruins. Innumerable shafts and capitals of others were lying on the ground partly concealed by brushwood.

On either side of this magnificent thoroughfare, which led through the centre of the city from one end to the other, were the great public edifices, and among them several temples. Two of these were of considerable size, and of the rich and profusely decorated Corinthian architecture of the time of the Antonines. The larger of the two had been dedicated to the Sun, as shown by an existing inscription, and stood in an immense double peristyle court.

I found the ruins of two theatres, with their gradines and principal entrances and passages still well preserved. The proscenium of the largest, with its numerous columns and its rich friezes, entablature, and decoration of the most florid Corinthian order, had escaped destruction.

Near the southern entrance was a vast artificial reservoir which, fed by an aqueduct, supplied the city with water.

As it was the winter season I saw the valley at an unfavourable time, the trees not being in leaf, and the oleanders and other shrubs not in flower. But I could judge of its natural fertility, and could picture to myself its extreme loveliness in spring, with its multitude of graceful columns and the majestic ruins of the city rising out of a bed of ver-

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dure enamelled with flowers, or embedded later in the year in the tinted foliage of a Syrian autumn.

The only tenants of the ruins were a few poor Arab families, some of whom were living in tents, others in the vaulted chambers of the temples or in tombs ; others, again, in huts rudely constructed of fragments of ancient buildings, amongst which were exquisite architectural ornaments and mutilated Greek inscriptions. Upon the roof of one of these huts Antonio had spread my carpet, and I endeavoured to seek some rest after my long day's labour among the ruins. But I was soon surrounded by a crowd of Arabs, with forbidding countenances, who gave me no peace. I was not sorry to have as a companion in my night's quarters a Bashi-Bozuk belonging to Ibrahim Pasha's irregular cavalry, who had been sent to the tribes on the borders of the desert to collect some taxes. Had it not been for his presence I should probably have been relieved of the little property that was left to me

When I came to discuss the means of continuing my journey on the following day, I found these Arabs insolent and extortionate. After a long wrangle, during which the Bashi-Bozuk gave me what help he could, I was promised a horse for myself and a donkey for Antonio on the morrow, as far as the village of Remtheh, for which I agreed to pay fifteen piastres. I now discovered that I owed many of my troubles and difficulties to Isaac of Hebron, who had played me false, having been, during the time he had been with me, in league with the Arab sheikhs in their attempts to extort money from me. He was, I found, to have a share in what I paid for the hire of the animals to Remtheh. When I taxed him with his dishonesty he pretended that without his assistance I could not have passed through the desert, nor should I be able to reach the Syrian frontier, where I should be under the protection of the Egyptian authorities. He threatened to leave me unless I agreed to pay him a sum of money. I peremptorily refused to give him anything, and bade him go his way as I had no need of his help. On the contrary, I was convinced that it was owing to his having been with me that he himself had so far travelled in

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safety. But the sheikh of Jerash, instigated by him, refused to let me have the horse he had agreed to give me if we parted company. I threatened to denounce the Jew to the Governor of Hebron, where his family resided, and where, consequently, he was well known. As he perceived that the Bashi-Bozuk was observing him with no very friendly eye, and might be a witness against him, he ended by making excuses to me for his conduct.

Wearied by my day's work, and by the angry discussion with Isaac and the Arabs, I retired for the night to a vault in the ruins of the principal theatre, the arena of which the sheikh used as a fold for his sheep and camels. Notwithstanding the high words which had passed between us, and the attempt to cheat me of a few piastres, not to be wanting in hospitality, he killed a kid for my supper.

I was up with the dawn and ready to proceed on my journey, but it was sunrise before the sheikh who was to accompany me could catch his mare, which was grazing among the ruins. We had scarcely left them when we perceived a man who was endeavouring to yoke two refractory oxen to a plough. The sheikh declared that the land to be ploughed belonged to him, and asked that he might help the labourer. Without waiting for a reply he galloped off after one of the oxen which had made its escape. It was a full hour before he returned with the beast. I was vexed and irritated by the delay, as I had a long day's journey before me, and the progress of the donkey which carried Antonio and my little property was very slow. The country was pleasingly diversified with low hills and narrow valleys, and was well-wooded with oak, having a park-like appearance. From the higher ground the eye ranged over an extensive and beautiful prospect. In the distance were the snowy summits of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ; beneath stretched a vast plain, lost to sight in the distance towards Damascus ; and to the right were the mountains of the Hauran, also white with snow.

The sheikh pretended that I ran great danger during the day from Arab robbers, who, he said, were wandering about the country in bands, concealing themselves among

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the hills and waylaying and murdering travellers. However, we saw nothing of them, and the only human being we met was a solitary shepherd tending a flock of sheep. After descending in the evening into a treeless plain and passing one or two small Arab encampments, we arrived at nightfall at Remtheh, a miserable village of ruined huts.

I was compelled to take up my quarters for the night in a room already half-filled with travellers. The rain had begun to fall in torrents, and they, with myself, sought shelter from it in this filthy hovel. But I felt disposed to leave it and the village, and to continue my journey, even on foot, when I learnt that the plague was raging in the place, and that some of the inhabitants had died of it on that very day. The sheikh, however, refused to accompany me. I was ignorant of the road, and to have ventured to cross alone and in the darkness this wild and deserted plain, would have been to run no slight risk. I had, therefore, to resign myself to passing the night in the close and infectious atmosphere of the crowded hut.

The intelligence that, owing to the existence of the plague in the Hauran, no one was allowed to enter from the east the neighbouring Pashalic of Damascus, the frontier of which was strictly watched and guarded by patrols of irregular cavalry, caused me the most serious anxiety. Only two days' journey separated me from the city; but the villagers, who had congregated in the room when they heard of the arrival of a stranger and a Frank, declared that it would be impossible to reach it by the direct road. Isaac of Hebron, and some pedlars, who like himself were trading with the Arab tribes, held a consultation as to the best means of avoiding the guards. It was suggested that, by again striking into the desert and going north for a considerable distance, I might be able to enter the Pashalic by a part of the frontier which was not watched by them. But five or six days would be required for the journey. I was so anxious to reach Damascus, where I expected to rejoin my travelling companion, Mr. Mitford, who had now been waiting for me far beyond the time at which I had agreed to meet him there, that I was determined to run the risk of

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being again stopped rather than remain for an indefinite period in this plague-stricken district.

In the village there were a few Christians. They offered to provide me with two horses, but taking advantage of my difficulties, and greatly exaggerating the risks and dangers of the journey, they demanded the most exorbitant hire for them. They were in no respect better than their Musulman neighbours, from whom they did not differ in appearance, and indeed were more difficult to deal with, and were, if possible, even more grasping than the Arabs. At length, after prolonged bargaining which lasted into the middle of the night, one of them agreed to provide me with two mules and to take me to Damascus in four days. As I was unwilling to part with the little money that still remained to me, I gave a written promise to pay their hire on my arrival there.

I slept little, as may be supposed. The room was filled with villagers during the greater part of the night. Many of them had been in contact during the day with persons who were dying, or had died, of the plague. Some were perhaps already infected with the fatal disease, and were shortly to be its victims. I had learned that it was making terrible ravages throughout the Hauran, and among the Arab tribes on its borders. I determined therefore to leave the place as soon as I possibly could, and at whatever risk.

Before dawn I was afoot. After some trouble I found the Christian who had agreed to let me have the mules. But he had changed his mind for some reason or another during the night, and refused to fulfil his engagement. There was no one in the village to whom I could appeal to compel him to do so. Although the rule of Ibrahim Pasha nominally extended over the Hauran, there were no official authorities with power to enforce it in this district, which had always been known for its lawlessness. No one seemed disposed to run the risk of falling, with his animals, into the hands of the guards who were watching the frontier, and of being punished with death for an attempt to violate the quarantine.

After much reflection I convinced myself that the plan

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suggested by the pedlar, to enter the Pashalic of Damascus by a northern route and thus to evade the quarantine, was impracticable ; or, at any rate, that, situated as I was, it would be foolish for me to attempt it, and to place myself again in the power of the robber Arab tribes from which I had just had the good fortune to escape. I determined, therefore, to turn southwards again, and to make my way as I best could across the Jordan to Tiberias. But I endeavoured in vain to obtain a horse or mule, or even a donkey, to carry me and my few effects. I could not even find a guide to go with me when I proposed to perform the journey on foot. At last, when I had been driven almost to despair and scarcely knew which way to turn, an Arab offered to let me have two camels as far as Tiberias, asking, however, the exorbitant price of one hundred piastres for the hire of each animal. I was compelled to submit to his demand, and, although the rain was falling in torrents and I had no means of protecting myself from it, I was ready to encounter any discomforts, or indeed any dangers, rather than remain a minute longer than I could help in this hotbed of the plague, especially as the villagers, convinced that all Franks were physicians, were bringing me persons suffering from the disease for whom I was asked to prescribe. The morning was, however, far advanced before the man with the camels was ready. Isaac of Hebron was persuaded that I should fail to reach Tiberias, and that I was running the greatest peril from the Bedouins, who were said to be out on marauding expeditions. He remained behind with his fellow-pedlars, and I saw no more of him.

Owing to the heavy rains that had fallen, the plain was deep in mud, through which the camels had so much difficulty in making their way that I was compelled to stop for the night at Irbid, a small village less ruined and forbidding than Remtheh, and at no great distance from it. A Bashi-Bozuk, who had been sent there upon some Government business, seeing the deplorable condition in which I was—wet through and not knowing where to go for shelter—invited me to share the room which he occupied, gave up the best corner in it to me, and lent me his cloak after I had stripped myself

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of my wet clothes. He dried them himself at a great wood fire, which was exceedingly welcome to me, as the weather was cold and damp, although I was almost suffocated by the smoke. He completed his hospitality by allowing me to share with him the best dinner he could obtain in the village.[1]

The inhabitants of Irbid were more friendly and more ready to help a traveller in distress than their neighbours. They assembled to see me when they heard that a Frank had come amongst them, as was natural. They offered to furnish me with mules to Tiberias, believing that I should have no difficulty in reaching the town. I regretted that I had made an agreement with the Arab of Remtheh for his camels, and had paid him their hire beforehand, thus depriving myself of nearly all my money.

Irbid had not escaped the plague, but I was assured that there had been but few cases of it in the village. The inhabitants were better dressed, they and their houses more cleanly, than those of Remtheh, which may probably have accounted for their partial immunity from the disease.

The Bashi-Bozuk refused to accept any payment for his hospitality, and would not allow me to depart in the morning until I had partaken of his breakfast. After crossing a deep ravine formed by a torrent, we entered a broad valley leading to the Jordan. We were now in a very fertile and fairly well-cultivated region. On the hill-sides I observed three large villages surrounded by extensive olive plantations. Scattered in all directions were the black tents of wandering Arabs, who, with their flocks, encamp on these hills in the winter and spring. The region to the east of the Jordan is rich and fertile, and in the early part of the year produces the finest pasturage.

It was very early in the afternoon when we reached a village on the right bank of the Jordan. My guide refused to go any further, alleging that it would be impossible to

[1] Although the name of Bashi-Bozuk became afterwards synonymous with everything that was truculent and cruel, I often experienced from these irregular troopers, recruited from all parts and races of the Ottoman Empire, much kindness and help, and found in them amusing and jovial companions.

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reach Tiberias before nightfall, and that we should find no other place to stop at on our way. Although I had made but little progress, I was under the necessity of yielding. The head of the village placed an empty hut at my disposal. But I was not long its sole occupant. I had to share it with some travellers, flying from a large body of Bedouins who were plundering the neighbouring villages.

The place was very prettily situated on a green slope descending to the Jordan, which could be seen winding through a fertile valley. In the distance rose the high land and mountains of Palestine. We had crossed the river by an ancient bridge near the ruins of a spacious building which appeared to have been a caravanserai. The stream was broad and rapid. We were, as far as I could judge, about five miles from its outlet in the Lake of Tiberias. Upon its banks were gathered large numbers of herons, cormorants, and other water-fowl. The few villages we had passed had a poverty-stricken appearance, many of the huts being built of reeds.

Ascending next morning a height above the river, we came in view of the Sea of Galilee. From a distance Tiberias, surrounded by a wall with equidistant towers, and standing upon a promontory mirrored in the blue waters of the lake, had the appearance of a great city. The scene was singularly beautiful; but when I reached the town itself I found myself in the midst of a heap of ruins.

We had scarcely caught sight of Tiberias when my guide declared that he could venture no further. He had been told that there were guards forming a 'cordon' round it, who would arrest him as soon as it was known that he came from the other side of the Jordan, would throw him into prison, where he would be kept for an indefinite period, if he ever came out again, and, what appeared to him to be worst of all, that his camels would be confiscated. It was of no use arguing with him or attempting to use force. He proceeded to throw my carpet and saddle-bags on the ground, and to drive his beasts back the way we had come.

There was nothing left to me but to divide my little baggage between Antonio and myself, and to carry it on



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our shoulders. We were still about three miles from Tiberias, and we had to wade through deep mud. However, we saw no guards nor any sign of the 'cordon.' After a tedious walk we entered the town, which was a mass of fallen houses, through a dilapidated gateway. It was a scene of utter ruin and devastation. I was standing, astonished at the sight and perplexed as to where I should find a place to pass the night, when a man in a tall worn-out hat and a threadbare suit of European clothes, and having the long curls on either side of his face which denote the Jew in the East, accosted me in broken Italian or 'Lingua Franca.' He asked me whence I came, and, seeing my forlorn condition and tattered garments, whether I had been robbed by the Arabs. Fearing to tell him that I had come from the other side of the Jordan, lest the Egyptian authorities might learn that I had violated the quarantine regulations, I replied that I was an English traveller from Jerusalem, that I had been robbed on the road, and had been compelled to perform the last part of my journey on foot. I begged him to tell me where I could find a night's lodging, and whether I could make arrangements for continuing my journey to Damascus on the following day.

He appeared to take compassion upon me, and asked me to go with him to his house. He led the way through the ruins of fallen buildings, which blocked up the streets. Among them were erected wooden sheds for the shelter of that part of the population which had escaped the terrible earthquake that suddenly overthrew the town on New Year's Day 1837, two years before my visit to it. My obliging guide inhabited one of these huts, which was divided into several rooms, fitted with divans and a little furniture. He offered me one with a clean European bed—the first I had seen for several months—which promised a comfortable night's rest after the fatigue and privations I had experienced during my wanderings in the desert.

He then informed me that his name was Haym, that he was a native of Poland, and had migrated, like many of his countrymen, to the Holy Land, whence his race had sprung, to spend his last days on the sacred soil. He had been

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a man of some substance, and having purchased one of the best houses in Tiberias, had established himself as a physician. His stone-built dwelling yielded to the first shock of the earthquake, and in falling overwhelmed himself and his family. His wife and children perished in the ruins. He had miraculously escaped with a broken leg. He was a man of some accomplishments, spoke several languages, and possessed a little knowledge of medicine.

Signor Haym had married his wife's sister, a comely woman, with that fair complexion and light hair which distinguish the Jews in the East from the darker races amongst whom they dwell. She was kindly and hospitable, and welcomed me to their abode. Her husband described to me the earthquake which had reduced Tiberias to a heap of ruins. When it occurred the Jews were for the most part gathered in their synagogues to celebrate a religious festival. They had no time to escape before they were buried under the falling buildings. According to Signor Haym, about six hundred Polish Jews had thus perished, besides a considerable part of the Arab population. Four hundred Israelites, he said, still remained in the place, inhabiting the wooden sheds which they had erected on the sites of their ruined houses, and subsisting upon the charity of their friends and co-religionists in Poland and other parts of Europe.

I was anxious to reach Damascus without further delay; but as my host was unable to tell me whether the road was closed on account of the plague, I called upon the Muteselim, or governor—an Egyptian—in the hope of obtaining help and information from him. He was lodged, like the rest of the population, in a wooden shed. It was crowded with his servants, cavasses, and people having business with him. He himself was seated on a low mattress, serving for a divan, at the top of the room. Notwithstanding the shabbiness of my attire, and my not very prepossessing appearance, he received me courteously, and, after reading my Turkish Buyuruldi [2] and the papers I had

[2] A kind of passport formerly given by the Turkish Government to travellers.



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received from the Egyptian authorities, which I had preserved, invited me to be seated, and handed me the long chibuk which he was smoking, ejaculating complaisantly, 'Buono! buono!' He fortunately did not question me as to where I had been travelling, but was satisfied with my statement that I came from Jerusalem, had been robbed on the road, and having been deserted near Tiberias by my guide, who had disappeared with his camels, had been compelled to enter the town on foot. He expressed his sympathy for me, but did not offer to help me in any way, nor could he give me any information as to whether there was a 'cordon' or not between the district of which he was the governor and Damascus. Such ignorance appeared to me surprising even in an Eastern official; but I heard that he was too much occupied in screwing money out of the already impoverished population, over which he brutally tyrannised, to think of other things.

It was necessary to find some means of reaching Damascus. I could not well perform the journey alone and on foot, and I had no money either to hire horses or to engage a guide. I could not conceal the difficulty in which I found myself from my host. With a ready kindness which surprised me, he offered to lend me ten pounds, which, he said, I could repay to a friend of his at Damascus on my arrival there. On my observing to him that he was showing an unusual confidence in a person who was a stranger to him, he replied that I was an Englishman, and in distress, and that this was enough. He could, he said, trust to my word; and when I expressed my grateful thanks to him for his generous help, he begged me not to consider myself under any obligation to him, as he had only performed a duty imposed upon him by his religion in succouring a stranger at his gate who was in need.

This noble trait of generosity in a poor Jew made an impression upon me which will, I hope, never be effaced, and has given me a feeling of affection for his race. I could not but contrast it with the mean and sordid disposition of the Eastern Christians.

Assisted by Signor Haym, I at last found a Jew who

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was willing to let me have a horse as far as Safed ; but he would not consent to accompany me any further than that town, as he had been told that the roads beyond were infested by robbers, and that if he escaped them he would run the risk of having his animal seized by the Egyptian authorities My host, however, offered to give me a letter to a brother Jew and fellow-countryman at Safed, who, he had no doubt, would be able to assist me in procuring a mule for the remainder of my journey to Damascus.

As Antonio preferred to return to Jerusalem, and found an opportunity of doing so with a small caravan about to depart from Tiberias, I determined to leave him under the care of Signor Haym, who promised to look after him. The poor boy had served me faithfully through all the dangers and privations to which we had been exposed together. As he was constantly during our journey through the desert in an agony of fear, he must have suffered more mentally than physically, for he was accustomed to hardships. He had fully made up his mind that he would be murdered, and it was pitiable to watch the expression of his face when he was listening to the Arabs, discussing, he declared, whether or not they should rob me and cut my throat.

Much refreshed by my night's rest, I left Tiberias early on the following morning, although it rained heavily, resisting Signor Haym's efforts to detain me until the weather had improved. The downpour continued during the whole day. Our path led through deep mud and over swollen streams, until we reached the foot of the mountain near the summit of which Safed stands, when we had to climb over loose stones and slippery rocks. My horse could scarcely make its way through the mire, or find a footing as we mounted the steep ascent. Our progress was consequently slow, and we did not reach the town until after sunset. The hills and surrounding country were enveloped in clouds during the day, and I could only catch occasional glimpses of the lake from the high ground. But there was enough to show me that in more favourable weather the scenery in this part of Galilee must be exceedingly beautiful.

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The name of the Jew for whom I had a letter was Shimoth. He received me very hospitably, and invited me to spend the night in his house. Like Signor Haym he was from Poland, and had migrated to the sacred land of his tribe to die there. He was also living in a wooden hut—Safed, like Tiberias, having been almost entirely destroyed by the great earthquake. His trade was that of a distiller of 'raki,' or ardent spirits, and he was likewise a maker of pipe-bowls. His still was in the shed in which he lived, and was superintended by a sharp intelligent Hebrew boy. Otherwise he was alone, not having wife or family.

I learnt next morning that all communication between Damascus and the south was closed, on account of the plague in the country to the east of Jordan, and that the city was surrounded by a line of irregular troops, who occupied the roads and allowed no traveller to pass. I nevertheless made up my mind to make an attempt to reach it. Through the help of Shimoth I found an Arab who possessed two mules and who professed himself willing to undertake the journey. Although the rain still continued to fall in torrents and the roads were in consequence almost impassable, I decided upon leaving Safed early on the following day. But when the time for our departure had arrived the Arab absolutely refused to fulfil his engagement, alleging the impossibility of passing through the troops forming the quarantine 'cordon,' who would throw him into prison and confiscate his mules. There was, moreover, he maintained, danger from the Bedouins. I could find no one else in the town who could be induced to hire animals for so perilous a journey. But my host was acquainted with an honest Arab living in the neighbouring village of Zeytun, who also had two mules, and whom he had employed on various occasions in expeditions connected with his trade. He proposed to send for this man and his animals.

In the meanwhile some travellers arrived in the town from Damascus, from whom we learnt that, although there was a strict quarantine against all persons coming from the south, yet that it would not probably be enforced against me, if I were provided with a certificate from the Cadi of

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Safed stating that there had been no cases of plague in the town that I came from, and that I was at the time of my departure in good health. Accompanied by Shimoth, I presented myself to the Cadi, who, learning the object of my visit, referred me to the Muteselim. The governor, an Egyptian officer, taking me for a Jew on account of my being in company with one, refused to grant the required certificate except on the demand and in the presence of the chief dragoman of the Hakhâm-Bashi, or head of the Jewish community. In vain I alleged my English nationality. The man in authority was inexorable, and we had to go in search of the interpreter, whom we at length discovered, and who, on the payment of a small fee, obtained the required document for me.

It was now late in the afternoon. The man with his mules had arrived from Zeytun, and was persuaded to take me to Damascus on my assurance that he would be under my protection, and that if he got into trouble on account of the quarantine I would use my influence with the British Consul to get him out of it. However, as sunset was approaching, he invited me to spend the night in his house in the village, so that we might commence our journey at an early hour on the following morning. To this I readily consented, as I feared that if I remained in Safed further difficulties might arise to interfere with my arrangements.

Although I had lost a day, it had not been unprofitably spent. Shimoth being an intelligent man, well acquainted with this part of Syria, gave me a good deal of interesting information with respect to it and the condition of its population. He had been in Safed at the time of the earthquake, which he described in graphic and moving terms—the rumbling underground sound like the roar of distant thunder, the noise of the falling houses, the dust which enveloped the sides of the mountain caused by detached rocks and stones, the cries of the women and children who were buried in the ruins, and the agony and lamentations of those searching for their friends and relations. He believed that about four thousand Jews had perished in Safed alone, the number of victims being greater amongst

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them than amongst the Christians and Musulmans, as, on account of their religious festival, they were assembled in their synagogues. These buildings, constructed of stone, had buried beneath their ruins almost every soul within them.

Bidding adieu to my host, who refused to accept any remuneration for my entertainment, I descended the hill with my Arab muleteer and reached the village of Zeytun at sunset. One room in his house was already occupied by three Egyptian soldiers, who had been quartered upon him. Another, in which were his wife and family, had a very neat and tidy appearance, the floor being covered with fresh mats. He invited me to take a place in it, and the women at once set to work to make a divan, and to spread carpets in one of the corners. I was surprised at the cleanliness and comfort of the place, which compared very favourably with what I had before experienced in Arab houses. The muleteer himself was an ill-clad and not over-clean little fellow—like men of his calling and class. But his wife was well dressed in a blue silk gown, or rather long loose shirt, and leggings of woollen twist of different colours. She did not think it necessary to conceal her face with a veil. On both sides of her head hung strings of large silver coins, such as were worn by well-to-do peasant women in Syria, and which frequently represented the greater part of their marriage dower. She was tall, erect, and strikingly handsome, with large black eyes, features of singular regularity, and a majestic expression. She gave me an unaffected welcome, and after seeing that the divan on which I was to sleep had been properly prepared, proceeded to superintend the cooking of my supper.

Notwithstanding the unexpected neatness and cleanliness of these good people, they were evidently very poor, and the only food they were able to prepare for me and their troublesome and unwelcome Egyptian guests consisted of 'bourghoul,' or dried wheat, over which melted butter was poured, and cakes of unleavened bread. When this mess was ready the muleteer's wife carried a large wooden bowl full of it to the three soldiers. She had scarcely

entered the adjoining apartment when I was alarmed by her screams, and her husband ran to her assistance. He, too, soon began to call out piteously for help. I rushed into the room, where I found the soldiers belabouring the man and his wife with their 'courbashes.' The presence of a European had a sudden effect upon them. They dropped their whips, and when I said that I should return to Safed to report their conduct to the Egyptian officer in command there, they entreated me in the most abject terms not to complain of them, offering to make any compensation in their power to their victims.

Ibrahim Pasha whilst in Syria maintained strict discipline in his army, and it was his policy to protect and conciliate the population. The soldiers well knew that a representation of their misconduct from a European would entail upon them very severe punishment. Hence their eagerness to induce me to condone their offence. It appeared that, not satisfied with the humble fare which had been placed before them, they had insisted upon having chicken and rice, and on the muleteer's wife representing to them that she was too poor to procure such luxuries, they had set upon her and beaten her most unmercifully, subjecting her husband to the same ill-treatment when he came to her assistance. They both begged me not to complain of the conduct of the soldiers, who, they feared, might revenge themselves upon them when I was no longer there to protect them. Quiet having been restored, I returned to my divan, and received, with the grateful thanks of my hosts, an addition of sour milk and honey to my supper of bourghoul.

I found the muleteer in the morning greatly alarmed by the reports which had reached the village during the night of Bedouins seen on the road to Damascus. He was disposed to shirk his bargain with me. It was only after I had assured his wife that he would be under my protection if any attempt was made to seize his mules and take him for a soldier—a fate which he feared more than being robbed by the Arabs—that he was induced to put the pack-saddles upon his animals. The rain continued to fall in torrents, and the tracks across the country were so deep in mud that

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we had the greatest difficulty in making our way, being frequently detained for some time before we could find means to flounder through the water-courses. After a wearying ride through an uninteresting country without inhabitants, we descended by a stony mountain pathway to the Jordan, at a spot called by my guide Joseph's Ford. A guard of Bashi-Bozuks were stationed there, in the ruins of a house, and near them some Arabs were living in reed-built huts.

The muleteer declined to go any further that afternoon, as there was no village we could reach before night, and it was dangerous to be out after dark. I was compelled, therefore, to bribe one of the Arabs, who clamoured for 'bakshish,' to allow me to rest for the night in a corner of his hovel, in which, however, I found but little protection from the rain.

The next day we stopped early at the village of Kuneitirah, where we heard alarming rumours of pilgrims going to Jerusalem having been attacked, robbed, and beaten by Bedouins upon the high road from Damascus. My guide determined, therefore, to avoid the beaten track, and to keep in the broken ground at the foot of a range of hills, where he thought we should escape the notice of Arabs on the look-out for travellers.

We had much difficulty in making our way over the rocky ground, and across the innumerable water-courses swollen by the rain, which had now been falling incessantly for several days. We were by the side of one of these torrents, seeking for a place to cross it, when we were suddenly surrounded by a number of men armed with guns. They were not Bedouins, but from their dress evidently conscripts who had deserted from the Egyptian army. I had left my mule, and two of these men began to turn out the few articles that still remained in my saddle-bags. The others seized me, and demanded money, threatening to shoot me if I refused to give it to them. Resistance was useless. I offered them some loose piastres I had in my pocket, but this did not satisfy them. They compelled me to take off a part of my clothes, and perceiving round my waist

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a wash-leather belt in which I carried a few gold coins, they tore it off me by force. They then asked for tobacco, and made me give them what I had. After examining the contents of my saddle-bags, and taking a few articles of no value, and allowing me to keep my gun, which was of no use to them, my books, papers, compass, and medicines, they went off, carrying with them a part of my clothes, and leaving me in my trousers and shirt, and with my Arab cloak, which was now almost in tatters and not worth taking.

As soon as they were out of sight the muleteer, who had taken to his heels and had hidden himself as soon as the robbers appeared, returned to me. He was overjoyed to find that his mules had not been stolen. The deserters, who were hiding themselves from the Egyptian authorities, had no doubt thought that the animals would be in their way. We collected the few things left to me, which were scattered over the muddy ground, and made the best of our way across country to a village called Kaferhowar.

Here we learnt that several parties of deserters from Ibrahim Pasha's army, such as we had met, were robbing travellers and plundering villages. The conscription had been introduced for the first time among the sedentary Arabs who inhabit the eastern borders of Syria. It was enforced with great severity and cruelty, and to avoid it many villages had been deserted by their inhabitants. The conscripts took the first opportunity to escape and to return to their homes, or to conceal themselves in the mountains and in the desert, infesting the highways and despoiling single travellers and even caravans. They were able to commit their depredations with impunity, on account of the quarantine, which prevented the villagers from entering Damascus to lay their complaints before the Egyptian governor, Sherif Pasha. We were informed at Kaferhowar that the 'cordon' was maintained very strictly, and that at no great distance from the village we should fall in with patrols of irregular cavalry, who would turn us back, or probably fire upon us if they suspected we had the intention of violating it.

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My muleteer was so much alarmed by what he heard from his friends in the village as to the punishment which awaited him if he attempted to evade the quarantine—the seizure of himself for a 'Nizam' (regular soldier), and the confiscation of his mules—that he absolutely refused to go any further, offering to forgo the hire for his animals rather than run the risk of losing them altogether, and of finding himself, against his will, a soldier. I had no money to pay him, having been robbed of the little I had about me in the morning; I could only do so on my arrival at Damascus. From a height near the village the city could be distinguished in the distance, its gardens forming a dark line on the horizon. To be so near it and not to be able to reach it, without money and almost without clothes, and not knowing where to go, was no pleasant position. My guide, who was at bottom a good fellow, and appeared really to feel for me, did his best to help me. After consulting with the sheikh of the village, he informed me that he had found a man who would take me to Damascus, avoiding the quarantine, if I agreed to pay him a small sum on my arrival there. But I should have to travel at night and on foot, and to follow his directions in everything. I made up my mind to run any risk rather than remain in my helpless condition, and at once agreed to the terms proposed. I promised further to send back to Kaferhowar, by my guide, the money I had to pay to the muleteer for the hire of his animals.

We were to leave the village in the evening. The rain was still falling heavily, and the night promised to be very dark. This was all in our favour, as we should, we hoped, be able to conceal ourselves from the patrols.

Soon after sunset, the Arab, whose name was Ahmed Saleh, having shouldered my carpet and divided with me my little luggage, we left the village together, and entered upon hilly and broken ground. It soon became pitch dark. My shoes were almost worn out, and as we had to walk on loose stones, and to climb over stone walls, I suffered much inconvenience and pain, and soon became sore-footed. It was evidently not the first time that my guide had evaded the quarantine. Although we could not see a yard before us,

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and the rain continued to descend in torrents, he went steadily on his way, wading through swollen rivulets and deep mud, scrambling over rocks, and creeping through ditches and water-courses. I followed him silently, making as little noise as possible. We walked for some hours, occasionally stopping for a few minutes, as I was nearly exhausted. When the day broke we could see the gardens of Damascus within a short distance of us. Ahmed Saleh assured me that we had passed through all the patrols, and that we might now consider ourselves in safety. We sat down to rest before entering upon the broad beaten track which led through the forest of fruit and other trees surrounding the city. We had scarcely resumed our walk when we perceived a horseman galloping towards us. He proved to be a Bashi-Bozuk.

He came up to us and inquired whence we came. Our answer not satisfying him, he ordered us to turn back and to accompany him to the officer in command. I had preserved the certificate given to me by the Muteselim of Safed, and I handed it to him, stating that it was a permission from a competent authority to enter Damascus, and that he had consequently no right to stop us. After he had looked at the document, which he could not read, and had examined the seal, he returned it to me, saying that it must be shown to his chief. Fortunately I had found at the bottom of my saddle-bags a small gold Turkish coin, which I slipped into his hand. It produced more effect than the paper. He looked at it for a moment, and after a little hesitation put it into his pouch and left us.

I hurried onwards as fast as my weary legs could carry me to the gardens. But we had scarcely reached them when we perceived the Bashi-Bozuk again galloping after us. He soon overtook us, and holding out the coin said that it was a bad one and asked me to change it. When I told him that I had no other to give him, he ordered us to go back with him, saying that he would certainly be shot when it was known that he had allowed us to violate the quarantine, and that it was his duty to take us to his officer. I replied that I was ready to accompany him, but I warned

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him that I should denounce him to his chief and to the authorities at Damascus for having accepted a bribe, as he had only wanted to return the gold coin when he had doubts as to its genuineness, and that I should make such representations through the English Consul as would ensure his condign punishment. Seeing that I was willing to turn back, and reflecting no doubt that the complaints of a European through a Consul might get him into serious trouble, he thought better of the matter, looked again at the piece of gold, assured himself that it was really worth five piastres, and then retraced his steps, leaving us at liberty to proceed. We lost no time in doing so, my guide leaving the high road to avoid further observation, diverging into by-lanes and climbing over the ruined walls of gardens.

Overjoyed at having thus escaped from the horrors of a quarantine of perhaps forty days in a filthy Arab hut, I almost ran until we were within the gates of the city. We passed through them with a crowd of peasants bringing their produce to market—the guards, no doubt, taking us for poor people from a neighbouring village. It was late in the morning before we reached the British Consulate, through numberless narrow winding streets enclosed by the naked walls of mud-built houses.[3]

[3] When, as the Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan, I entered Damascus in 1879, my thoughts could not but revert to my entry into the same city nearly forty years before. The contrast was singular enough. On the second occasion I experienced a reception such as, I believe, had never been accorded to any European, whatever may have been his rank, in the Turkish dominions. Midhat Pasha, the Governor, and all the authorities, Musulman and Christian, came out several miles to meet me. Abd-el-Kadr, the celebrated chief of the Arabs of Algiers, then an exile, received me on the way in his country house with a sumptuous entertainment. As we drew near to the city we passed through vast crowds of men and women of all creeds—Mohammedans, Christians, Jews, &c.—with their respective chiefs, who had come out to welcome me. It was a sight never to be forgotten. Similar demonstrations awaited me in all the towns and villages through which I passed during my tour in Syria and Palestine. At that time the influence and reputation of England stood high in Turkey.

## CHAPTER IV

*Consul Wherry—A Turkish bath—Damascus houses—An Arab barber-surgeon—Purchase a mare—Leave Damascus—Cross Anti-Lebanon—The Mutuali—Arrive at Baalbek—The Emir—Leave for Beyrout—Cross Lebanon to Beyrout—Journey to Aleppo—Rejoin Mr. Mitford—Leave Aleppo for Baghdad.*

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MR. WHERRY was then British Consul at Damascus—a courteous and well-informed gentleman, who had long held similar offices in the Levant, and was one of those honourable and useful public servants in the East who have been very unjustly and foolishly stigmatised as 'Levantines.' He was not a little surprised at being addressed by an Englishman clad in scarcely more than a tattered cloak, almost shoeless, and bronzed and begrimed by long exposure to sun and weather and to the dirt of Arab tents. I made myself known to him. He was expecting me, as Mr. Mitford, after long waiting for me, had gone to Aleppo, leaving a letter for me.

Mr. Wherry, seeing my exhausted condition—for I could scarcely stand after the fatigue I had gone through during the night—kindly offered me some tea. I had not tasted tea for many weeks, and it would be difficult to describe how delicious I found it. After I had rested a little he sent one of his janissaries [1] with me to the Latin Convent, where the Friars gave me a room, very barely furnished, but which appeared to me to contain every luxury, after what I had of late been accustomed to. My first thought was to take

[1] The guards appointed by the Turkish and Egyptian authorities for the service and protection of a Consul, now called cavasses, were then termed janissaries.

a bath, and to provide myself with clothes. I went to one of the principal Hamams of the city, and was somewhat surprised that in my ragged condition I obtained admission. But in those days with good Musulmans there was no distinction of persons, and the principles of equality were not only professed but practised by them. I found when travelling in the East and undergoing great fatigue, there was nothing so refreshing as the Turkish bath. After I had gone through the various processes—had been soaped and kneaded, and had my joints pulled and cracked—I smoked a narguilé, and fell into a sound sleep on the divan with its clean white linen, on which the bathers found repose before dressing. In the meanwhile I had sent the janissary to the bazar to buy me some ready-made clothes. A European dress was not to be obtained, and I had to be satisfied with that worn by the Egyptian Nizam, or regular troops, during winter—a pair of baggy trousers with tight leggings, a short jacket, a waistcoat fastened up in front with numerous buttons, a coloured sash of common English materials, and a linen shirt. Thus clothed, and having given my discarded garments to one of the attendants at the bath, to be thrown away, I returned to the convent.

Damascus has been so often described that I need scarcely write anything about the city—its narrow streets, deep in filth and dust or mud, according to the season of the year, and its houses with exterior walls of earth, without windows or architectural decorations of any kind, but enclosing spacious and beautiful courts with fountains of ever-running water, orange trees and beds of flowers, into which open rooms adorned with the most exquisite carvings and with designs in gold and the brightest colours. When the traveller, after passing through the long vaulted entrance which led into these apparently half-ruined and ignoble dwellings, suddenly found himself, as if by enchantment, in the midst of one of these luxurious and beautiful edifices, he might fancy himself in a palace described in the 'Arabian Nights.' In such a house lived the English Consul.

At the time of my visit the city was full of Egyptian troops, and had a busy and prosperous appearance. The

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extensive bazars were crowded with men and women of many races, and in endless varieties of costume—Egyptian soldiers, Christians and Musulmans from the surrounding villages, Maronites from Mount Lebanon, Druses from the Hauran, Bedouins from the desert, and inhabitants of Damascus itself in their gay robes of silk and ample turbans. The East had not then experienced the change that contact with the West has since brought about, and the dress, manners, and habits of the people of Syria were still what they had been for many generations before.

I spent much of my time during the few days that I remained in Damascus in the bazars, enjoying the lively and picturesque scene. The shops were then filled with rare and beautiful silk manufactures, quaint furniture, inlaid arms, and a thousand curious objects for which the traveller would now search in vain. I used to sit in the shop of a barber, with whom I had made acquaintance in the following manner. When I arrived at Damascus I was suffering excruciating pain from a whitlow under one of my thumb-nails. Not knowing where to go to obtain relief, I entered a barber's shop in the bazar, thinking that the owner probably followed the trade of surgery as well as his own, like his brethren in other parts of the world. I showed him my thumb. He was a tall, muscular fellow, and grasped it with a grip of iron. He then took a sharp instrument, and, inserting it under the nail, drove it into the sore. In vain I struggled and howled, as the agony I experienced was intense. He held me as if I had been an infant, until he had pressed the matter out of the opened whitlow. He then allowed me to withdraw my hand, and turned with a look of satisfaction to the little crowd which had gathered round his shop to witness the operation.

I went to him daily to have my finger dressed with an ointment which he prepared. The cure was complete, but the method, to say the least of it, was somewhat brutal, and I vowed that, after my experience of Arab dentistry and surgery, I would not again trust myself to a Bedouin to draw a tooth, or to a Damascus barber to cure a whitlow.

I was desirous of losing as little time as possible, and of

going to Aleppo by the direct road through Hamah and Homs; but as by a short *détour* I could see Baalbek, I resolved upon visiting those celebrated ruins on my way. Not being able to find a man who would let me have only one mule and accompany me on foot to Aleppo, I determined to buy a horse and to perform the journey as I best could alone. I should thus be entirely independent, and be able to follow the route which suited me best. Accordingly, early one morning I went to the horse-market, and purchased from an Arab, for a reasonable price, a strong well-built mare. I then bought, in the bazar, a native saddle over which I could throw my carpet and saddle-bags.

I left Damascus accompanied by a Bashi-Bozuk, who, Sherif Pasha, the Governor, had informed Mr. Wherry, was proceeding on business to Baalbek, and would act as my escort on the way. He was furnished with a Government order directing the sheikhs of the villages at which we might stop to provide me with food and lodging, and provender for my horse, at the Government expense. I soon had an opportunity of learning how well-founded were the complaints against the Bashi-Bozuks, who then overran the country, and were employed by the Egyptian authorities in collecting the taxes and tithes, in guarding the roads, and maintaining order. I had constantly to interfere to prevent my companion from ill-treating the sheikhs and inhabitants of the villages through which we passed, if they did not bring at once what he pretended to consider necessary for my entertainment, but which was really for his own. His 'courbash' and the butt-end of his gun were in constant requisition. The only answer that I could obtain to my remonstrances was, when the inhabitants were Christians, that they were pigs, and had to be driven by the stick, and when Musulmans, that they were asses who could only be treated in the same way.

As my Bashi-Bozuk was in no hurry, and by the aid of my firman was living upon the fat of the land, he insisted upon stopping at almost every village on our way. It was, consequently, not until the day after I quitted Damascus that I ascended the Anti-Lebanon. The beautiful view

obtained from its summit over the city, with its gardens, its minarets, and its running waters, and the boundless desert beyond, was soon shut out from me by a dense snowstorm, through which we could scarcely make our way. After struggling against it for some time we were forced to turn back and to take refuge in the Christian village of Dimas, halfway up the mountain.

We had considerable difficulty in crossing the pass on the following day, on account of the snow which had fallen in the night. We descended the western declivity of the Anti-Lebanon range to a village called Zibdani, in a valley watered by a stream of the same name. Here we learnt that the Mutualis, a fanatical and lawless tribe, to whom were attributed strange idolatrous rites, through whose country we were now passing, were in open rebellion against the Egyptian authorities, in consequence of an attempt to enforce the conscription. The sheikh of the village, a venerable old man with an ample white beard, who belonged to the Mutuali sect, tried to persuade me not to attempt to reach Baalbek without a strong military guard. He warned me that the road was very insecure, and that I should run great danger of being robbed, and, if taken for an Egyptian functionary, as would probably be the case, of being murdered. The Bashi-Bozuk took alarm at what he had heard, and refused to incur the responsibility of allowing me to proceed without a sufficient escort to insure my safety. As I saw that he was determined not to go any further, I resolved to continue my journey alone. The sheikh, finding that I could not be prevailed upon to turn back, expressed his opinion that I should be safer without the Bashi-Bozuk than with him, as the Mutualis bore no ill-will to Europeans, whilst they would certainly cut the throat of any Egyptian who might fall into their hands. He offered to send with me to the next village one of his followers, who would explain that I was an English traveller to any of his people we might fall in with on our way. I started with this man, leaving behind me the Bashi-Bozuk.

I met with no adventure, and reached in the afternoon a large village, in which I was very hospitably entertained



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by a Turk employed on some Government business, who took me for a European physician belonging to Ibrahim Pasha's army, as I wore the Nizam dress. I was on the beaten track to Baalbek, and had no difficulty in reaching the place early in the following afternoon. As I approached the ruins I could see the stately remains of the great temple rising above a collection of low flat-roofed mud cottages. I found my way to the residence of the governor of the place, who was a Mutuali, and a member of the family which possessed the hereditary chieftainship of the semi-independent clan occupying the plain of Baalbek. He was still styled the 'Emir' (Prince), and had been recognised as such and maintained in his authority by Ibrahim Pasha. He received me civilly, surrounded by a number of armed followers. Learning that I was a European, he offered to conduct me to a Frank, who was living, he said, in the village, and could speak my language. He then took me to a house occupied by a Syrian Christian from Damascus, who was employed as a tax-gatherer, and who had the reputation of being well acquainted with Italian. However, his knowledge of that tongue was confined to *favorisca*, which he kept constantly repeating, and one or two other words. The Emir left me with him, and I obeyed his '*favorisca*' by sitting down beside him on his divan. He then directed some native 'raki,' or brandy, to be brought to me, thinking, no doubt, that it was the first and most urgent requirement of a Christian.

Finding that his knowledge of Italian was too limited to enable us to exchange many ideas in that language, he proposed to take me to the house of a European who was quartered in the village with a squadron of Ibrahim Pasha's cuirassiers, which he was engaged in instructing in cavalry drill and manœuvres. Signor Ferrari, the gentleman in question, was a Neapolitan. He received me very courteously, was delighted to find some one with whom he could converse in his own tongue, and insisted upon my accepting his hospitality so long as I remained in Baalbek.

The evening was drawing near before I had settled myself for the night in the house of the obliging cavalry

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instructor. Having done so, and stabled my mare, I paid a hasty visit to the magnificent ruins, which, lighted up by the setting sun, rose high above the mean and squalid dwellings clustered around them. I was lost in admiration and astonishment at their stupendous proportions and their marvellous beauty. The stately columns, and the blocks of richly sculptured marble which still kept their places in the great temple, had assumed that exquisite golden hue which I had observed in the remains of Ammon and Jerash. I had no time to examine in detail all the wonderful monuments by which I was surrounded. I could only go from one to another, and then linger among them until they were clothed in darkness.

Early on the following morning I called on the Emir to ascertain from him the state of the country between Baalbek and Aleppo, concerning which very alarming reports prevailed. When he learned that I had the intention of going alone to Homs, he emphatically declared that he would not allow me to proceed in that direction without an escort of at least twenty Bashi-Bozuks and twenty Mutuali villagers. The whole of the Mutuali tribes to the north of Baalbek were, he said, in insurrection against the Egyptian Government; his own brother, who had attempted to restore order, had been killed, and if anything happened to me he would be held responsible. I was to give him, moreover, a written declaration that I considered the escort which he proposed to send with me sufficient for my security, and that I had taken the road to Homs of my own free will after having been warned by him of its danger.

Finding that he was determined not to allow me to follow the direct route to Aleppo without this large escort, for which I could not afford to pay, and which would, I felt convinced, take to flight at the first appearance of any real danger, I very reluctantly renounced my intention of going to Aleppo by the way of Homs, and decided upon taking the more circuitous route by Beyrout and Tripoli. This would cause me a delay of several days, which I could ill spare, but there was no help for it.

The Emir having promised to send a Bashi-Bozuk on

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the following morning to accompany me to Beyrout, the road in that direction being, he said, perfectly safe, I proceeded to examine the ruins at my leisure. I spent the whole of the day among them, delighted beyond expression with their beauty and splendour, and more impressed than ever with the culture, energy, and power of that wonderful people which had planted their colonies in the most distant lands, and had adorned them with such magnificent public works.

It was already midday before my guide was ready. We left Baalbek in a violent storm of snow and hail, and I was half blinded by it as I crossed the treeless plain, then deep in mud, which separates the Anti-Lebanon from the great Lebanon range. I was glad to reach, about sunset, the village of Malaga, where I hoped to find shelter for the night. Its inhabitants were Christians. The headman was a surly, inhospitable fellow, who refused to give me any help or to procure me a lodging. After in vain trying, by offers of payment, and by threats of complaining to the Egyptian authorities, to induce him to find me a room and something to eat, I was compelled to take refuge in a kind of barn, half filled with barley and straw, which fortunately furnished food for my mare, and to lie down to sleep supperless and shivering from the cold.

During my dispute with the headman the Bashi-Bozuk, whose duty it was to find lodgings and food for me, had disappeared. He did not show himself again until the following morning, having, no doubt, settled himself somewhere comfortably for the night, leaving me to my fate. When I reproached him for his conduct he became impertinent, and used threats to extort money from me. Finding that he could not intimidate me, he said that his orders were to accompany me to Malaga, and not further, and that he would return to Baalbek. I begged him to do so, as I had no need of his services, and, mounting my mare, took the road to the large village, or rather town, of Zahlé, which was scarcely more than a mile distant. It was inhabited entirely by Maronite Christians under the rule of the Emir Beshire, then the great Druse chief of the Lebanon. The place was

deep in snow, and I had some difficulty in reaching it. The Muteselim, or headman, who seemed very hospitably inclined, supplied me with food, of which I was much in need after my long fast of twenty-four hours, and endeavoured to prevail upon me to remain in his house until the weather had improved. He assured me that in consequence of the heavy fall of snow I could not cross the mountain; but, finding that I persisted in my resolution to proceed, he ordered a horseman to accompany me.

The snow was everywhere so deep that my guide had much difficulty in following the track over the mountain. After struggling for some hours up the steep ascent, we came late in the afternoon to a small khan. As there was no other shelter to be found before reaching the summit of the pass, we had to spend the night there. It contained two small rooms, which were crowded with travellers, who, like myself, were going to Beyrout, and had been unable to cross Mount Lebanon. They had stabled their horses and mules in these rooms, which were consequently warm, but close and filthy. As there was no one in charge of the building, it was impossible to obtain anything to eat there, and I had to be content with a little dry bread which I had put into my saddle-bags, and some 'dibbs,' or molasses made of grapes, which I obtained from a muleteer.

Sleep was impossible in the crowded room, in which I was scarcely able to lie down, and in which the muleteers discussed during the whole night the state of the weather and the possibility of reaching Beyrout. When morning came I found that the building was almost buried in snow, which was still falling. The horseman who had accompanied me from Zahlé declared that it was impossible to reach the top of the pass, and that it would be dangerous to attempt to do so. His opinion was shared by the other travellers in the khan, and he refused to proceed. I was, however, determined not to be baffled, and leading my mare by the halter made my way for some distance alone, when, losing all traces of the path, I could proceed no further, and was forced to return.

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At the khan, a man who was from one of the villages on the mountain, offered for a few piastres to show me the way, and as one of the travellers was willing to accompany me I resolved to make another effort. After struggling for three hours through the snow, and having to drag our horses out of the drifts into which they constantly fell, we reached the summit of the pass. The road on the other side had been in many places completely carried away by the rain, and we had the greatest difficulty in leading our weary animals down the rocky descent. As we reached the large village of Hammein, halfway down the mountain, the snow and hail suddenly ceased. A soft westerly breeze blew aside the clouds in which we had hitherto been shrouded, and disclosed a glorious expanse of blue sea, the far-stretching gardens of Beyrout, and the town itself in the distance beyond. On a green plateau near the village a number of young men, gaily dressed and mounted on handsome horses richly caparisoned, were playing the 'jerid.'

I was now on a beaten track, and had no difficulty in finding my way. The sun shone brightly, and after the cold that I had experienced since leaving Damascus, the sudden and complete change of climate—from winter to summer—was as striking as it was grateful to me. It was dark before I found myself in the gardens of Beyrout, and eight o'clock before I succeeded in finding my way through its narrow, deserted, and unlighted streets, to the small inn in which I had lodged when passing through the town some months before.

I started again early on the following day and passed an hour at the mouth of the Nahr-el-Kelb to examine the remarkable Assyrian sculptures and inscriptions carved on the face of the rock there. Riding along the shores of the beautiful bay of Jouni, I remained for the night at the small village of that name.

The direct road to Tripoli, which was carried along the coast and close to the sea, was rocky and very trying to my mare. I made slow progress, and could get no further than a wretched khan situated in a marsh, and filled with Egyptian soldiers. The place was too foul for me to sleep

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in. I bought a few dried figs and some cakes of stale unleavened bread from the khanji, spread my small carpet outside the building, tethered my horse close to me for fear of thieves, and passed the night in the open air.

I reached Tripoli on the following morning, and remained there for the remainder of the day to rest my mare. My road to Aleppo lay through Hamah. I found no difficulty in travelling alone, notwithstanding the warnings which I received from the British Vice-Consul, a native of Syria. We were now in the midst of a Syrian spring. The face of the country was covered with the richest verdure, and enamelled with countless flowers. The air was soft and balmy ; the sky intensely blue. The only drawback to the exquisite pleasure which I enjoyed in finding myself wandering alone through this beautiful scenery, without the impediments of servant and baggage or the hindrance of an escort, was the state of the roads, the country having been reduced to a vast swamp by the recent heavy rains. I had to wade through it, with the water frequently reaching above the girths of my saddle, and my poor mare having to flounder and struggle through the mud. I occasionally met a solitary traveller or a small caravan. But no Mutualis nor other robbers were to be seen, although reports of their depredations and misdeeds were rife enough.

It took me three days to reach Hamah. The first night I passed in the ruins of an old castle in the hills, inhabited by a few poor Mutuali families. The second I spent among the picturesque remains of the fine mediæval castle of El Hosn, surrounded by wooded slopes. A small village had been built near it by Mutualis, who treated me very hospitably. In the middle of the day I had rested at a large convent belonging to the Maronites. I found its long vaulted entrance filled with monks, who were anticipating an attack from the Mutualis, and were anxious to learn whether I had fallen in with any armed bands of them on my way. They appeared to be somewhat reassured when they learnt that I had travelled alone through the country, and had met neither with marauders nor with solitary robbers. The Superior regaled me with excellent wine of

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his own making, and wished me 'God speed' on my journey—very doubtful whether I should ever get to the end of it.

My mare being still somewhat lame, I could make but slow progress after leaving Hamah, and it was only on the fourth day that I reached Aleppo, the country being in many places a swamp, caused by the winter rains, through which I had frequently no little difficulty in making my way. I passed the remains of many ancient buildings, tombs, and Christian churches; but I had no time to examine them. The rolling plains which I crossed were very thinly inhabited. I had to sleep, or try to sleep, in miserable hovels filled with vermin. I could get little to eat, and little provender for my horse, which I had to tend myself.

At Aleppo I found Mr. Mitford, who, tired of waiting for me and not knowing what had become of me, was making his preparations to continue his journey. On March 18 we left the city together, and reached Baghdad on May 2.[2]

[2] My companion, in his *Land March from England to Ceylon*, has described our journey.

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## CHAPTER V

*Leave Baghdad—Assume the Persian dress—Reach Kermanshah—The Shah's camp—The Minister for Foreign Affairs—The camp raised—Reach Hamadan—The Prime Minister—Difficulty in obtaining firman—Separate from Mr. Mitford.*

WE left Baghdad on June 30 to enter upon the most dangerous and difficult part of our long journey. I had determined to assume the Persian dress. Although I had been industriously studying the Persian language during my residence of nearly two months at Baghdad, my acquaintance with it was not, of course, sufficient to enable me to disguise my European character. But I was advised that by wearing the native costume I should attract less notice, and consequently be less exposed to danger, and be less liable to insult and annoyance from the fanatical populations through which I should now have to pass. I accordingly threw aside my Turkish dress which I had hitherto worn in travelling—it was well-nigh in rags from long and rough use—and replaced it by the long flowing robes, confined at the waist by a shawl, shalwars or loose trousers, and the tall black lambskin cap or 'kulâh' then worn by the Persians. In addition I wore, when riding, a pair of baggy trousers of cloth tied at the ankles, into which the ends of the long outer garment were thrust. My scanty linen, stockings, and shoes were also after the Persian fashion, and later on I shaved the crown of my head, leaving a ringlet on each side, and dyed my hair and beard black with henna and 'rang.' I could thus pass very well, so long as my mouth was closed, for an orthodox Persian.

At this time the English Government, in consequence of a diplomatic misunderstanding, had suspended its relations

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with the Persian Court, and had withdrawn its ambassador from Tehran. It was expected that hostilities would soon break out between the two nations, and the air was full of rumours of war. We were, therefore, running some risk in venturing into what might be considered an enemy's country. On our arrival at Kermanshah, a city on the Persian frontier, the governor refused to allow us to proceed on our journey without the special permission of the Shah, and sent us under escort to Kangowar, where his Majesty was encamped at the head of an army of about 13,000 men, with which he had threatened to invade the neighbouring Turkish territory.

I had been furnished at Baghdad with letters for Mirza Aga Baba, the Shah's 'Hakim-Bashi,' or principal physician, at that time an influential and much-respected personage at the Persian Court, who spoke our language with fluency. We informed him of our position, and of our object in passing through Persia, and asked his advice as to the course we should pursue. He recommended us to call without delay upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to show him our passports and such papers establishing our character as simple travellers as we might possess, and to ask for a royal firman to enable us to continue our journey. We accordingly made our way to the minister's tent—a magnificent pavilion, lined with the finest Cashmere shawls and spread with the choicest carpets. Mirza Ali, who was at that time charged with the administration of the foreign affairs of his country, was a beardless youth of about two-and-twenty. In this important office he was associated with his father, Mirza Masoud, a statesman of experience and reputation. He spoke French, and had among his secretaries a Frenchman. He received us with politeness, seemed satisfied as to the object of our journey, and promised to speak on the subject to the Shah in the evening.

On July 10 the Shah moved with his camp to Hamadan, a large city occupying the site of the ancient Ecbatana. We followed him thither. The Prime Minister, with whom we were now in constant communication, and who had promised to obtain for us the firman to enable us to travel in

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his Majesty's dominions, was Mirza Agasi, familiarly known as 'the Haji,' from the pilgrimage he had made to Mecca. He was the man of the greatest influence, power, and authority in Persia. He had the reputation of being crafty and unscrupulous, cruel and treacherous, and a fanatical hater of Christians. His misgovernment and the corruption and oppression which prevailed throughout the kingdom had brought it to the verge of ruin, and he was execrated as the cause of the misery, sufferings, and discontent of the population. He evidently suspected that we were spies and agents of the British Government. Hence the delays in granting us the promised firman.

It was evident from the information we had received that we should encounter very great difficulties in attempting to pass through the Seistan to Kandahar. The Persian Government were resolved to prevent us from doing so, and if we ventured to proceed without its authority and in spite of its opposition, trusting to our disguise, our lives would be in imminent danger in a country notorious for the lawlessness of its inhabitants. Mr. Mitford was unwilling to incur the risk, and being now anxious to reach his destination, determined upon taking the most direct route to India — that through the north of Persia by Meshed and Herat. But it was not without its dangers, owing to the disturbed state of Central Asia. He was, however, assured that he need be under no fear so long as he was within the Shah's dominions.

I was unwilling to renounce the attempt to reach the Lake of Furrah. I was not without hope that at Isfahan I might find an opportunity of joining a caravan, or a party of travellers, going to Yezd, and that I might even perform the journey without attracting the notice of the Persian authorities. I determined, therefore, to separate from Mr. Mitford and to proceed in the first instance to that city. We accordingly asked for separate firmans, which were promised to us. But we soon learnt the value of Persian promises. It was not until August 8, after having been detained for nearly one month at Hamadan, that we obtained the documents we required and the permission of

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the Shah to continue our journey. We spent the greater part of that time in going backwards and forwards from the Prime Minister to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. We were always received with politeness, our remonstrances were listened to, and we were assured that on the following morning, without fail, we should be in possession of all that was required to enable us to take our departure. The morning came, but not the firmans. We were the more anxious to leave Hamadan, as in riding through the town and the camp we were exposed to constant annoyance and insult, and were occasionally in some danger. The population of the city was fanatical, the soldiers were insolent and without discipline, there were in the irregular cavalry wild fellows from the mountain tribes, who would not have scrupled to take the life of a Christian and a European, and there was a lawless and vicious rabble of camp followers. Stones were frequently thrown at us as we rode among the tents. We were occasionally threatened with actual violence, and in the streets we were usually greeted with cries of 'Káfir' (infidel), 'dog,' and other opprobrious epithets. This state of things was only partly put an end to when, on one occasion, a sentry having hurled a large stone at me which struck my horse, I proceeded to the Haji and demanded redress, threatening to appeal to the Shah himself unless it was afforded me. I was able to identify the culprit, who was arrested and received a bastinado. We were not afterwards molested in the camp, but in the city we were constantly insulted in the most foul language.

His Majesty treated me generously, commanding, in his firman, that I was to travel at the public expense, and to be furnished, without payment, with a certain number of horses. I was to receive at every place where I stopped for the night provisions for eight persons, including chickens, meat, eggs, rice, bread, sugar, and many other things, and barley and straw for my horses. The 'mehmandar'[1] who was to accompany me and to see to all my wants, was to give receipts

[1] The 'mehmandar' is an officer appointed by the Shah to accompany travellers of distinction and to provide for their wants.

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to the heads of the villages for the provisions supplied to me, the price of which was to be allowed to them in their taxes and other payments to the Shah's treasury. As I well knew that this was a mere idle form, that the villagers themselves would have to bear the expense, and that these rations and allowances to travellers of rank are made the excuse for great oppression and extortion, I determined not to avail myself of his Majesty's liberality, but to travel as economically as I possibly could and to pay for all I required. I should have gladly dispensed with the attendance of the mehmandar, but as he had received the Shah's express commands to accompany me, and was probably set to watch and report my movements—the Haji not having divested himself of the suspicion that I had other motives for travelling than those of pursuing geographical and antiquarian researches—I was compelled, very unwillingly, to retain him. The governors of districts and towns on my way were ordered to furnish me with escorts whenever danger was to be apprehended, and were made responsible for my safety.

In addition to the firman I received a letter from the Haji to Mehemet Taki Khan, the great Bakhtiyari chief, recommending me to his special protection. I was also furnished with a letter to the governor of Isfahan, who was directed to afford me facilities for the prosecution of my journey.

On August 8 I rode with Mr. Mitford as far as the village of Shaverin, where I took leave of him, and he started on his long and perilous journey through the north of Persia to Kandahar. We had been together for above a year, and I much regretted that we had to part. He had proved an excellent fellow-traveller, never complaining, ready to meet difficulties or hardships, and making the best of everything.[2]

I then returned to Hamadan. The Shah had left in the morning and his camp had been raised. There was silence

[2] For an account of our adventures in our journey from Baghdad to Hamadan, I must refer the reader to Mr. Mitford's *Land March from England to Ceylon*.

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and desolation where a few hours before there had been tumult and bustling crowds. Before leaving the city the soldiers had pillaged the bazars. All the shops were closed and the inhabitants, dreading violence and ill-treatment, had concealed themselves in their houses. The gardens around the town had been stripped of their produce and the trees cut down. The place looked as if it had been taken and sacked in war. Such was the usual result of a visit from the Shah, his Ministers, and his army.

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## CHAPTER VI

*Leave Hamadan—My mehmandar—Douletabad—A Persian palace—Burujird—Khosrauabad—Difficulties of the journey—A village chief—The Bakhtiyari—Renounce attempt to reach Shuster—Freydan—A Georgian colony—Tehrun—Reach Isfahan—M. Boré—Mr. Burgess—The Matamet—The punishment of Imaum Verdi Beg—Shefi'a Khan—Ali Naghi Khan—Invitation to Kala Tul—Delays in departure—The Palaces of Isfahan—Persian orgies—The Mujtehed.*

I WAS now alone. The most arduous and dangerous part of my journey to India, if I persisted in my attempt to reach Kandahar through the Seistan, was before me. In order to be entirely independent in my movements, and to be able to choose the route which suited me best, I had bought from a soldier a strong sturdy horse. As it had probably been stolen I paid but a few tomans[1] for it. All I possessed in the way of luggage was contained in a pair of small saddle-bags. I was not, consequently, in need of a second horse for my baggage. My quilt and carpet were placed over my saddle. It would have been impossible to travel with fewer encumbrances.

It was not until the afternoon of August 9 that a Ghulâm,[2] named Imaum Verdi Beg, who had been appointed my mehmandar, had completed his preparations for the journey and was ready to start. We could, therefore, make but a short stage. He joined me, mounted on a good horse, and in travelling costume—his robes thrust into a pair of baggy trousers of brown cloth—armed with a long gun, a huge pistol, and the usual curved dagger, and various

[1] The 'toman' was then worth about 10*s*.

[2] The title given to an officer in the household of the Shah, or of any great personage.



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contrivances for holding powder and balls hanging from his belt. We left the city together, and rode through a well-cultivated and fertile plain, thick with habitations surrounded by trees and gardens, and watered by numberless streams. In about two hours we reached the large village of Yalpand. The Ghulâm put his horse to a gallop when we came in sight of it, to precede and prepare my lodging. He secured a clean and airy room for me at the top of the best house in the place, and when the sun went down an excellent supper with a variety of dishes was served to me.

When, in the morning, I wished to pay for my night's entertainment, I was informed that I was the Shah's guest, and that, consequently, I was travelling at his Majesty's expense. I remonstrated in vain. The Ghulâm declared that the royal firman must be obeyed, and that no one would dare to receive money for anything supplied to me.

Our departure was delayed by a quarrel between my mehmandar and the head of the village. I then discovered that he had sent back his horse to Hamadan the previous evening, as he wished to spare it the long journey to Isfahan. He was now demanding from the villagers the horses with which, according to the Shah's firman, they were bound to provide me. After a great deal of wrangling and threatening, he succeeded in obtaining a wretched horse and a donkey, upon which a load was placed. What the load consisted of I could not at first imagine, as he had not been encumbered with luggage on his departure from Hamadan. I soon discovered that he had already commenced a system of extortion, for which the inhabitants of the villages at which I might stop for the night were to be the victims during the whole of my journey to Isfahan. My firman specified the supplies that I was to receive at each place. The Ghulâm had exacted them at Yalpand, and as they were far beyond what he or I could consume, he insisted upon carrying off the surplus. This accounted for the donkey's load. I was very angry, declared that I would not be a party to so flagrant an abuse of the Shah's orders, and that, much as I valued his Majesty's generosity and hospitality, I would not profit by them to the detriment of his subjects. But the

mehmandar persisted. He argued that, as he had given a receipt for what he had taken to the 'Ket-Khudâ,' or head of the village, the inhabitants would be repaid from the royal treasury, and that if he had not exacted all the supplies granted to me they would nevertheless be charged to the Shah. Why, therefore, should we not profit by his Majesty's bounty instead of the 'gourumsags'—the scoundrels—who wished to cheat him? Although the argument had some weight, I could not reconcile myself to the idea of travelling at the public expense, especially as I was well aware that the villagers had but little chance of being repaid out of the Shah's empty treasury. I again protested that I was resolved to pay for all that had been supplied to me and my horse. But both the master of the house in which we had lodged, and the Ket-Khudâ, were too much afraid of the consequences of offending a public officer to accept the money that I tendered to them, and I rode away in very ill-humour with my mehmandar, who was urging on the donkey, which, unable to keep up with the horses, greatly delayed our progress.

I had resolved to avoid the usual road between Hamadan and Isfahan, and to keep as close as I could to the great range of the Luristan Mountains. I should thus pass through a part of Persia which, I had reason to believe, had not been at that time explored by previous travellers, as it was a blank upon my map. After a pleasant ride through a hilly country abounding in villages, and offering constant views of high and picturesque peaks rising in the distance, we arrived late in the afternoon at Tashbandou (?), having breakfasted on our way, again at the public expense, at Samanabad. As the Khan, or chief, to whom the village belonged, was absent, and the inhabitants did not appear inclined to obey the firman without his orders, I took up my quarters in the doorway of a small fort which he was constructing. In the meanwhile my Ghulâm was bullying and threatening the villagers, who, he declared, were 'yâghi,' or rebellious to the Shah, and, when reported as such to his Majesty, would receive condign punishment. He succeeded at last in finding a house, to which I removed.

During the night the man who was in charge of the horse and donkey carried off from Yalpand decamped with them, and we had fresh difficulties in procuring others. The Ghulâm, however, possessed, in addition to my firman, an order from the prince governor of Hamadan which entitled him to claim two horses at every village, or the amount of their hire in money. Although the inhabitants at first resisted the demand, they found the horses for him, after a few blows from his heavy whip administered right and left, and we continued our journey with a further addition to the supplies he had exacted at the other villages through which we had passed.

At the next village, Daëleh, where we stopped to breakfast, the inhabitants proved more loyal to the Shah, kissing the firman and pressing it to their foreheads, and supplied the required horses without delay. We continued through a hilly country, passing numerous villages and crossing many streams, and reached Douletabad early in the afternoon. I was surprised to find it a considerable town, although not indicated on the maps I possessed, surrounded by an embankment of earth and a ditch, and by double mud-built walls, the inner of which was very lofty and furnished with bastions. Passing through a gateway and through a heap of ruins, I found myself in a large quadrangle formed by low buildings having numerous arched recesses, serving for rooms, and handsomely decorated with stucco ornaments in relief. At one end of this square was an extensive palace, formerly the residence of the governor, but fast falling to decay. It must at one time have been a building of much magnificence. The walls of a spacious hall which I entered were painted in the brightest colours with human figures, animals of various kinds, birds and flowers, and arabesque ornaments.

Beyond this fine hall was a courtyard of large dimensions, in the centre of which was a tank of clear water, supplied by a spring. Around it were wide-spreading trees, rose-bushes, and flower-beds. At one extremity was a kind of screen concealing the entrance to an inner court, panelled with porcelain tiles of exquisite beauty, on which were

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enamelled in gorgeous colours the exploits of Rustem, the hero of the great Persian epic of the 'Shah-Nameh,' with numerous figures of warriors in mail and in fantastic costumes, and of horses with gaudy trappings.

I passed into this inner court, which was surrounded by numerous rooms partly in ruins, but still retaining remains of the ornaments in coloured stucco, glass, and carved woodwork with which they had been decorated. Beyond this court was a second, with fountains, rose-bushes, and parterres of flowers, and with similar rooms opening into it. It had been the enderun, or women's apartments.

I lingered with delight in admiration of these examples of Persian architecture and art in this deserted but still beautiful building, until the return of the Ghulâm, who had been to the governor of the town to obtain a lodging for me. He had succeeded, and we left the palace together. We passed a fine mosque, the cupola and walls of which were covered with coloured tiles, and a kind of kiosk, in the form of a tower, elaborately painted, but falling to ruin. After making our way through a crowded and well-supplied bazar, we entered, through an archway, spacious pleasure-grounds intersected by avenues of lofty poplars, and watered by rills of running water, forming ponds and reservoirs. Roses and other flowers filled the air with a delightful perfume. Between the avenues were fruit trees and vines laden with grapes.

In this garden were several detached kiosks, or summer-houses. One of them, standing on the margin of a little lake, had been assigned to me as a lodging. The room in which I spread my carpet was beautifully decorated with arabesques surrounding tablets on which were painted scenes from the chase—horsemen with spear and sword pursuing stags and hares, or more noble game, such as lions, tigers, and leopards ; or with hawks on their wrists following partridges and other birds. In the centre of the room were two live falcons seated upon their perches, and in one of the corners were collected guns, swords, and spears. The palace and the kiosk, I learned, belonged to Prince Sheikh Ali Mirza, one of the sons of Feth-Ali Shah.

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A large window, which could be closed with a wooden trellis of elegant design, opened upon a second garden with parterres of flowers and running water, even more spacious than that through which I had passed. Beyond was a long avenue of stately trees, which ended with a view of the cragged and snow-covered peaks of one of the mountains of the great Luristan range, called Kuh Arsenou.

I had scarcely seated myself on my carpet in this delicious retreat when two attendants placed before me an immense tray in which grapes, apricots, and other fruit were piled in pyramids. After I had eaten I wandered about the garden and entered one of the palaces, which was without inhabitants. It was a spacious building with a magnificent hall which, judging from the freshness of its coloured ornaments, appeared to have been recently restored. In the walls and ceiling small pieces of glass or mirrors were tastefully arranged in patterns—a favourite mode of decoration in Persia and Baghdad.

Other apartments which I entered were similarly ornamented. Painted life-size on the walls were figures of dancing girls in various postures, and of richly-clad ladies with almond-shaped eyes and black locks, as they are usually represented in Persian pictures, and hunting scenes, with horsemen bearing falcons on their wrists.

The Palace was reflected in a reservoir of crystal water, about a hundred paces in length. As I wandered through this beautiful building, which was without a human inmate and as silent as the grave, I might have fancied myself in one of those enchanted palaces whose inhabitants had been turned to marble, as described in the 'Arabian Nights,' and which had so captivated my imagination in childhood.

It was not without much regret that I left this paradise, but time pressed and I could not stay. At five in the morning the governor sent a soldier to accompany us to a neighbouring village, where the Ghulâm expected that he would meet with difficulties in obtaining horses, for we were now approaching a country inhabited by a wild and lawless population little disposed to respect the Shah's firman. After leaving Douletabad we entered a highly cultivated and

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thickly populated plain. On all sides were villages, generally surrounded by mud-built walls, and containing a small fort in which the khan or village chief resided, as they were exposed to frequent attacks by marauding parties from the wild tribes inhabiting the mountains of Luristan. I rode through vineyards and fields white with the cotton-bearing plant. To the right rose the Elwend Mountains, which separate this rich plain—a blank on my map—from Luristan and the great range of Zagros. Towering above them, and almost overhanging Douletabad, rose the fine conical peak of Arsenou. After passing through a fortified village called Gouran, overlooked by a castle built upon a high and precipitous mound, we reached in about three hours Kala Khalifa, where the Ghulâm stopped to procure fresh horses. The inhabitants at first absolutely refused to supply them, and it was only after a delay of nearly four hours that, with the aid of the soldier, he succeeded in obtaining a young horse and two donkeys to carry his increasing stores, exacted from the villagers as we went along. A Lur named Ali, who had accompanied us on foot from Hamadan, bought this horse for him for three tomans (thirty shillings). Imaum Verdi borrowed one toman from me, promising to repay it at the end of our journey. He sold the horse shortly afterwards for five shillings more than he gave for it, but did not offer to pay back the money I had lent him. In Kala Khalifa there is a tomb said to be that of the son of Imaum Ali, which is held in great veneration, and is a place of pilgrimage.

We now left the plain and entered the hills. They equally abounded in villages—each with its castle, its walls and bastions, having at a distance a rather imposing appearance, and showing the unsettled state of the country. The lands were irrigated by innumerable streams conveyed in artificial water-courses and in subterranean conduits called kanâts. A little before sunset we came in sight of Burujird, a large town situated in an extensive and well-cultivated plain, with the lofty range of Zagros, its higher peaks covered with snow, bounding it to the west. We did not, however, reach the gates until long after dark. I would not

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disturb the governor at so late an hour to obtain a lodging, but took up my quarters in a large and well-built caravanserai.

The Ghulâm, who had been sent to protect me, had already given me much trouble, and I had formed a very bad opinion of him. He now threatened in an insolent manner to leave me and to return to Hamadan, unless I gave him a sum of money far beyond what I could afford to pay. I was not disposed to yield to his menaces, and told him that he might continue with me or leave me as he thought proper, but that in either case I should at once send a messenger to the Shah with a letter complaining of his behaviour. I reminded him, at the same time, of the fate of one Mirza Jaffer, the mehmandar of a French traveller, who, having been guilty of similar misconduct, had, upon complaint made to his Majesty, been condemned to lose his head. As he saw that I was resolved to resist the imposition, and was preparing to find my way to the governor to represent what had occurred and to engage a messenger to be sent to the Shah, he became alarmed, and implored me to pass over what had occurred and not to put my intention into execution. He went himself, at the same time, to the governor, to make, he said, all necessary arrangements for my journey to Korumabad. He returned shortly afterwards with many obliging messages from this official, and with assurances that I should be furnished even with fifty soldiers if they were needed to ensure my safety in Luristan.

I remained at Burujird the next day in order to call upon the governor and to make arrangements to continue my journey. He was a Sirdar, or General, named Mirza Zamein. He received me at once, and expressed himself ready to help me as far as it might be in his power, but endeavoured to dissuade me from going to Korumabad. Not only, he declared, were the roads very unsafe on account of the unsettled state of the Lur tribes, who were in open revolt against the Shah, and were making constant depredations in the district through which I should have to pass, but the heat was so great at this time of the year at Shuster that no human being could possibly endure it.

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His statements were corroborated by others, and as I had reason to believe that there was some truth in them, I decided upon changing my route and endeavouring to reach Shuster by going to Freydan or Feridun, and thence to cross the Bakhtiyari Mountains.

To make up for his misconduct on the previous evening, the Ghulâm exerted himself to the utmost to please me, and I found him on returning to the caravanserai followed by several men bearing loads of provisions—bread, meat, fowls, rice, eggs, butter, tea, and firewood—enough to feed a regiment. He declared that they were a present from the governor, and that it would be considered a want of politeness and an offence on my part not to accept them. A very small portion of them sufficed for my wants; the rest went into the capacious sacks in which he had stowed the various supplies that he had been collecting on our way, and which he sold when he reached a town. In the afternoon I walked through the bazars, which I found extensive and well supplied with the produce of the country and foreign fabrics. The town, the position of which was wrongly marked on my map, contains about twenty thousand inhabitants, and is the largest in the province. It possesses several handsome mosques, whose domes and minarets give it a striking and picturesque appearance from a distance, and stands in the midst of extensive gardens and orchards, irrigated by streams coming from the hills. They are celebrated for their fruit, especially for melons and a small black grape of delicious flavour. In the bazar, melons, peaches, apricots, and plums were piled up in great heaps, and were sold for a mere trifle. But this abundance of fruit is one of the causes of fevers and dysentery, from which the population suffer severely during the autumn. The town contains a few Jewish families, but no Christians.

I left Burujird early on the morning of August 14, and continued during the greater part of the day through the highly cultivated and thickly peopled plain which we had entered after crossing the hills of Douletabad. I had rarely seen a country so densely populated and with so prosperous and flourishing an appearance. We were evidently entering

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upon a district whose inhabitants had not been exposed to the oppressive rule of the Persian Government, with its attendant suffering and misery. It was harvest time in these high regions, and the peasants were everywhere engaged in cutting and carrying the corn. In all directions were long lines of beasts of burden, bearing sheaves of wheat and barley to the villages, where they were deposited on the threshing-floors, to be threshed by a rude roller, made of wood with iron spikes, drawn by oxen or horses. This mode of threshing prevails throughout the greater part of Western Asia.

About nightfall we stopped at the village of Khosrauabad. We were getting farther and farther from the country in which the authority of the Shah and his officers was fully recognised, and were entering upon that inhabited by the semi-independent tribes of Luristan. The Lur khan, the chief of Khosrauabad, declined to obey his Majesty's firman, and declared that he owed no allegiance to him. High words ensued. Imaum Verdi Beg drew his sword, and a very pretty quarrel, which might have led to bloodshed and serious consequences to myself, seemed to be impending. However, the khan at length yielded to alternate threatening and coaxing, and procured us a night's lodging. But the Ghulâm and our companion Ali were alarmed by these signs of rebellion, and declared that matters would get worse as we penetrated farther into the mountains of Luristan, where the authority of the Government was no longer recognised, and where it would consequently be impossible to obtain either provisions or horses. They urged me to give up the attempt to pass through the Lur Mountains to Shuster, and to take the direct road to Isfahan. To corroborate what they had told me about the dangers and difficulties of the route I proposed to take, they brought to me several 'charwardârs,' or muleteers, who were preparing to leave with a caravan for the latter city. They described to me, with circumstantial details, a number of murders and robberies which they affirmed had been recently committed upon travellers by the ferocious Lurs. As I could not depend upon the

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Ghulâm, and as it was evident that we had now entered a part of Persia in which the Shah's firman was no longer respected, I thought it advisable to make my way to the district of Freydan, instead of striking at once into the mountains. I hoped that thence I might still find means of carrying out my original intention of crossing the Luristan range to the plains of Khuzistan. If insurmountable difficulties were in the way, I could always join the high road between Hamadan and Isfahan.

We had some trouble on the following morning in obtaining horses, but managed to resume our journey about seven o'clock. At the southern extremity of the plain of Burujird we entered a low range of barren hills. Although we still passed many villages, they were not surrounded by gardens and trees as in the low country. But each had its small bastioned mud fort, generally perched upon a mound or a projecting rock, and having from a distance a very picturesque appearance. They are the residences of the khans to whom the villages belong, and serve as places of refuge for the inhabitants when they are engaged in the quarrels which constantly ensue between their chiefs, or when exposed to raids from the tribes of the neighbouring mountains. This part of Persia had always been in a very disturbed state, and its population appeared to live in perpetual warfare. Every petty chief considered himself independent of the Shah and at liberty to attack and plunder his neighbour, to carry off his corn, and to drive away his cattle. Life and property were nowhere safe, and the villages were for the most part in ruins. We saw in the distance during the day several encampments of black tents belonging to the Bakhtiyari, a nomad mountain tribe renowned for its courage and daring, and dreaded by the settled inhabitants of the plains. Their 'chapaws,' or forays for plundering villages and caravans, were carried on by bodies of horsemen to a great distance. Even the neighbourhood of Isfahan was not safe from them. They were everywhere the terror of travellers and of the population.

We continued to skirt the lofty range of the Luristan Mountains, whose summits were covered with snow, which

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I was assured remained throughout the year. A river which we had hitherto been following now turned towards the south-west, and disappeared in a deep gorge, to issue again, I was told, in the plains of Khuzistan, or Susiana, near Dizful. I much regretted that I was unable to continue along it, and thus to reach by the shortest route the principal object of my journey, the ruins of Susan.

We stopped at a village fort at the foot of Mount Shuterun. The khan was absent, but arrived soon after, accompanied by a crowd of ferocious-looking horsemen carrying matchlocks and armed to the teeth. He was a tall man, with a flowing black beard and a somewhat sinister countenance. He was probably returning from a raid, but he was civil to me, gave me a substantial breakfast, and asked me many questions about England, the Shah's army, which he heard I had seen, and my object in visiting his country. Although he professed to treat his Majesty's firman and the Ghulâm with the utmost contempt, he provided us with a horse and a couple of donkeys, and we continued our journey, reaching at nightfall the village of Derbend, the largest we had seen during the day, and, like those in the plain, surrounded by trees and gardens. I passed a sleepless night, assailed by myriads of mosquitoes.

We entered on the following morning upon a small plain, in which were two Armenian villages, named Zarnou and Kirk. It was divided by a range of low hills from a second plain inhabited by Bakhtiyari. The man who was in charge of the horses furnished to us at our last sleeping-place declared that he could not venture amongst these savage people, of whose deeds of murder and robbery he kept relating terrible instances, entreating us to see to our arms and to be prepared for the worst. He wished to take back the horses, and to leave the Ghulâm with his ill-acquired property to shift for himself. But Imaum Verdi Beg refused to part with them, as there were no others to be obtained. The poor fellow, seeing that we were determined to venture among the Bakhtiyari, and fearing to lose his life as well as his horses, took to his heels and left us in possession of them. They had been taken by force, and I was sorry for

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him, but there was nothing to be done. My mehmandar would not listen to my remonstrances, maintaining that it was only right that the Shah's firman should be obeyed.

In the extensive plain before us were numerous mud-built castles belonging to petty Bakhtiyari chiefs. We stopped at one of them named Makiabad. Najef Khan, its owner, welcomed me very cordially and invited me to share his breakfast, which was spread under a shady tree and consisted of 'âbi-dugh' (sour milk), a universal beverage in Persia, thick curds and cheese, with large cakes of unleavened bread, crisp and thin as a wafer, baked upon a concave iron plate over hot embers. He was a very handsome young man, with bright eyes and an open intelligent countenance. As we had the horses which had been left on our hands, there was no necessity for showing my firman, or of making any demand upon his village. We consequently parted good friends.

I resumed my journey through a hilly and barren country, thinly inhabited by Bakhtiyari. As the sun was setting I came in sight of what appeared to be a grand old castle on a mound rising above a village. It reminded me of one of those baronial strongholds of the Middle Ages of which ruins may yet be seen in many parts of Europe. These Bakhtiyari chiefs, indeed, lead the life of mediæval barons—at constant war with each other, plundering their neighbour's goods, his cattle and his flocks, and levying blackmail upon travellers and merchants. However, as we approached, the illusion was soon dispelled. The village proved to be in ruins and uninhabited. The mud fort itself was scarcely in better condition. After riding with some difficulty up the steep ascent to it, I entered the gateway and found myself in a courtyard, in which were a number of armed men of very savage and sinister appearance lounging about. The khan soon made his appearance, and as fortunately there was no need to show my firman, and I presented myself as a simple wayfarer, he offered me at once a night's lodging and entertainment, and his followers were ready enough to help us and to see to our horses, for even the lawless Bakhtiyari, like all nomad tribes,

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consider themselves bound to receive a stranger and to treat the traveller with hospitality. The chief even offered to take charge of my saddle-bags, for the better security of their contents against thieves—an offer, however, which I thought it prudent to decline. The Ghulâm and Ali, our travelling companion, expressed great alarm at the aspect of the place and of its inhabitants. Before settling myself to sleep on my carpet I looked carefully to my arms, and prepared myself for any attempt that might be made upon my life or property in the night. However, our host had been apparently calumniated by the timid Persians, and I slept undisturbed.

I had been suffering for some days from a severe attack of intermittent fever, and, in addition, from dysentery. As I felt very weak and scarcely fit to cross the Luristan Mountains by difficult tracks almost impassable to horses, where the population was as scant as it was hostile to strangers, and where I might find myself even unable to procure food, I decided upon proceeding at once to Isfahan, where I hoped to obtain some rest and medical advice before continuing my journey. I had been going through many hardships. The heat was still almost unbearable in the burning rays of an August sun, and I was obliged to travel during the day. My only bed had been for long but a small carpet, and I could never take off my clothes, which were in a very ragged condition. My food had consisted of little else than sour curds, cheese, and fruit. It was not surprising, consequently, that my health should have suffered.

We had now entered the district of Freydan, or Feridun, a considerable part of which belonged to the great Bakhtiyari chief, Mehemet Taki Khan. We stopped at the principal village in it, which bore the same name, and which contained about one hundred and fifty houses. It was inhabited by a Georgian colony, which had been established there by Shah Abbas. These Christians had retained their native language and their religion. They were industrious, and their villages, which were numerous and surrounded by gardens and orchards, had a prosperous appearance. They

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were to be recognised at once by their features, which differed from those of the surrounding populations. Their women went unveiled, and many among those whom I saw were strikingly handsome. An abundance of water from the mountains, carried by innumerable water-courses and subterranean channels to all parts of the plain, irrigated a vast number of melon beds, producing fruit of excellent quality, which was sent for sale to Isfahan and elsewhere. A kind of clover, bearing a small fragrant flower, was also largely cultivated. We did not reach Adun, a Christian village where I had decided upon passing the night, until after dark. We were not hospitably received, and had much difficulty in getting a room. When at last we had succeeded in finding one, it was immediately crowded by idlers who came to gaze at the stranger, the news of whose arrival had spread through the place. Even the courtyard was filled with people who were waiting their turn to enter my room to stare at me. The women had congregated in numbers on the flat roof of the house, whence they could look down upon me through a hole in the ceiling which served for a chimney. I was placed to so much inconvenience by the men who crowded round me, that I was forced to threaten to drive them out with a thick stick. When at last they departed I stationed Ali at the door, who kept guard with a drawn sword and would not allow any one to enter. The women could not be induced to withdraw, but remained on the roof watching my proceedings until I settled myself for the night.

As I was now about to enter upon the track between Hamadan and Isfahan usually followed by caravans and travellers, I had no longer any need of the services or protection of a mehmandar. I had every reason to be dissatisfied with Imaum Verdi Beg. He had got me into constant trouble and quarrels in the villages by his extortions and the manner in which he was accustomed to treat the inhabitants. As the number of horses he required to carry the stock of provisions which he had been collecting during our journey could not be procured, he was obliged to be satisfied with donkeys. As these animals were unable to keep up with

the horses, and were continually straggling into fields of ripe corn or barley to feed, my progress was much delayed and I lost a great deal of valuable time. Accordingly I insisted that he should deliver the firman to me, and I left him to do as he thought fit. He sold for ten shillings one of the donkeys which he had stolen, and then followed me. Ali came with him on one of the horses. We still skirted the lofty mountain range, from which rose a grand peak called Dulan-kuh, which had been visible during the previous two days. The plain through which we rode appeared to be deserted. We saw no villages, and the one or two caravanserais we passed were in ruins. The Ghulâm had been told that the inhabitants had fled on account of the incursions of the Bakhtiyari, and had been warned that we might probably fall in with one of their marauding parties. He was consequently very anxious that I should take an escort for my protection, which, however, I refused to do.

Towards evening we reached a small Bakhtiyari village, where we were unable to obtain either provisions for ourselves or barley for our horses. I saw a castle on a mound in the distance and galloped to it. But the place seemed deserted, and when I entered the gateway I found myself amidst a heap of ruins tenanted by a solitary herdsman with a pair of oxen. He could not help us, but said that there was a village off the road near the foot of the mountain where we might obtain what we required. It was already dark, but there was nothing to be done but to take the direction he pointed out to us. We were overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, and I soon got wet to the skin. Except when the vivid flashes of lightning, accompanied by deafening peals of thunder, showed us surrounding objects, we were in total darkness. When the storm had ceased and we had wandered about for some time, distant lights and the barking of dogs directed us to the village of which we were in search. After scrambling through ditches and wading through water-courses, we found ourselves at the gate of a ruined khan where some men were gathered round a bright fire. They were strolling shoemakers, who were on their way to Isfahan, and had taken up their quarters

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for the night in a vaulted passage which had afforded them shelter from the storm. Upon the fire they had kindled was a large caldron of savoury broth, which was boiling merrily. The long ride had given me an appetite, and I seated myself without ceremony in the group, and began to help myself without waiting for an invitation. The shoemakers, although good Musulmans, made no objection to my dipping my own spoon into the mess with them. Seeing that my clothes were soaked by the rain, and that I was suffering from ague, they very civilly left me alone in the recess in which they had established themselves, and I was able to dry myself by their fire and to spread my carpet for the night by the side of its embers.

Next day we entered upon the great plain in which Isfahan is situated, and I soon came to a broad, well-beaten track, which proved the highway from Hamadan to that city. After following it for a short distance I was so exhausted by a severe attack of fever, and by the dysentery which had greatly weakened me, that I was obliged to dismount on arriving at a small village, and to take a little rest. After the shivering fit had passed I resumed my journey, but being again overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm, I took refuge in a flour-mill which was fortunately hard by.

When the rain had ceased I again mounted my horse, but being too unwell and weak to proceed very far, stopped for the night at Tehrun, a large village surrounded by gardens, where I was able to obtain a clean room and the repose of which I was so much in need.

The gardens amongst which I had entered before arriving at Tehrun reach in an almost uninterrupted line to Isfahan. They produce fruit and vegetables of all kinds, especially melons of exquisite flavour, which have an unrivalled reputation throughout Persia. These gardens owe their extreme productiveness to the great number of streams which descend into the plain from the Zerda-Kuh range of mountains, and are divided into innumerable rivulets for the purpose of irrigation, frequently carried underground by the tunnelled watercourses or kanâts, which have well-like openings at regular distances.

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The many horsemen, and men and women carrying loads, whom I passed on the road showed me that I was approaching Isfahan; but nothing could be seen of the city, which was completely buried in trees. By constantly asking my way I managed to reach, through the labyrinth of walls which enclose the gardens and melon beds, the Armenian quarter of Julfa. I had letters for M. Eugène Boré, a French gentleman, and, not knowing where to find a lodging, I presented myself to him to ask for advice. He received me with great kindness, and insisted that I should be his guest.

Mr. Edward Burgess, an English merchant from Tabreez, who was at Isfahan on business, hearing that I had arrived, came to see me and offered to be of use to me. He proposed that we should present ourselves to the governor, Manuchar Khan, the Mu'temedi-Dowla, or, as he was usually called, 'the Matamet,'[3] to whom he was personally known.

I was anxious to deliver the letter which had been given to me by the Haji at Hamadan for this high personage, and at the same time to lodge a complaint against Imaum Verdi Beg, my mehmandar, for his exactions and his ill-treatment of the villagers on the road. He had left me as we approached the city, taking with him the horses and donkeys laden with rice, sugar, and other spoils which he had acquired by the use of my firman. I was determined to have him punished, and compelled to restore to their owners the animals that he had carried off, and to repay to the village chiefs the money he had levied from them.

Although very ill and weak, I rode with Mr. Burgess on the second day after my arrival to the governor's palace. The Armenian suburb of Julfa is at some distance from the main portion of the city, in which only Musulmans were then permitted to live. After passing through extensive gardens we reached the Mohammedan quarters, and threading our way between mud-built houses, for the most part falling to ruins, through narrow, paved streets, deep in dust and mud

[3] I spell this name as it was pronounced; Mu'temedi-Dowla means 'the one upon whom the State relies.'

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and choked with filth and rubbish, we at length reached the Matamet's residence.

After entering, through a narrow dark passage, a spacious yard with the usual fountains, running water, and flowers, we passed into the inner court, where the governor gave audience. The palace, which at one time must have been of great magnificence, was in a neglected and ruined condition, but had been once profusely decorated with paintings, glass, and inlaid work, such as I had seen in the palace of Douletabad. The building was thronged with miserably clad soldiers, 'ferrashes,'[4] men and women having complaints to make or petitions to present, and the usual retinue and hangers-on of a Persian nobleman in authority.

The Matamet himself sat on a chair, at a large open window, in a beautifully ornamented room at the upper end of the court. Those who had business with him, or whom he summoned, advanced with repeated bows, and then stood humbly before him as if awestruck by his presence, the sleeves of their robes, usually loose and open, closely buttoned up, and their hands joined in front—an immemorial attitude of respect in the East.[5] In the 'hauz,' or pond of fresh water, in the centre of the court, were bundles of long switches from the pomegranate tree, soaking to be ready for use for the bastinado, which the Matamet was in the habit of administering freely and indifferently to high and low. In a corner was the pole with two loops of cord to raise the feet of the victim, who writhes on the ground and screams for mercy. This barbarous punishment was then employed in Persia for all manner of offences and crimes, the number of strokes administered varying according to the guilt or obstinacy of the culprit. It was also constantly resorted to as a form of torture to extract confessions. The pomegranate switches, when soaked for some time, become lithe and flexible. The pain and injury which they inflicted were very great, and were sometimes even

[4] The 'ferrash,' literally the 'sweeper,' is an attendant employed in various ways, from sweeping the rooms to administering the bastinado.

[5] The attendants of the Assyrian King are thus represented in the sculptures from Nineveh.



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followed by death. Under ordinary circumstances the sufferer was unable to use his feet for some time, and frequently lost the nails of his toes. The bastinado was inflicted upon men of the highest rank—governors of provinces, and even prime ministers—who had, justly or unjustly, incurred the displeasure of the Shah. Hussein Khan, on his return from a special mission as ambassador to England and France, had been subjected to it on a charge of peculation.

Manuchar Khan, the Matamet, was a eunuch. He was a Georgian, born of Christian parents, and had been purchased in his childhood as a slave, had been brought up as a Musulman, and reduced to his unhappy condition. Like many of his kind, he was employed when young in the public service, and had by his remarkable abilities risen to the highest posts. He had for many years enjoyed the confidence and the favour of the Shah. Considered the best administrator in the kingdom, he had been sent to govern the great province of Isfahan, which included within its limits the wild and lawless tribes of the Lurs and the Bakhtiyari, generally in rebellion, and the semi-independent Arab population of the plains between the Luristan Mountains and the Euphrates. He was hated and feared for his cruelty ; but it was generally admitted that he ruled justly, that he protected the weak from oppression by the strong, and that where he was able to enforce his authority life and property were secure. He was known for the ingenuity with which he had invented new forms of punishment and torture to strike terror into evil-doers, and to make examples of those who dared to resist his authority or that of his master the Shah, thus justifying the reproach addressed to beings of his class, of insensibility to human suffering. One of his modes of dealing with criminals was what he termed 'planting vines.' A hole having been dug in the ground, men were thrust headlong into it and then covered with earth, their legs being allowed to protrude to represent what he facetiously called 'the vines.' I was told that he had ordered a horse-stealer to have all his teeth drawn, which were driven into the soles of his feet as if he were being

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shod. His head was then put into a nose-bag filled with hay, and he was thus left to die. A tower still existed near Shiraz which he had built of three hundred living men belonging to the Mamesenni,[6] a tribe inhabiting the mountains to the north of Shiraz, which had rebelled against the Shah. They were laid in layers of ten, mortar being spread between each layer, and the heads of the unhappy victims being left free. Some of them were said to have been kept alive for several days by being fed by their friends, a life of torture being thus prolonged. At that time few nations, however barbarous, equalled—none probably exceeded—the Persian in the shocking cruelty, ingenuity, and indifference with which death or torture was inflicted.

The Matamet had the usual characteristics of the eunuch. He was beardless, had a smooth, colourless face, with hanging cheeks and a weak, shrill, feminine voice. He was short, stout, and flabby, and his limbs were ungainly and slow of movement. His features, which were of the Georgian type, had a wearied and listless appearance, and were without expression or animation. He was dressed in the usual Persian costume—his tunic being of the finest Cashmere cloth—and he carried a jewel-handled curved dagger in the shawl folded round his waist. He received us courteously, said a few civil things about the English nation, which he distinguished from the English Government, and invited us to come up into the room in which he was seated and to take our places on a carpet spread near him.

I handed him my firman and the letter from the Haji, and being unable to suppress my indignation against Imaum Verdi Beg, my mehmandar, for his ill-treatment of the villagers on the road, I denounced him at once in vehement terms, describing his misconduct and the insolent manner in which he had behaved to me when I had remonstrated against it. The Matamet applied a variety of opprobrious and foul epithets to the Ghulâm himself, and to his mother and all his female relatives, after the Persian fashion, and promised that he should receive condign punishment. And he was

[6] A contraction of Mohammed Husseini.

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as good as his word, for two days after Imaum Verdi came hobbling to me with a very rueful countenance, and his feet swollen from the effects of the bastinado which he had received. I was inclined to pity the poor wretch, although he had richly deserved his punishment; but I almost regretted that I had denounced him to the Matamet when he said to me in an appealing tone, 'What good, sir, has the stick that I have eaten done you? Who has profited by it? You and I might have divided the money and the supplies that, as the Shah's servant, I was entitled by his firman to obtain for you on our way. The villagers would have been none the worse, as they would have deducted the amount from their taxes. Do you think that they will get back their horses, or their donkeys, or their tomans? No, the Matamet has taken them all for himself. He is a rich man and does not want them; I am a poor man and do. He is the greater robber of the two. He goes unpunished and I have scarcely a nail left on my toes.'

After the Matamet had made the usual inquiries as to the object of my journey, and as to the route I desired to take and the places I wished to visit, he said that, had I been accompanied by a competent Ghulâm, I should have met with no difficulty in carrying out my original intention of crossing the Bakhtiyari Mountains to Shuster. He promised to send with me one of his own officers, who would conduct me to that city. A Bakhtiyari chief, named Shefi'a Khan, who happened to be present, confirmed what the governor had said, and informed me that one of the brothers of Mehemet Taki Khan, the great Bakhtiyari chief, was then in Isfahan. When I took my leave of the governor he told me that my new mehmandar would be ready to leave immediately, and that I should receive the letters he had promised me without delay.

The day after my interview with the Matamet I succeeded, after some trouble, in finding Shefi'a Khan, who had promised to introduce me to Ali Naghi Khan, the brother of the principal chief of the Bakhtiyari tribes. They both lodged in the upper storey of a half-ruined building forming part of one of the ancient royal palaces.

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The entrance was crowded with their retainers—tall, handsome, but fierce-looking men, in very ragged clothes. They wore the common white felt skull-cap, sometimes embroidered at the edge with coloured wools when worn by a chief, their heads being closely shaven after the Persian fashion, with the exception of two locks, called 'zulf,' one on each side of the face. The Bakhtiyari usually twist round their skull-caps, in the form of a turban, a long piece of coarse linen of a brown colour, with stripes of black and white, called a 'lung,' one end of which is allowed to fall down the back, whilst the other forms a top-knot. In other respects they wear the usual Persian dress, but made of very coarse materials, and, as a protection against rain and cold, an outer, loose-fitting coat of felt reaching to the elbows and a little below the knees. Their shoes of cotton twist, called 'giveh,' and their stockings of coloured wools, are made by their women. A long match-lock—neither flint-locks nor percussion-caps were then known to the Persian tribes—is rarely out of their hands. Hanging to a leather belt round their waist, they carry a variety of objects for loading and cleaning their guns—a kind of bottle with a long neck, made of buffalo-hide, to contain coarse gunpowder; a small curved iron flask, opening with a spring, to hold the finer gunpowder for priming; a variety of metal picks and instruments; a mould for casting bullets; pouches of embroidered leather for balls and wadding; and an iron ramrod to load the long pistol always thrust into their girdles. I have thus minutely described the Bakhtiyari dress as I adopted it when I left Isfahan, and wore it during my residence with the tribe.[7]

I had some difficulty in making my way to Shefi'a Khan through this crowd of idlers, who were not a little surprised at learning that I was a Christian, and especially a 'Feringhi,' as they had never seen one before, and were evidently not quite certain as to how they should treat me. I found the Khan in a small room at the top of a rickety wooden staircase. He received me very civilly, and conducted me at once to Ali Naghi Khan. The Bakhtiyari

[7] See the frontispiece to this volume.

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chief was seated on a felt rug, leaning against a bolster formed of his quilt and bed-clothes rolled up in a piece of chequered silk. In front of him was a large circular metal tray, on which were little saucers containing various kinds of sweetmeats and condiments. In one hand he held a small porcelain cup, from which he occasionally sipped 'arak,' and in the other a 'kaleôn,' from which he drew clouds of smoke. An effeminate youth was singing verses from Hafiz and other Persian poets, accompanied by a man playing a kind of guitar. Ali Naghi Khan had unwound the shawl from his waist, and had unbuttoned his shirt and his robe, and on his closely shaven head was a small triangular cap made of Cashmere shawl, jauntily stuck on one side. It was evident that the chief was indulging in a debauch with four or five friends who were seated near him. But he had still his senses about him. I was amused at seeing in one of the corners of the room a mullah squatted upon his hams, and rocking himself to and fro whilst reading from the Koran, and interspersing with the text loud ejaculations of 'Ya Allah!' and 'Ya Ali!' apparently unmindful of the violation of the laws of his religion by his drunken associates.

Ali Naghi Khan was the second brother of Mehemet Taki Khan,[8] who at that time exercised authority over the greater part of the Bakhtiyari Mountains. He was on his way to Tehran, to be kept as a hostage for the good conduct of the chief, whose loyalty was suspected, and who had recently been in open rebellion against the Shah. Shefi'a Khan had accompanied him with an escort of retainers as far as Isfahan, whence he was about to proceed to the capital with a few attendants. He was a short, thick-set man, of about forty years of age, not ill-looking, and with an intelligent, though somewhat false, countenance.

Shefi'a Khan, kneeling down by his side, whispered to him the object of my visit. As soon as he learnt that I was an Englishman, he begged me to sit on the felt rug by his side, bade me welcome in very cordial terms, and

[8] This name should properly be written 'Muhammed Taghi Khan. I write it as generally pronounced.

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offered me a cup of iced Shiraz wine and sweetmeats, which I could not refuse. We soon became boon companions over the bottle. It was my object to establish friendly relations with him, as I hoped through his influence and the recommendations he might give me to his brother to enter the Bakhtiyari Mountains.

We had scarcely commenced a friendly conversation when attendants entered, bearing upon their heads trays containing various kinds of pillaus, savoury stews, and other dishes. The arak, the wine, and the sweetmeats were speedily removed, and the trays having been placed on the floor, the guests gathered round them, crouching on their hams. I was invited to partake of the breakfast, which was excellent. Persian cookery is superior to that of any other Eastern nation. As I was a Frank and an infidel, I had a tray to myself, an arrangement to which I by no means objected, although I could never altogether get over the sense of humiliation at being treated as unclean and unfit to dip my fingers into the same dish with true believers.

After the breakfast had been removed and the usual kaleôns smoked, the Khan spoke to me about my contemplated journey to the Bakhtiyari Mountains. He had already been at Tehran, where he had acquired the manners and the vices of the Persians who frequented the court. As he had seen Englishmen in the capital and had learnt something about their habits and customs, I was able to make him understand the object of my journey, and to remove the impression that might have existed in his mind that I was a spy, or that I was travelling in search of buried treasures, or for the discovery of a talisman which would enable the Franks to conquer his country—for such are the usual reasons assigned by wild tribes like the Bakhtiyari to the presence of Europeans amongst them. These suspicions have more than once led to fatal results. He very readily answered some questions I put to him as to various ruins of which I had heard, and when he was unable to give me the information I required he sent for such of his attendants as might be able to supply it. He

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expressed regret that he was not returning to the mountains, otherwise, he said, I should have accompanied him, but he promised to give me a letter to his brother, and suggested that I should join Shefi'a Khan, who would shortly leave Isfahan for Kala Tul, the residence of Mehemet Taki Khan. I gladly agreed to avail myself of his offer.

The Matamet had met my request to be allowed to proceed either through Yezd or Kerman to the Seistan with so absolute a refusal, that I thought it better to renounce for the time any attempt to reach that district from Isfahan. The news of the occupation of Afghanistan by the British troops had caused great excitement in Central Asia, and had added greatly to the insecurity of the country on the eastern borders of Persia. The death of Dr. Forbes, who had been murdered in an attempt to reach the Lake of Furrah, was known to the Matamet, and he was persuaded that I should meet with the same fate, and that he would be held responsible for anything that might happen to me if he permitted me to undertake so dangerous an expedition. As he had the means of preventing me from carrying out my intention of going to Yezd, I decided upon waiting until the state of affairs might enable me to persevere in it. In the meanwhile I could employ my time usefully in exploring the Bakhtiyari Mountains, and in endeavouring to solve some interesting geographical and archæological problems. Such were the reasons which induced me to renounce for the time my original plan of reaching Kandahar through the Seistan, but I was still resolved to adhere to it unless I found insurmountable difficulties in my way. Alone, and without official protection—England being in a state of war with Persia—and suspected of being a spy or an English agent, I was under the necessity of acting with extreme prudence and caution, although I was prepared to run any risk that the object I had in view should appear to me to justify.

Although Shefi'a Khan had assured me that he was about to leave Isfahan at once, the days passed by without any signs of his departure. I was continually going to and fro to the caravanserai, a ruined building in the middle of

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the city, to which he had removed after the departure of Ali Naghi Khan. There he sat, imperturbably smoking his kaleôn, on a raised platform of brickwork in the centre of a dirty yard in which his horses and mules and those of other travellers were tethered, and in which the smells were consequently almost intolerable. He had always some excuse ready to explain the delay. At one time it was a hostile tribe that had closed the road; at another he was endeavouring to raise, by the sale of his effects, money to pay his bill at the khan and to provide for the necessary expenses of his journey. Then the mullah who was to accompany him had failed, after opening the Koran and other books and consulting the first words on the page,[9] to name the day on which it would be propitious to begin the journey. His detention was, however, mainly caused by discussions with the Matamet, who wished to send one of his officers to collect the tribute from the Bakhtiyari tribes, and who was disposed to retain the Khan as hostage for its payment.

The five weeks that, in consequence of this delay, I passed in Isfahan were not unprofitably or unpleasantly spent. I continued to study the Persian language, which I began to speak with some fluency. I frequently visited the mosques (into which, however, I could not, as a Christian, enter), and the principal buildings and monuments of this former capital of the Persian kingdom now deserted by the court for Tehran. I was delighted with the beauty of some of these mosques, with their domes and walls covered with tiles, enamelled with the most elegant designs in the most brilliant colours, and their ample courts with refreshing fountains and splendid trees. I was equally astonished at the magnificence of the palaces of Shah Abbas and other Persian kings, with their spacious gardens, their stately avenues, and their fountains and artificial streams of running water, then deserted and fast falling to ruins. It was not difficult to picture to oneself what they must once have been. Wall-pictures representing the deeds of Rustem and

[9] This mode of ascertaining the propitious moment for commencing an undertaking or a journey prevails among Mohammedans, and is called 'Istikâra.'

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other heroes of the 'Shah-Nameh,' events from Persian history, incidents of the chase and scenes of carouse and revelry, with musicians and dancing boys and girls, were still to be seen in the deserted rooms and corridors, the ceilings of which were profusely decorated with elegant arabesques. In the halls, the pavements, the panelling of the walls, and the fountains were of rare marbles inlaid with mosaic. The rills which irrigated the gardens and avenues were led through conduits of the same materials. Even the great carpets, the finest and most precious which had issued from Persian looms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—unequalled for the beauty and variety of their designs and the fineness of their texture—were still spread upon the floors. The neglected pleasure-grounds were choked with rose-bushes in full bloom. These gorgeous ruins—desolate and deserted—afforded the most striking proof of the luxury and splendour of the Persian court in former times.

Mr. Burgess had several acquaintances amongst the notables of the city, who invited us to their houses and hospitably entertained us with breakfasts and dinners, at which I became acquainted with a great variety of excellent Persian dishes. They were, unfortunately, almost always accompanied by a free use of wine or arak, which generally preceded such feasts—Easterns rarely drink them during and after a repast—unless the host was a rigorous Musulman who looked upon all that intoxicates, or even exhilarates, as forbidden. Music and dancing were rarely wanting. The odes of Hafiz and Saadi, which have almost the same effect upon a Persian as the wine of Shiraz, were sung by professional reciters, and occasionally by some one of the company—for most educated Persians have a rich store of them in their memory.

But the most characteristic and curious scenes of Persian life were those I witnessed in the house of a Lur chief who had left his native mountains and had established himself in Isfahan, professing to be a 'sufi,' or free-thinker. He was an intimate friend and a distant connection of Shefi'a Khan, by whom I was introduced to him. He invited me more than once to dinner, and I was present at some of

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those orgies in which Persians of his class were too apt to indulge. On these occasions he would take his guests into the 'enderun,' or women's apartments, in which he was safe from intrusion and less liable to cause public scandal. They were served liberally with arak and sweetmeats, whilst dancing girls performed before them. Many of these girls were strikingly handsome—some were celebrated for their beauty. Their costume consisted of loose silk jackets of some gay colour, entirely open in front so as to show the naked figure to the waist; ample silk 'shalwars,' or trousers, so full that they could scarcely be distinguished from petticoats, and embroidered skullcaps. Long braided tresses descended to their heels, and they had the usual 'zulfs,' or ringlets, on both sides of the face. The soles of their feet, the palms of their hands, and their finger- and toe-nails were stained dark red, or rather brown, with henna. Their eyebrows were coloured black, and made to meet; their eyes, which were generally large and dark, were rendered more brilliant and expressive by the use of 'kohl.'[1] Their movements were not wanting in grace; their postures, however, were frequently extravagant, and more like gymnastic exercises than dancing. Bending themselves backwards, they would almost bring their heads and their heels together. Such dances are commonly represented in Persian paintings, which have now become well known out of Persia. The musicians were women who played on guitars and dulcimers. These orgies usually ended by the guests getting very drunk, and falling asleep on the carpets, where they remained until sufficiently sober to return to their homes in the morning.

I called once or twice on the 'mujtehed,' or head mullah of the great mosque and of the Musulman religion in Isfahan. Although a very strict Mohammedan, and unwilling to be seen seated on the same carpet with a Christian —any manner of contact with an infidel rendering a follower of Islam unclean—he received me very courteously, and appeared to take pleasure in conversing with me about European manners and discoveries, and upon general politics. I always carefully avoided the discussion of subjects con-

[1] A black powder used to darken the eyelids.

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nected with religion—and especially controversial matters—in conversing with him and any other Persian Musulman, as an unguarded expression might have brought me into very serious trouble. In those days the fanatical Persians were apt to deal very summarily with anyone who might have used words which could be construed into an insult to their religion, or as blaspheming their Prophet. A Christian thus offending would have caused a public tumult, and might even have been torn to pieces.

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## CHAPTER VII

*Departure from Isfahan—My travelling companions—The Shuturbashi—Shefi'a Khan—False alarm—Enter the Bakhtiyari country—Fallaut—Hospitable reception—Chilaga—A foray—Lurdagon—A Bakhtiyari feast—Effect of poetry—Difficult mountain pass—Thieves—Reach the Karun—Kala Tul—The guest-room—Mehemet Taki Khan's brothers—His wife—His sick son—The great Bakhtiyari chief—Cure his son—Khatun-jan Khanum—Khanumi—Fatima—Hussein Kuli—Ali Naghi Khan's wives—Dress of Bakhtiyari women—Marriages—Life at Kala Tul—The Bakhtiyari.*

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On September 22 Shefi'a Khan sent to tell me that everything was ready for his departure, that a mullah of recognised sanctity had declared, after consulting the Koran and his beads, that the day was propitious for undertaking the journey, and that he intended to leave Isfahan that very evening for the mountains. It was his intention, he said, to travel by night, as the heat was still great, and as it would be safer to do so to avoid the marauders who were believed to infest the country through which we had to pass. He proposed that I should meet him at sunset in the garden of the ruined palace of Heft-Dest, near the Shiraz bridge. I was there by the time appointed. Instead of finding, as I had expected, the Khan and his companions ready to start, I saw that they had evidently settled themselves down for the night. The chief, with his eternal kaleôn, was seated on his carpet under a tree; the women who were to accompany us were crouched amongst the baggage, enveloped from head to foot in their thick 'chaders,' or veils; the horses and mules were tethered for the night, and the men were occupied in giving them their provender. Shefi'a Khan apologised for the delay, throwing the blame for it upon an officer of the Matamet, who was to accompany us to the mountains upon

some business connected with the revenue, and who had sent word to say that he could not join us until the morning. He should have, therefore, to give up his intention of travelling by night in order not to lose another day, and whether the 'shutur-bashi,' chief of the running footmen—for such was the title of the official for whom we were waiting—appeared or not, he was determined to start at dawn.

There was nothing to be done but to picket my horse, and to spread my carpet as near to it as possible, so as to be on the watch for thieves. The scene was singularly picturesque. The stars were shining brilliantly overhead, the majestic trees of a long avenue rose darkly above us, a bright fire threw a red and flickering glare upon the countenances of the wild and savage men gathered around it, and the silence was soon only disturbed by the tinkling of the bells of the mules tethered about us. I wrapped myself in my cloak, for the nights were beginning to be cold, and soon fell asleep.

I was awoke before daylight by the noise and bustle of the preparations for our departure. The shutur-bashi had arrived. The attendants were placing the baggage on the mules, and the women and children on the top of the loads. I saddled my horse, and mounting, joined the small caravan. It was a motley company. Shefi'a Khan, who belonged to the Suhunni, a division of the great Bakhtiyari tribe of Chehar Lang, was handsome, tall, and of a commanding presence. He wore the Lur dress, except that since his visit to Isfahan he had laid aside the felt skull-cap for the 'kulâh,' or tall lambskin Persian hat, as more becoming and dignified. It would be difficult to imagine a more wild and ferocious-looking set of fellows than his followers; but they were very fine specimens of the human race, like most of the mountain tribesmen of Persia, who claim to be of pure Persian or Aryan blood, and to descend from the ancient inhabitants of the country they still occupy. Two ladies, wives of Ali Naghi Khan, the brother of the great chief, who would not accompany their husband to Tehran, were returning with us to their home with their maids. They rode on mules, perched high up on the baggage. At first they were

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closely veiled, their faces being concealed by a kind of network. But they soon dropped their veils and their reserve, and we became friends, talking on the way and when resting for the night. They were both really beautiful women. One of them had a little daughter, a lovely child about five years old, with large black eyes and long silken eyelashes. She and I became fast allies. She would make me take her on my saddle as we rode along, entertaining me with her merry chatter, and when we rested she would sit on my carpet and play with my watch or compass. She was adorned with all the trinkets that her mother had been able to save from the pawnbrokers of Isfahan, her little feet and hands were dyed with henna, and her wrists and ankles encircled with numerous gold and silver bangles. Her name was Bibi Mah—Lady Moon.

The shutur-bashi was one of those vain, lying, and unprincipled fellows who abounded in Persia and were plentifully found in the public service. He was a mirza, or scribe, rode a strong, sturdy mule, smoked, through a long flexible leather tube, a silver enamelled kaleôn which was carried by an attendant on horseback at his side, and had half a dozen servants. He gave himself great airs, and seemed to avoid the rest of the company.

I had adopted, as I have mentioned, the Bakhtiyari costume with the outer coat of felt. Shefi'a Khan suggested that I should do so to avoid being recognised in the dangerous country through which we had to pass, where a European had never before been seen. He begged me to have my gun and pistols always ready, as they were meant not for show but for use, and as we might have occasion for them at any moment during our journey. I had succeeded in obtaining from a banker at Isfahan a small sum, about twenty tomans, or 10*l.*, in gold, which I carried, as usual, in a belt worn round my waist next to the skin. This was all the money I possessed. My Bakhtiyari friends had insisted that I should require none when with their tribe, with whom hospitality was a duty, and who would resent as an insult an offer of payment for it. I was advised, indeed, in order not to tempt the cupidity of the evilly-disposed, to take no



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money with me, and I thought it prudent to conceal what little I had. Shefi'a Khan had given me as an attendant—who was to be responsible for my person and goods—a youth with stern and fierce features, named Khunkiar.[1] All my effects were contained in a pair of saddle-bags, worked in worsted of divers colours, which I could place on my Persian saddle. They only consisted of a second shirt, a hammer and nails to shoe my horse, one or two books and maps, and a few necessary medicines. Shefi'a Khan allowed me to place my small carpet and wadded coverlet upon one of his baggage mules.

The caravan, which consisted of about fifty persons, mostly on foot, having been formed, we commenced our march. Our progress was necessarily slow, as much of the baggage was carried by donkeys, which required continual urging with blows to make them keep up with the horses. The abuse with which a Persian assails his ass, whilst prodding the wretched animal with his dagger or a packing-needle, is indescribably foul. It is usually applied to the animal's master, that is, to the driver himself.

After leaving the gardens of Isfahan, which do not extend as far to the south of the city as they do to the north, we found ourselves on a broad well-beaten track, leading over a treeless, barren, and rocky country, into which extended spurs from the neighbouring hills. This was the high road leading to Shiraz. Shefi'a Khan explained to me that he had been compelled to renounce his original intention of striking into the mountains to the west of the city, and of reaching the residence of the Bakhtiyari chief by the more direct route over the range of Zerdâ-Kuh. He had, he said, received information that a tribe with which he had a blood feud, hearing that he was about to pass that way, had sent out a body of horsemen to intercept him. He had determined, therefore, to follow the main road to Shiraz as far as Koomeshah before entering the Bakhtiyari country. He would thus, he hoped, avoid all risk of meeting

[1] This, as it is well known, is one of the ancient titles of the Sultans of Turkey, and is generally supposed to mean the 'blood-drinker,' and to denote their ferocious propensities; but it is, I believe, derived from a Tartar word which signifies emperor.

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his enemies, who lived further to the north, and who would not have been made acquainted with his change of route.

As I rode along I could abandon myself to my reflections, which were of a very mixed kind. I was much elated by the prospect of being able to visit a country hitherto unexplored by Europeans, and in which I had been led to suppose I should find important ancient monuments and inscriptions. It would have been impossible to have undertaken the journey under better auspices. Shefi'a Khan seemed well disposed towards me. I had every reason to believe that during our intercourse at Isfahan I had gained his friendship, by various little services which I was able to render him. As he had served for a short time in a regiment of regular troops organised by English officers in the Persian service, and had thus acquired some knowledge of Europeans, he did not look upon them, as ignorant Persians did in those days, as altogether unclean animals, with whom no intercourse was permitted to good Musulmans. His wild and lawless followers were kind and friendly to me, and I had no cause to mistrust them. But the Bakhtiyari bear the very worst reputation in Persia. They are looked upon as a race of robbers—treacherous, cruel, and bloodthirsty. Their very name is held in fear and detestation by the timid inhabitants of the districts which are exposed to their depredations. I had been repeatedly warned that I ran the greatest peril in placing myself in their hands, and that although I might possibly succeed in entering their mountains, the chances of getting out of them again were but few. However, I was very hopeful and very confident that my good fortune would not desert me, and that by tact and prudence I should succeed in coming safely out of my adventure. I determined at the same time to conform in all things to the manners, habits, and customs of the people with whom I was about to mix, to avoid offending their religious feelings and prejudices, and to be especially careful not to do anything which might give them reason to suspect that I was a spy, or had any other object in visiting their country than that of gratifying my curiosity and of exploring ancient remains. Accordingly I abstained from

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making notes or taking observations with my compass except when I could do so unobserved. Whilst associating with my companions on intimate terms, and conversing freely with them, I abstained from touching their food and their drinking vessels unless invited to do so, and from showing too much curiosity and asking too many questions about their country, its resources, and the roads through it. Shefi'a Khan himself was more enlightened and liberal in his opinions than other Bakhtiyari chiefs. His views had been enlarged by his visits to Tehran and Isfahan. He was always ready to give me such information as I required, and did not appear at any time to suspect my motives in asking for it. He could even understand a map and the use of a compass, and I could explain to him the object of my researches. He could read and write—rare accomplishments amongst his fellow-tribesmen—and knew by heart a considerable part of the 'Shah-Nameh,' and the odes of the great Persian poets. He took pleasure in reciting verses from them to me as we rode together. I could not have been introduced to the great Bakhtiyari chief under better auspices or more favourable circumstances; for neither my firman nor my letter from the Matamet would have availed me anything with one of the most powerful chiefs in Persia, who boasted that he owed no allegiance to the Shah.

We stopped for the first night in a ruined caravanserai in the village of Mayar. Shefi'a Khan's purse had been entirely drained by his long detention at Isfahan, and he had sold or pawned all the little property that he had taken there with him. He was consequently unable to buy provisions, and was compelled, as were his followers, to be content with the dry bread that they had brought with them. As I did not wish to make any display of my money, or to do otherwise than my companions, I had to be satisfied with the same fare, to which, however, I added some delicious grapes. The shutur-bashi being a Government officer, and little inclined to go to bed on so frugal a meal, quartered himself upon the principal inhabitant of the place, and by threats, backed up with the whip, obtained a good supper.

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We fared no better the next evening at the small town of Koomeshah. On the following day we had scarcely ridden for an hour when we halted at the village of Babakhan. As the shutur-bashi had presented Shefi'a Khan with a sheep which he had exacted from the villagers, it was decided that we should proceed no farther, but stop and make a feast.

We had now left the high road to Shiraz, and were approaching the mountains. Our next sleeping-place was Coree, a small village surrounded by a mud wall, within which we had to take up our quarters, as the place was exposed to attack from Bakhtiyari marauders. About midnight we were roused by an alarm that horsemen had been seen in the distance. Shefi'a Khan and his followers armed themselves, and after putting the women into a stable for safety, sallied forth to meet the enemy. There was a good deal of noise and much firing of guns; but after a time the horsemen, if there had been any, withdrew. We returned to our carpets, and passed the night without being again disturbed.

However, we learnt from the villagers that a party of Bakhtiyari belonging to a tribe hostile to that of Shefi'a Khan was in the neighbourhood, and that there was reason to apprehend that our caravan might be attacked when crossing the difficult and precipitous mountain range which separated us from the plain of Semiroon. Consequently, in order to be prepared, our caravan on starting was formed into a line of march in which it was to continue during the day. The ketkhudâ, or headman, of Coree, furnished us with an escort of horsemen, and we were joined by a number of men with laden donkeys, who had been waiting for an opportunity to pass through this dangerous country in company with other travellers. We now mustered about five-and-thirty well-armed horsemen, and about twenty matchlock-men on foot. The shutur-bashi rode in front with a part of this force; the women and children, with the baggage and the laden donkeys, guarded by matchlock-men, formed the centre; and Shefi'a Khan, with his Bakhtiyari followers, brought up the rear, which was con-

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sidered the post of danger. Horsemen were sent out as scouts to watch the movements of the enemy, who appeared once or twice at a distance. Shots were exchanged with them, but they did not venture to attack us. It was fortunate that such was the case, as the track over the mountain was narrow, rocky, and dangerous, and owing to the donkeys the confusion which prevailed was so great that we must have been at their mercy. I was well pleased when we had reached the crest of the pass, and commenced a very precipitous descent to the village of Semiroon, which lay beneath us. To the south of the plain of Semiroon, the mountains which form the principal seat of the Bakhtiyari tribes rose in grand snow-covered peaks. We issued from a narrow gorge wooded with magnificent walnut trees, and arrived in the afternoon at the village, which had once been a town of some importance inhabited by about a thousand families, reduced at that time to three hundred. Its houses of solid stone masonry were for the most part in ruins. We were again lodged, with the horses and mules, in the dirty court-yard of a deserted caravanserai, and had nothing but coarse dry bread for supper—our only meal during the day. My companions were longing to reach the Bakhtiyari country, where we were promised an hospitable reception and better fare.

We crossed next day a second precipitous mountain by so steep and difficult a track, that we had to dismount and to walk a greater part of the way. Descending into a small plain we reached Fellaut, a Bakhtiyari village of stone huts, built at the foot of a lofty perpendicular rock. It belonged to the Duraki, a subdivision of the great Bakhtiyari tribe of Haft Lang, who only, however, inhabited it in the winter months. During the summer they migrated to the mountains with their flocks in search of pasture. They had descended from the high lands on the approach of autumn, and were encamped in the plain, over which were scattered their black tents. The sight of them gave infinite delight to Shefi'a Khan and his followers, who looked forward to finding among the 'Iliyât,' or livers in tents, that hospitality which was not extended to travellers by the inhabitants of

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the towns and villages of the plains. They were not disappointed. As soon as our approach was announced the chief of the encampment came out to meet us, and invited us to spread our carpets near a stream, under some fine trees. As the sun went down trays were brought from his tent with excellent pillaus, which were very welcome after our long fast. Shefi'a Khan sat to a late hour in the night, surrounded by the principal men of the tribe, inquiring about the various events which had occurred during his absence—the 'chapous,' or forays, the tribal feuds, and the death of friends in war or by the assassin's hand—and discussing the affairs of the mountains in general. The Duraki were at that time at peace with his tribe, the Suhunni, which is a branch of the other great division of the Bakhtiyaris known as the Chehar Lang. They had frequently been deadly enemies. Although all the subdivisions of the Bakhtiyari clan which occupy this part of the mountains then acknowledged the supremacy of Mehemet Taki Khan, they were constantly engaged in bloody quarrels arising out of questions of right of pasture and other such matters. When they were thus at war they ruthlessly pillaged and murdered each other. With them 'the life of a man was as the life of a sheep,' as the Persians say, and they would slay the one with as much unconcern as the other. Had there not been peace at that moment between the Suhunni and Duraki, Shefi'a Khan would not have ventured into their tents.

The mountainous country beyond Fellaut, in which we now entered, was thickly wooded with the 'beloot,' or oak. I observed several different species, one in particular bearing a very large and handsome acorn. But these trees are principally valuable for the white substance called by the Bakhtiyari 'gaz,' or 'gazu,' a kind of manna, which is deposited, I believe, by an insect upon the leaves of the tree. It is an article of export to all parts of Persia, and is everywhere sold in the bazars, and employed in the manufacture of a sweetmeat called 'gazenjubin,' which is much relished and considered very wholesome. When boiled with the leaves and allowed to harden, it forms a

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kind of greenish cake not disagreeable to the taste. But prepared for the use of the ladies of the enderun, and to be offered to guests, it is carefully skimmed and separated from the leaves, when it becomes a sort of white paste of very delicate flavour.

In the valley of Chilaga, which we entered about midday, there were vineyards and corn-fields and some good arable land. But we found the village of that name in great commotion—men and women were gathered together in knots, gesticulating violently, and screaming at the top of their voices. A hostile tribe had that morning driven off part of their flocks and herds. Horsemen had galloped in all directions to pursue the marauders and to endeavour to recapture their booty. There was great excitement when they returned, bringing back some of the cattle that had been stolen, and a prisoner, who was handed over to Shefi'a Khan to be taken to the castle of a neighbouring chief. After breakfasting upon luscious grapes and honey we continued our journey, the captive being driven before us with his arms bound behind his back. His mother—an aged woman, with long dishevelled grey locks—followed us with loud cries, supplicating for his release, and appealing to the Bakhtiyari ladies on his behalf. When she found that her entreaties were of no avail, she broke out in maledictions and curses upon our heads, and, throwing herself upon her son, endeavoured to unloose his arms until she was driven back.

On our way we saw at a distance some oxen and donkeys grazing. They were recognised as belonging to the freebooters who had that morning plundered the inhabitants of Chilaga. Shefi'a Khan consequently considered them as lawful prey, and dashing with some of his horsemen through a rapid stream which separated us from them, he drove them over it. With this addition to our caravan the confusion of our march was much increased in a narrow gorge, through which we had to pass as fast as we could, anticipating that we should be attacked. We heard the sound of matchlock-firing in our rear, and passed horsemen hurrying to the fray, amongst them five young men of

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savage appearance, belonging to the castle of Lurdagon, which we reached in the afternoon. Its owner, one Ali-Gedâ Khan, a Bakhtiyari chief, garishly dressed, and followed by a number of well-armed retainers, came out to meet us, and warmly welcomed Shefi'a Khan. We sat down with him under some spreading trees, on the bank of a stream. Such cool and shady spots are generally found near Persian villages for the resort of the inhabitants and of travellers during the heat of the day. We were surrounded by lofty rugged mountains, and the castle with its towers, like a feudal stronghold of the Middle Ages, stood on the outskirts of a gloomy forest. It was altogether a very picturesque and romantic spot, rendered even more so by the crowd of ferocious and savage-looking men, all armed to the teeth, who gathered round us. Our host's reputation for hospitality, of which I had heard much on the way, was not belied. Two hours after sunset a procession of attendants, carrying torches, issued from the gate of the castle bearing trays on their heads, with an excellent and ample supper of pillaus, boiled and roasted meat, fowls, melons, grapes, sherbets, curds, and other delicacies, which did honour to the enderun of the chief whose ladies had prepared our repast. I entertain a lively recollection of the feast and of the scene ; for it was the first time that I had been the guest of one of the principal mountain chiefs, and his appearance, his independent and manly bearing, and the quiet dignity of his manners, so different from those of the false and obsequious Persians of the towns, much impressed me. The prisoner was locked up in the castle, but, owing to the negligence or connivance of his guards, effected his escape during the night.

We remained at Lurdagon during the following day to rest our horses and baggage animals, which had been much tried by the steep, stony mountain passes which we had crossed. It soon became known that I was a Frank, and as all Franks were believed to be cunning physicians, I was visited by men and women asking for medicine for various complaints, chiefly intermittent fever, which is very prevalent in the valleys during the autumn. I was invited to

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visit the ladies of the chief, who received me in the enderun, without being veiled, and asked me to prescribe for them and their children—charms for securing the affections of their husbands and to enable them to bear children being principally in request. They brought me trays of fruit and sweetmeats, and similar attention was shown me even in the humblest tents that I entered. Although I was the first European who had visited these wild mountains, and none of the people of Lurdagon had ever seen a Christian before, I was everywhere treated with kindness and respect, although I was naturally an object of curiosity. It was with some difficulty that I was able to leave the encampment unfollowed, to indulge in a bath in the cool and refreshing stream. I was much in need of one, as my clothes had not been off my back since I had left Isfahan.

The castle of Lurdagon stands on an artificial eminence in an island formed by a stream, which is one of the sources of the Karun, here called Bugûr. I was told by Shefi'a Khan, who was well informed as to the history of his native mountains, that it occupied the site of an ancient town which was, at one time, the capital of the extensive district of Luri Buzurg (the greater country of the Lurs), now inhabited by a variety of tribal subdivisions, each having its own chief, but all acknowledging the supremacy of Mehemet Taki Khan. Near the village there was a large artificial mound which may cover some ancient ruins. The castle, which was square, consisted of five circular bastions, united by a curtain. Within was the house in which the family of Ali-Gedâ Khan resided. The arched gateway and the tops of the towers were adorned with various trophies of the chase, such as the skulls and horns of the ibex, or wild mountain goat, and the antlers of a large stag. The place may have been sufficiently strong to resist the attacks of the Bakhtiyari, but not those of a regular force. The chief, whose jurisdiction was extensive, could assemble for its defence and for purposes of war a considerable body of horsemen and matchlock-men.

In the evening Ali-Gedâ Khan produced a splendidly illustrated manuscript of the 'Nizami,' a present to his father,

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a well-known Bakhtiyari chief, from Feth-Ali Shah. Shefi'a Khan read portions of it aloud, and recited verses describing the loves of Khosrau and Shirin, to an admiring and excited group of wild-looking men who stood in a circle round him, leaning on their long matchlocks. They followed him with intense interest, expressing their sympathy for the lovers with deep-drawn sighs, and their admiration for the heroic deeds of Khosrau with violent gesticulations and cries of approval. I often afterwards witnessed the effect thus produced by the recital of poetry upon these savage but impressionable mountaineers. The scene, lighted up by the bright fire round which we were sitting, in the midst of forests and mountains towering into the sky above us, was a very strange and striking one.

We left Lurdagon accompanied by our hospitable host, who had entertained us magnificently, considering that he was only the chief of a small tribe, with no other resources except what his mountains could supply. He was followed by some fifty well-armed and well-mounted retainers. He never stirred without them, having blood-feuds with most of his neighbours, whose relations he had killed in war, or perhaps put out of the way in his struggle for the chieftainship. We had a delightful ride of four hours along the banks of the Bugûr, here a considerable stream, winding through the valley and forcing its way through narrow and precipitous gorges. I was surprised to find the valley so highly cultivated and so fertile. The stream was used to irrigate melon-beds and extensive rice-fields. On the lower slopes of the mountains grew corn and barley, and fruit and other trees abounded. Higher up were dense forests of oak. Black tents and small hamlets for winter habitation were scattered on all sides. Horsemen came from them to accompany us on a part of our road.

We arrived early at the encampment of Hussein Aga, the brother of Ali-Gedâ Khan. He was living with his wives and children, and his immediate followers, in black tents and huts formed of boughs, in a pleasant glade in the forest. He had not yet occupied his winter quarters—a small village with a castle hard by. He received us with

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the same hospitality that we had experienced from his brother.

We had still to cross the highest mountains which divided us from the valleys and plains of Khuzistan, or Susiana. The ascent commenced immediately after we left the encampment in which we had passed the night. We followed a track which was more fitted for the mountain goat than for either horses or mules. The poor beasts were continually stumbling and falling, and the way was impeded by their loads, which had to be readjusted or replaced. We had to lead them with great toil over loose stones or along the face of precipitous rocks as smooth and slippery as glass. Once my horse, losing its footing, rolled down a steep slope for about thirty feet. It was fortunately stopped by some bushes before it had reached the edge of a precipice, and was dragged back by main force by Shefi'a Khan's men, having fortunately escaped with only a few cuts and bruises. The animals suffered greatly, and our path was marked by their blood. The women, wrapped in their veils and wearing their clumsy travelling dress, could scarcely keep up with the rest of the company, and were overcome with fatigue. The road which Shefi'a Khan had taken was, I believe, rarely if ever follow by caravans, and could scarcely be called practicable for horsemen. It was chosen by him in order to avoid a district inhabited by a tribe with which he was at enmity.

From the summit of the pass, which we reached with the greatest labour and difficulty, and where we stopped to rest, we had a magnificent view of various lofty mountain ranges and snow-capped peaks. Descending by a track less toilsome and dangerous than the one we had followed on the ascent, we reached a narrow marshy valley, from which issued a herd of wild boars. The country through which we were travelling abounded in game. In the higher regions were the ibex, the mouflon, and other kinds of wild sheep and goats. Broad-antlered deer were to be found in the wooded valleys. The red-legged partridge, much larger than that of Europe, everywhere abounded. The 'duroj,' or francolin, a most delicate bird for the table, swarmed in the brushwood on the banks of the stream.

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We had to climb another pass, scarcely less difficult than the one we had crossed on the previous day, before we reached the valley of Borse, through which runs one of the principal confluents of the Karun, here known as the Âbi-Borse (river of Borse). We spent much time in fording it with the animals and baggage—a matter of no small difficulty, as the water was deep and the stream so rapid that the donkeys could scarcely breast it. We all got more or less wet, and my saddle-bags containing my books and maps were thoroughly soaked. On the opposite side we found a few men who had been left to gather in a scanty crop of barley. They were able to furnish us with some straw for our horses, but nothing whatever, not even dry bread, for ourselves. We were consequently obliged to go to sleep supperless, having eaten nothing the whole day.

When I rose from my carpet at dawn, some of my companions were searching in vain for their shoes, others for their caps. Shefi'a Khan's kaleôn had disappeared. There was scarcely one of us who had not lost something. The men who had furnished us with the provender for our animals were not to be found. They had decamped during the night. After a good deal of vociferation, and much cursing of the thieves, and abuse of their fathers and mothers, we had to resign ourselves to our losses, as there was nothing else to be done. Shefi'a Khan and his people, however, swore that they would never rest until they had inflicted condign punishment upon them. They belonged to the tribe of Dinaruni, notorious even among the Bakhtiyari for being the most audacious and accomplished of thieves. After passing over a thickly wooded mountain we came upon the encampment of their chief, who, with his followers, was living in huts made of boughs, the usual habitation of the Bakhtiyari during the warm weather. His men were busily employed in building a small fort on the opposite side of the river, which they were constantly crossing and recrossing on inflated sheepskins. They had already completed two circular towers and the curtain or wall uniting them, constructed of rounded stones taken from the bed of the river. The place was called Kessevek. The women, who were

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unveiled, were employed, seated on the grass in front of their huts, in weaving those carpets so beautiful in colour and design, and so fine in texture, for which the mountains of Luristan are renowned.

Shefi'a Khan lodged a complaint against the thieves who had robbed us during the night. The chief promised to recover the things stolen, and gave us an excellent breakfast, of which our previous day's fast made us much in need. We then continued our journey, following the Karun by a narrow and very dangerous pathway, led along the precipitous sides of the mountains, where a slip on the part of man or animal would have proved fatal, as the deep stream ran tumultuously below. We stopped for the night, after a short ride, at an encampment of Dinaruni called Bohous.

On waking in the morning I found that my quilt had been stolen. This was a severe loss, for, although the weather was still mild during the day, the nights were cold, as it was now the 3rd of October. I was not the only sufferer from the thievish propensities of our Dinaruni hosts. We had another most fatiguing day's journey, scrambling over stony and almost inaccessible mountain ridges, or forcing our way through the thickets of myrtle, oleander, and tamarisk which clothe the banks of the Karun in this part of its course. The mountain slopes were clothed with a kind of heath or heather in full bloom, bearing flowers of the brightest rose colour. Two tracks led to Kala Tul—the castle of Tul—where Mehemet Taki Khan was then residing, as he had left the 'sardisirs,' or mountain pastures, where the Bakhtiyari spend the summer months. One track followed the course of the river and crossed the plain of Mal-Emir, the other took a direct line across the mountains. As the latter would only occupy two days, whilst the former required four, Shefi'a Khan decided upon taking it, although he warned us that it was very bad—even worse than any we had yet followed. This was scarcely credible, but proved true.

We passed through a hamlet called Sheikhun, surrounded by pomegranate trees in full fruit, but deserted at this time of the year by its inhabitants, who were living higher up on

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the mountain side. The chief, who received Shefi'a Khan and his followers with the warmest expressions of friendship, embracing them all round, was an immediate retainer of the great Bakhtiyari chief. As he could not persuade them to pass the night in his encampment, he insisted that they should remain to breakfast. He slew a sheep for them, and brought us a great bowl of sour milk and delicious honey-combs. As we should have to sleep at the tents of some of his followers who were living in still higher regions, and who would be without the means of properly entertaining us, he insisted upon accompanying us and upon bringing the carcass of a sheep and a great bag of rice with him.

We reached our night's quarters after a most toilsome and dangerous climb, quite justifying Shefi'a Khan's warning. We had now entered the district of Munghast, and had reached a high elevation. The air was keen and piercing, and I had good reason to lament during a bitterly cold night the loss of my wadded quilt.

There was a long and arduous ascent over a treeless and barren slope, and amongst huge rocks covered by mosses and lichen, between which were patches of snow, to reach the summit of the mountain. From this point a magnificent prospect opened before us. Shefi'a Khan pointed out to me the different spots which he considered worthy of note. Almost at our feet could be just seen, like a mere speck, Kala Tul. To the north could be distinguished the plain of Mal-Emir, described to me as containing ruins which excited my liveliest curiosity. Beyond it could be traced the wooded banks of the Karun, as it wound through the low country.

The district of Kala Tul was bounded to the west by a ridge of low, yellow, barren hills, beyond which the imagination rather than the sight might distinguish those vast alluvial plains which stretch, unbroken by a single eminence, to the Euphrates and the sea.

After scrambling and crawling down a most precipitous descent—men and horses appearing to those below them as if piled up one upon the other—we came to a narrow ravine formed by a torrent now dry. Making our way over the

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loose stones and boulders in its bed, we issued into a small plain, and saw, high up on a mound at a short distance from us, the castle of Tul—the end of our long and weary journey.

As we approached, a crowd of men and women came out to welcome their relations and friends who had been so long absent. No news had been received from them during what the Bakhtiyari considered their perilous sojourn within reach of the treacherous and rapacious officers of the Shah and his Government, who were always ready to ill-treat and torture his Majesty's subjects, and especially the semi-independent mountaineers. Here and there in the crowd was a young chief mounted on his high-bred horse, with his falcon on his wrist, and followed by his greyhounds. But there was no gathering of armed men. We learned that they were all away with Mehemet Taki Khan, who was absent on the affairs of the tribe at a place called Kala Kûmi. Leaving the rest of my fellow-travellers at the foot of the mound, I rode to the castle with Shefi'a Khan. As we approached the gateway two younger brothers of the chief and several elders of the tribe, who were seated on raised platforms on either side of the entrance, rose up to receive us. They exchanged embraces with my companion, and having learnt from him who I was, they bade me welcome and invited me to enter.

I was taken to a large room over the gateway which served as the 'lamerdoun'—as the Lurs call the chamber for the reception of guests. It was already occupied by several persons; but there was a vacant corner in which I could spread my small carpet upon the felt rug covering the floor. There I deposited the little property that still remained to me. My only spare shirt and stockings, which I had kept in my saddle-bags, had been stolen, and I was thus not even provided with a change of linen. I had every reason to suspect that Khunkiar, the youth whom Shefi'a Khan had attached to me during our journey, was the thief. I complained of him, but without avail. Fortunately my books, maps, and, most important of all, my small assortment of medicines, were still left. My watch and compass,

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which enabled me to map my route roughly, I had carefully concealed about my person.

Amongst those who occupied the room with me was a seyyid from Shuster—tall, well-featured, and with a long black beard which reached almost to his waist. He had the reputation of being a skilful doctor, and had been invited to Kala Tul to attend one of the children of Mehemet Taki Khan, who was ill of fever. A restless, bright-eyed little man, a native of Isfahan, who was also a physician, had been brought to the castle for the same purpose. He wore the tall lambskin cap, round the lower part of which was twisted a white Cashmere shawl, long robes of silk and fine cloth, a Kerman shawl folded round his waist, with the usual dagger thrust in it, and green shoes with immoderately high heels. There was also in the lamerdoun another seyyid named Kerim, likewise from Shuster—a quiet, mild, studious, and retiring man, who was on a visit to the chief, and who was usually occupied in reading the Koran. A ket-khudâ of one of the tribes, who was at the castle upon business, completed with myself the company that occupied the 'divan-khana,' as it was called. They were my companions for some time. When breakfast and dinner came they ate together from the same dishes, but a separate tray was always brought to me, as I was a Christian, and it was unlawful for them to eat of anything that I had touched.

The three brothers of Mehemet Taki Khan, Au (a Bakhtiyari corruption of Aga) Khan Baba, Au Kerim, and Au Kelb Ali,[2] did the honours of the castle in his absence. The first was a man of prepossessing appearance, with good features, an amiable and rather jovial expression, and gentle address. He was somewhat low in stature and rather stout. Au Kerim was short and thickset, with a more warlike and determined look than either of his brothers. Au Kelb Ali was tall and thin. His emaciated form and a constant cough showed that he was in an advanced stage of consumption. He had a handsome and intelligent countenance, and his manner was more dignified than that

[2] They were also called, when addressed in terms of respect, Khan Baba Khan, Kerim Khan, and Kelb Ali Khan.

of his brothers. They all wore the Bakhtiyari dress with the white felt skull-cap.[3]

The chief's wives and family, having only recently descended from the summer pastures in the mountains, were still living in huts of boughs and in black tents at the foot of the mound on which stood the castle, where, however, they removed shortly after my arrival.

Kala Tul resembled the castles that I had already seen in the Bakhtiyari country, being only larger than those belonging to the petty chiefs of the tribe. It was quadrilateral, with five towers. One of the angles was formed by a square building, in the upper part of which was the 'lamerdoun,' or guest-room. Beneath was the long vaulted passage which formed the entrance. Within the castle were two courts. In the outer were the rooms for guests and for the chief's immediate attendants and guards ; in the inner the women's apartments, or enderun, in which lived the chief and his wives with their maids, and Mehemet Taki's brother, Au Kelb Ali, with his wife. Although this fort, constructed of stone and brick, could have resisted an attack from an irregular force, it could not have been held against troops provided with artillery. On the towers and walls were a few heavy matchlocks eight or nine feet in length on movable stands and turning on a swivel. They were loaded with one large bullet, or with a number of small balls or bits of iron, and were formidable enough to the mountaineers. At the foot of the mound was a village of mud huts, inhabited in winter by the brothers and relations and retainers of the chief. Scattered round it and over the plain were numerous black tents, which were occupied by his dependents who cultivated the soil.

The day after our arrival at Kala Tul, the party which had formed the caravan from Isfahan broke up. Shefi'a Khan with his followers departed for their tents, which were at a day's journey from the castle. The traders with their laden donkeys proceeded on their way to Shuster and other places, to sell the wares they had brought with them.

[3] Mehemet Taki Khan had a half-brother named Aslan (Au Aslan, as he was usually called), who also lived at Kala Tul.

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My reputation as a Frank physician had preceded me, and I had scarcely arrived at the castle when I was surrounded by men and women asking for medicines. They were principally suffering from intermittent fevers, which prevail in all parts of the mountains during the autumn. Shortly afterwards the chief's principal wife sent to ask me to see her son, who, I was told, was dangerously ill, and I was taken to a large booth constructed of boughs of trees, in which she was living. It was spread with the finest carpets, and was spacious enough to contain a quantity of household effects heaped up in different parts of it. The lady sat unveiled in a corner, watching over her child, a boy of ten years of age, and about her stood several young women, her attendants. She was a tall, graceful woman, still young and singularly handsome, dressed in the Persian fashion, with a quantity of hair falling in tresses down her back from under the purple silk kerchief bound round her forehead. As I entered she rose to meet me, and I was at once captivated by her sweet and kindly expression. She welcomed me in the name of her husband to Kala Tul, and then described to me how her son had been ill for some time from fever, and how the two noted physicians whom I had seen in the lamerdoun had been sent for from a great distance to prescribe for him, but had failed to effect a cure. She entreated me, with tears, to save the boy, as he was her eldest son, and greatly beloved by his father. I found the child very weak from a severe attack of intermittent fever. I had suffered so much myself during my wanderings from this malady that I had acquired some experience in its treatment. I promised the mother some medicine and told her how it was to be administered. Returning to the castle, I sent her some doses of quinine ; but before giving them to the child she thought it expedient to consult the two physicians who had been summoned to Kala Tul. Fearing that if their patient passed into my hands they would lose the presents they expected, they advised that it would be dangerous to try my remedies. Their opinion was confirmed by a mullah, who, upon all such important occasions, was employed to consult the Koran in the usual way by opening the leaves

at random. The oracle was unfavourable, and my medicine was put aside for the baths of melon juice and Shiraz wine, and the water with which the inside of a porcelain coffee-cup, on which a text from the Koran was written in ink, had been washed. The condition of the boy, however, became so alarming that his father was sent for.

Soon afterwards Mehemet Taki Khan arrived at the castle, surrounded by a crowd of horsemen. Leaving them at the foot of the mound, he rode up to the entrance, and dismounting from his mare—a magnificent Arab of pure breed—seated himself on the raised platform of masonry where the chiefs and the 'rish-sufeeds'[4] usually assembled in the afternoon and in the evening to talk over the events of the day, to listen to complaints, and to settle disputes. It was, as it were, the judgment-seat of the tribe, whence justice was administered, redress given, and punishments awarded. The elders acted as assessors to the chief, who was all-powerful, and exercised the right of life and death over his people.

The guests at the castle, myself included, came down to greet him. I presented my firman and the letter with which the Matamet had furnished me. He glanced at them, and then threw them somewhat contemptuously from him. This reception was not very encouraging, and I began to fear that my presence was not welcome to the Bakhtiyari chief, and that he might entertain suspicions as to the object of my visit to Kala Tul, but my misgivings were soon removed. Motioning me to be seated, and addressing me in a very friendly tone, he said that I was in no need of such an introduction as I had brought to him, or of the firman of the Shah, which had no authority among the independent mountain tribes. As a stranger I was welcome to his house, which I was to consider as my own as long as I liked to remain at Kala Tul. He added that he had already received accounts of me from his vizir, Shefi'a Khan, and that he considered my arrival as of happy augury for himself and his people.

[4] *I.e.* 'white-beards, a title given to the elders of a tribe or village.

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The cordial and unaffected manner in which these words were spoken made a very favourable impression upon me, which was confirmed by his frank and manly bearing and engaging expression. Mehemet Taki Khan was a man of about fifty years of age, of middle height, somewhat corpulent, and of a very commanding presence. His otherwise handsome countenance was disfigured by a wound received in war from an iron mace, which had broken the bridge of his nose. He had a sympathetic, pleasing voice, a most winning smile, and a merry laugh. He was in the dress which the Bakhtiyari chiefs usually wore on a journey, or when on a raid or warlike expedition—a tight-fitting cloth tunic reaching to about the knees, over a long silk robe, the skirts of which were thrust into capacious trousers, fastened round the ankles by broad embroidered bands. Round his Lur skull-cap of felt was twisted the 'lung,' or striped shawl. His arms consisted of a gun, with a barrel of the rarest Damascene work, and a stock beautifully inlaid with ivory and gold ; a curved sword, or scimitar, of the finest Khorassan steel—its handle and sheath of silver and gold ; a jewelled dagger of great price, and a long, highly ornamented pistol thrust in the 'kesh-kemer,' or belt, round his waist, to which were hung his powder-flasks, leather pouches for holding bullets, and various objects used for priming and loading his gun, all of the choicest description. The head and neck of his beautiful Arab mare were adorned with tassels of red silk and silver knobs. His saddle was also richly decorated, and under the girths was passed, on one side, a second sword, and on the other an iron inlaid mace, such as Persian horsemen use in battle. Mehemet Taki Khan was justly proud of his arms, which were renowned throughout Khuzistan. He had a very noble air, and was the very *beau-idéal* of a great feudal chief.

Mehemet Taki Khan, by his courage and abilities, had raised himself from the rank of a chief of the clan of Kunursi, to which he belonged, to that of head of the great Bakhtiyari tribe of Chehar-Lang, of which the Kunursi were a branch. He was descended from Ali Mardan Khan, a Bakhtiyari chief, who, during the anarchy that prevailed after the death

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of Nadir Shah, possessed himself of Isfahan and caused himself to be proclaimed King of Persia—an honour which he enjoyed but for a short time, having been put aside by Kerim Khan Zend. Of this lineage he was very proud, but it made him an object of jealousy and suspicion to the Persian Government, and encouraged him in his desire to establish his independence.

He was famed throughout Persia, as well as in his mountains, as a dauntless warrior, a most expert swordsman, an excellent shot, and an unrivalled horseman. He was not less celebrated for his skill in dealing with tribal politics, and as an administrator of tribal affairs. His rivals, and those who attempted to dispute his authority, had one after another been overcome and reduced by him to submission, or had been slain in war or by treachery. Ali Khan, his father, was too powerful not to excite the suspicion of the Persian Government. He was betrayed by his brother, Hassan Khan, and Feth Ali Khan, his uncle, into the hands of the Shah. His eyes, according to the barbarous custom of the country, were put out, and Hassan Khan received the chieftainship as the reward of his perfidy. Mehemet Taki Khan and his brothers were then children, and were concealed in the village of Feridun. Hassan Khan, to strengthen his authority over the tribes, put to death Iskander Khan, an uncle of Mehemet Taki Khan, with two other of his nearest relations, and attempted to slay his brother and his two sons. According to the law which prevails among the nomad tribes, the blood of Hassan Khan and two of his family was required by Mehemet Taki Khan. He and his brothers, Ali Naghi and Khan Baba, in order to avenge the murder of their relatives, succeeded in penetrating without discovery into the castle of Hassan Khan, and slew him as he rose from his prayers. Mehemet Taki Khan subsequently married the daughter of Hassan Khan, and adopted his three infant sons, with a view to putting an end to the blood feud and consequent dissensions which had led to a war between the two branches of the tribe. In this he was successful, and he had for some time maintained peace in the mountains over which he ruled, although he

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could not altogether prevent petty chiefs from lifting each other's cattle, which led to quarrels frequently ending in bloodshed.

Although tribal politics in Asia are notoriously tainted with, if not founded upon, treachery and deceit, Mehemet Taki Khan had the reputation of being a generous and merciful enemy, and a trustworthy, just, and humane man, and his followers were devotedly attached to him. He could neither read nor write, but he was exceedingly intelligent, and especially fond of poetry. He was sincerely anxious to promote the good of his people and the prosperity of his country by maintaining peace, by securing the safety of the roads through his territories, and by opening his mountains to trade.[5]

He had scarcely entered the enderun of the castle, to which his wife had removed, than he sent for me. I found him sobbing and in deep distress. His wife and her women were making that mournful wail which denotes that some great misfortune has happened or is impending.[6] The child was believed to be at the point of death. The father appealed to me in heartrending terms, offering me gifts of horses and anything that I might desire if I would only save the life of his son. The skilful physicians, he said, for whom he had sent had now declared that they could do nothing more for the boy, and his only hope was in me.

I could not resist Mehemet Taki Khan's entreaties, and after reminding him that the medicines I had already prescribed had not been given, I consented to do all in my

[5] Sir Henry Rawlinson, who took part as an officer in the Persian army in an expedition against Mehemet Taki Khan, wrote of him in the following terms: 'At the outset of his career he was the acknowledged chief of his own single tribe, and he owes his present powerful position solely to the distinguished ability with which he has steered his course amid the broils and conflicts of the other tribes. The clans, one by one, have sought his protection, and enrolled themselves amongst his subjects; and he can now at any time bring into the field a well-armed force of 10,000 or 12,000 men. He collects his revenues according to no arbitrary method, but in proportion to the fertility of the districts and prosperous state of the villages and tribes. He has done everything in his power to break the tribes of their nomadic habits, and to a great extent he has succeeded.'—*Notes on a March from Zohab to Khuzistan*, p. 105.

[6] It consists of the constant repetition of a plaintive sound like 'Wai, wai,' whilst the body is rocked to and fro.

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power to save the child's life, on condition that the native doctors were not allowed to interfere. Although he was willing to agree to all I required, he could not, as a good Musulman, allow the boy to take my remedies until the mullah, who resided in the castle and acted as secretary and chaplain to the chief, could consult the Koran and his beads. The omen was favourable, and I was authorised to administer my medicines, but they were to be mixed with water which had served to wash off from the cup a text from the Koran ; upon this the mullah insisted.

The child was in a high fever, which I hoped might yield to Dover's powder and quinine. I administered a dose of the former at once, and prepared to pass the night in watching its effect. I was naturally in great anxiety as to the result. If the boy recovered I had every reason to hope that I should secure the gratitude of his father, and be able to carry out my plan of visiting the ruins and monuments which were said to exist in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, and which it was the main object of my journey to reach. If, on the other hand, he were to die, his death would be laid at my door, and the consequence might prove very serious, as I should be accused by my rivals, the native physicians, of having poisoned the child. About midnight, to my great relief, he broke out into a violent perspiration, which all the remedies hitherto given him had failed to produce. On the following day he was better. I began to administer the quinine, and in a short time he was pronounced out of danger, and on the way to complete recovery.

The gratitude of the father and mother knew no bounds, for the affection among these mountaineers for their children is very great. They insisted that I should in future live in the enderun, and a room was assigned to me. Mehemet Taki Khan made me accept a horse, as mine had not recovered from the effects of the journey over the mountains. But what I most needed was linen and clothes. These were supplied to me by his wife. I was indeed sadly in want of my second shirt. I had been compelled, after I had been robbed of it, to hide myself in the rushes on the bank of a stream to wash the one I wore, and to wait without it until

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it had been dried by the sun. My Persian clothes, of European cotton print, were in the shabbiest condition, and beyond repair. The Khatun's women soon made for me all that I was in want of.

Khatun-jan—'Lady of my soul'—was the principal wife of Mehemet Taki Khan, and the mother of his three children.[7] There were two other ladies who ranked as wives of the chief, but who were on a very different footing from the Khanum, whose apartment her husband regularly shared. She was one of the best and kindest women I ever knew. She treated me with the affection of a mother, nursing me when I was suffering from attacks of fever, which were frequent and severe, and during which I was frequently delirious for several hours. She took charge of the little money that I possessed, as she feared that in my wanderings in search of ruins and inscriptions I might be exposed to great danger if it were known that I carried it with me. She acted as my banker, and gave me what I needed for immediate use, which was very little indeed, as there was nothing to buy, all that I required being furnished to me by her husband and herself. Neither she nor her women, nor indeed any of the wives and female relatives of the chief and his brothers, ever veiled themselves before me. I was in the habit of passing the evening listening to the Khanum's stories about the tribes. The chief was frequently present and took part in the conversation. I was even permitted, contrary to the etiquette of the harem, to eat with her, and Mehemet Taki Khan would jokingly taunt me with introducing European customs into the enderun, as it was not proper for even the husband to sit at the same tray with his wife, although in private. The other wives of the Khan, who were young and not ill-looking, never sat in his presence unless invited to do so, taking their places among the waiting-women of the Khanum, who was always treated with the greatest respect and consideration by her husband, and by her partners in his affections. She

[7] Her full name was Khatun-jan Khanum. Khatun and Khanum have the same meaning, that of Lady, and the name translated would be 'Lady lady of my soul.'

was the daughter of one of the principal chiefs in Luristan, and consequently a lady of rank and entitled to this treatment. Mehemet Taki Khan, in speaking of her, always called her, 'the mother of Hussein Kuli'—her eldest son, my patient—and not by her name.

Khanumi, Khatun-jan's sister, who was some years younger than herself, was the beauty of Kala Tul. Indeed, it was said that there was not a more lovely woman in the tribe, and she deserved her reputation. Her features were of exquisite delicacy, her eyes large, black, and almond-shaped, her hair of the darkest hue. She was intelligent and lively, and a great favourite with all the inmates of the enderun. The chief and the Khanum would often tell me that if I would become a Musulman and live with them they would give her to me for wife. The inducement was great, but the temptation was resisted.

Khatun-jan's mother, Fatima, was another of my friends in the harem, and showed me at all times great kindness. She was still young, and had not lost her figure or good looks, as women among nomad tribes usually do after they have borne children. She had a rich store of tribal histories and traditions, and would relate in vivid and picturesque language the wars of the Bakhtiyari, their blood feuds, and those barbarous deeds of revenge which stain their annals.

Hussein Kuli was the eldest of Mehemet Taki Khan's three sons by Khatun-jan. Both father and mother doted on him. He was one of those beautiful boys who are constantly seen in Persia, and especially among the mountain tribes, and was intelligent, high-spirited, brave, and dauntless —inheriting all the qualities of his father. He became greatly attached to me and I to him. His two younger brothers were also charming children. The elder of the two, Meta-Kuli, was familiarly called 'Berfi,'[8] from having been born in the 'yilaks,' or summer quarters, of Zerda Kuh, among the snowfields. The other was named Riza-Kuli.

Mehemet Taki Khan's youngest brother, Au Kelb Ali, the tall, emaciated youth who had received me on my arrival

[8] *I.e.* of the snow.

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at the castle, also lived in the enderun. He was lovingly tended by his one wife, who watched him night and day with the greatest devotion and care as he gradually sank under the disease from which he was suffering. I could do nothing for his relief, notwithstanding her entreaties.

The chief's other brothers, Ali Naghi Khan, Au Khan Baba, and Au Kerim, lived in the village with their families. I was intimate with them all, and had free access to their enderuns. Some of their wives were very handsome women. The eldest of the three brothers was Ali Naghi Khan, whom I had seen at Isfahan, and who had been sent to Tehran as a hostage for the loyalty of Mehemet Taki Khan. He was known among the Bakhtiyari as the 'Serdar,' or commander-in-chief, and, being considered the ablest of the chiefs, was usually sent upon political and diplomatic missions to the capital and to the governor of Isfahan. He had consequently seen something of the Court and of Persian officials, who were notorious for their profligacy. He had unfortunately acquired most of their vices, and especially a fondness for those drunken orgies with the accompaniment of music and of the amorous couplets of Saadi and Hafiz, in which, lounging by running water and amidst flowers, they were wont to indulge. To these pleasures neither Mehemet Taki Khan, who was a rigid Musulman and very strict in his religious observances, nor his other brothers were given. He never drank wine nor arak, and they were forbidden in the castle, although occasionally a debauched Persian would indulge in them in the guest-room, to the great horror and scandal of the pious mullahs and seyyids who frequented it.

Ali Naghi Khan had three wives, two of whom had accompanied us from Isfahan. They were living in spacious booths, constructed of the boughs of trees and reeds, and divided into several compartments spread with the finest carpets, and furnished with such luxuries as the chief of a nomad tribe could procure. They were all three very beautiful women. One, whose name was Bibi Limûn (the Lady Lemon), was the daughter of a Bakhtiyari chief; the others were Georgians whom he had purchased. They lived together, apparently in perfect harmony, and had the same attendants.

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Their husband, like other Bakhtiyari chiefs, had but one establishment, and occupied with them one hut, or when encamping in the mountains one large tent, divided into four compartments ; one was reserved for guests ; in another were picketed at night the favourite horses of the chief ; in a third were kept the caldrons, cooking and baking utensils, great bundles of bedding, and other furniture. The last to the right was occupied by the ladies and their women.

The domestic arrangements were very simple. Each person had his or her wadded quilt or coverlet, a small carpet, and a bolster, which during the day were rolled up in a silk or linen cover. When the time for going to rest had come, the tent was closed by lowering the flaps in front, which were held up during the day by poles, except in the summer, when in the suffocating heat of the arid valleys of Khuzistan it was left open on all sides. The bundles containing the bed-clothes were then unrolled, the carpets spread either on the bare ground or on a 'nemud,' or rug of soft felt—generally in hot weather outside the tent—and everyone settled himself or herself for the night. This did not occupy much time, as neither women nor men did more than take off the outer coat or jacket, loosen the strings or buttons which fasten the shirt and long robe in front, and remove the shawl and belt from round the waist. In the morning the men, crouching down at a short distance from the tent, performed their ablutions, which consisted of washing the face, hands, and arms with water, poured into the open palm of the right hand from a jug of elegant form with a long curved spout, rinsing their mouths, and rubbing their teeth with the forefinger, also of the right hand, the left never being used for such purposes or in eating. They then put on the few garments they had taken off before going to rest, said their morning prayer, and were ready for the day.

The women performed their toilettes inside the tent, which, however, was generally open on one side. But their preparations differed little from those of the men, as they had only to put on their tunics and jackets. Their dress

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was nearly similar to that of the Persian women, but, except in the case of the wives of the chiefs, made of coarser materials woven by themselves, or of common European chintzes bought of itinerant pedlars. It consisted of the ample loose shalwars, or trousers, of chintz or red silk, tied above the hips and very full at the ankles; a short chemise of white linen only reaching to the band of the shalwars, entirely open in front, but fastened with a loop at the neck; and a jacket, usually of common European figured chintz, but occasionally of silk, also open in front, fitting tight to the arms as far as the elbow, and then hanging loosely. Sometimes in winter an outer tunic of cloth of similar shape was worn. The jackets of the wives of the chiefs were of cashmere shawl, or of silk or velvet, frequently embroidered with gold. The whole of the bosom and the rest of the person to the waist were exposed; but when receiving strangers, and sometimes before their husbands, as a mark of respect, the ladies tied a large silk kerchief, usually of a rich plum colour, round their necks, which concealed the throat, chest, and arms. Their hair fell in tiny plaits down the back, and was gathered in curls and ringlets on the forehead and on the side of the face. A kerchief of black silk, or of white linen in the case of the poorer people, was bound round the head, the ends being left to hang loosely behind. In the enderun the ladies sometimes wore skull-caps of Cashmere shawl, ornamented with pearls and jewels. The Bakhtiyari women rarely wore stockings, and generally used woollen shoes, knitted by themselves, with leather soles; but sometimes they put on the Persian shoes of green leather with very high heels, which were fashionable in the towns. They were fond of ornaments, wearing bracelets, armlets, anklets, and necklaces of gold or silver, and they invariably carried, either hung round their necks, bound round their arms, or attached to some part of their dress, amulets or charms consisting of texts from the Koran written on parchment and enclosed in a small silver case.[9]

[9] The men wore similar charms. Mehemet Taki Khan and other chiefs carried the entire Koran, written in very minute characters, suspended round their necks in an embossed silver or embroidered leather case. Such manuscripts, when of very small size, are greatly prized.

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When the Lur women went abroad among strangers they enveloped themselves in an ample veil, which concealed the whole person, and was held over the face. But in their tents, and when moving about in their encampments, they did not conform to the Musulman custom of hiding their features.

Like the Persians, the Bakhtiyari men and women, when they could afford the luxury, dyed their hair, their eyebrows, the palms of their hands, the soles of their feet, and the nails of their fingers and toes. This was done in the bath, when there was one to be found, which was rarely the case in the mountains except in some of the castles of the chiefs. The following was the process, to which I had to submit once a week, besides having the centre part of my head shaved without soap and with a rasping razor which brought tears into my eyes. The dried leaves of the henna were made into a paste with water. A little lime-juice or some other acid was added. This paste was kept on all the parts to be dyed for about an hour, and was then washed off. The colour produced was of a dark red approaching to brown. It was thus left on the hands, feet, and nails ; but the hair and eyebrows were covered for another hour with a second paste made of the leaves of the indigo plant, which turned the red-brown into a glossy black.

The wives of the chiefs, like the women in the towns, rubbed their eyelids with the black powder called 'kohl,' which added to the brilliancy of their eyes and to their fascination, and, like our great-grandmothers, adorned their cheeks with black patches or beauty spots.

Among the Bakhtiyari, as among other Eastern peoples, marriages are contracted at a very early age. Children are affianced from their tenderest years, and boys are frequently married when fourteen or fifteen years old, the girls when twelve or even before. It is rare to find any but the chiefs with more than one wife. Divorce is so easy among most Mohammedans that it can be effected by the repetition of a few words by the husband.

Various members of Mehemet Taki Khan's family lived in the village. I knew all of them, and was received by

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them and their wives as a welcome guest. I was frequently able to render them little services by prescribing for them or their children, who were suffering from fever or sore eyes. Happily, my treatment generally proved successful, and my reputation as a physician consequently increased.

The following was our mode of life in the castle. In the morning trays with dishes of excellent pillaus of rice and boiled mutton, cooked by the women of the harem, and bowls of sherbet, of sugar and water, flavoured with some kind of syrup, were brought into the diwân-kâna for the guests. The chief himself usually breakfasted in the enderun. I did as I pleased.

After breakfast Mehemet Taki Khan left the women's apartments and seated himself on the raised brick platform at the entrance to the castle, where he was joined by some of the notables and 'rish-sufeeds.' He there heard and settled disputes, administered speedy justice, or received travellers bringing news from afar, or messengers with letters upon business and public affairs. Later in the day he would order his favourite horses, of which he had ten or twelve always tethered in the inner court of the castle, where they were tended with the greatest care, to be brought out to be inspected. They were of the finest Arab breeds —Wusnan, Suglowiyah, Kailan, and others—and he was very proud of them. They had been either obtained from the Arab tribes on the Euphrates, or had been bred by him from horses of the best races of Arabia. He knew the genealogy of all of them. He usually mounted one of them whilst the rest were being exercised by his attendants, who galloped to and fro in the plain or wheeled in narrowing circles, discharging their guns, like the Parthians of yore their arrows, from behind as they fled from an imaginary foe, picking up a handkerchief or other object when at full speed, and performing other feats, such as hitting with a single ball their felt skull-cap which they had thrown on the ground, and clinging at full length to one side of their horse in order not to offer a mark to the enemy. Mehemet Taki Khan's horsemen were considered the most skilful and daring in Persia.

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A favourite amusement of the chief was to exercise his horses to the chase, by bringing them up to a rudely stuffed lion which was kept for the purpose in the castle. They were thus accustomed to the sight and smell of this animal, which is frequently found in the valleys and plains of Khuzistan, and which is often hunted by the Bakhtiyari.

I frequently accompanied the Khan's brother, Au Kerim, who was an ardent sportsman, and other young chiefs, with their hawks and their greyhounds, on hunting expeditions. The plain of Tul and the neighbouring valleys abounded with a large red-legged partridge, and the duroj, or francolin. The 'hubara,' or middle-sized bustard, was also constantly met with, and in the marshy ground near the streams ducks and other water-fowl were plentiful. Hawks, trained to hunt with the large, long-haired Persian, and the more high-bred Arab, greyhound, were used for the capture of hares and gazelles.

We occasionally ascended the mountains behind Kala Tul, and rarely returned without two or three ibex, of which we usually saw large herds, or a mouflon or mountain sheep. The flesh was generally cut up into small bits, spitted on a ramrod or skewer, and roasted as 'kibabs.' The liver, heart, and other parts of the entrails thus cooked were greatly relished by the mountaineers.

At sunset attendants bearing trays on their heads appeared in the lamerdoun. The dinner consisted of the usual pillaus, with the addition of kibabs, stewed fowls, roast game, and several kinds of sweet dishes. After dinner coffee was handed round in the Arab fashion, kaleôns were smoked, and some of the guests played at backgammon, whilst others conversed or read or recited poetry until it was time to sleep, when every one spread his carpet upon the floor and settled himself for the night. I usually dined in the enderun. Mehemet Taki Khan was fond of talking with me about England and her institutions and European inventions. He took a very enlightened view of such matters, was eager to induce the wild inhabitants of his mountains to engage in peaceful pursuits, and was very desirous that the country should be opened to commerce. These

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conversations generally took place in the evening in the inner court, where his favourite horses were tethered, and where he would sit amongst them on his carpet. But he was also in the habit of questioning me on those subjects when we were seated at the entrance to the castle, surrounded by the elders and principal men of the tribe. He would make me describe to them railways and various modern discoveries, and explain to them the European sciences of astronomy, geology, and others unknown to his people. As they were at variance with the teachings of the Koran, he would direct a mullah to argue the matter with me and to endeavour to confound me. The learned man was generally satisfied with a simple denial of what I had stated, quoting in support of it some verse from the holy volume. But this did not satisfy the chief, who was anxious for knowledge. He would make me describe the wigs worn by judges and barristers in England, and then, with a jovial laugh, would exclaim, 'You see that to make a cadi in England it only requires two horses' tails!' He had some difficulty in understanding why I had left my home to incur the privations and dangers of a journey through wild and inhospitable regions... He could scarcely believe that I had been impelled to do so by the love of adventure, and by a curiosity to visit new countries and to explore ancient remains. It was not easy to remove his suspicion that I was a secret agent of the British Government, travelling to obtain topographical and other information with a view to the invasion of Persia by England, as the news of the rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries had already reached the Bakhtiyari Mountains. But he so hated the corrupt, vicious, and cruel Persians, and was so exasperated at the constant demands upon him for money from the Persian governor of Isfahan, that he was not the less friendly to me on that account.

The lessons in Persian that I had taken at Baghdad, and the necessity of using it when travelling alone, had enabled me to speak the language with some fluency, although, of course, incorrectly. Whilst at Kala Tul, Seyyid Kerim, whom I had found in the guest-room on my



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arrival there, and who had made a very favourable impression upon me by his quiet and reserved manners and his amiable expression, undertook to give me further instruction in it, and I read with him the sonnets of Saadi and Hafiz and parts of the 'Shah-Nameh.' He also taught me to write the Persian character, and the knowledge that I acquired of it proved very useful to me.

The Bakhtiyari speak a Persian dialect which is generally known as the Luri, and is a corruption of the pure old Persian without the modern intermixture of Arabic and Turkish. They maintain, indeed, that it is the 'Farsi Kadîm,' the language of the ancient Persians. It more nearly resembles the language of the 'Shah-Nameh' than it does that of the works of the later Persian poets and of modern Persian literature. I was soon able to converse in it; but it had the effect of corrupting the little Persian that I had originally learnt, and my Persian friends laughed at me because I used Lur words and expressions.

The Bakhtiyari are probably the descendants of the tribes which inhabited the mountains they still occupy from the remotest antiquity. They are believed to be of pure Iranian or Persian blood. They are a splendid race, far surpassing in moral, as well as in physical, qualities the inhabitants of the towns and plains of Persia—the men tall, finely featured, and well built; the women of singular beauty, of graceful form, and when young almost as fair as Englishwomen. If the men have, for the most part, a savage and somewhat forbidding expression, it arises from the mode of life they have led from time immemorial. They are constantly at war, either among themselves or with the Persian Government, against which they are in chronic rebellion. In addition, they are arrant robbers and freebooters, living upon the plunder of their neighbours and of caravans, or of the pusillanimous population of the plains, amongst which they are in the habit of carrying their forays with impunity. But notwithstanding the fierce and truculent appearance of the men, I have never seen together finer specimens of the human race than in a Bakhtiyari encampment.

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The Bakhtiyari tribes have at different times played an important part in the history of Persia. Their chiefs would descend into the plains at the head of large bodies of brave and daring horsemen. Sometimes they threatened Isfahan, the capital; at others they encountered the enemies of their country, such as the Afshars, who had overrun the greater part of it. They rebelled against the renowned Nadir Shah, who, however, conquered them, and removed some of their tribes to distant parts of his empire. But during the anarchy which prevailed after his death they revenged themselves by seizing the throne and proclaiming Ali Marden Khan—who, as I have mentioned, was the ancestor of Mehemet Taki Khan—Shah of Persia.

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## CHAPTER VIII

*Excursion to Mal-Emir—Bakhtiyari graves—The Atabegs—A wife of Mehemet Taki Khan—Plain of Mal-Emir—Mullah Mohammed—Sculptures and inscriptions of Shikefti-Salman—Leave Mal-Emir for Sûsan—Robbed on the road—Difficulties in crossing the Karun—Mullah Feraj—The tomb of Daniel—A fanatic—Suspicions of the Bakhtiyari—The ruins—Ancient bridge—Bakhtiyari music—Leave Sûsan—Forest encampment—Return to Kala Tul—Recover my property—Visit ruins of Manjanik—Legend relating to Abraham—Ill of fever—Village of Abu'l Abbas—Attempt to visit Shefi'a Khan—Dangers of the road—Return to Kala Tul—Accompany Shefi'a Khan to his tents—A terrible night—Encounter with a lion—The lions of Khuzistan—Leopards and bears—Recalled to Kala Tul—Escape from drowning.*

DURING the autumn months I made excursions in search of ruins and inscriptions which were said to exist in the neighbourhood of Kala Tul. One of my first expeditions from Kala Tul was to the plain of Mal-Emir,[1] and to a valley known to the Bakhtiyari by the name of Sûsan, or Shushan. It was believed that extensive ruins and inscriptions cut in the rock existed at both places, and that at Sûsan there was a tomb which was traditionally known as that of the prophet Daniel, and that the ruins there represented the ancient city of Shushan, in the province of Elam, on the river Ulai, where, in the palace, Daniel saw his vision.[2] There were also some mounds known as Sûsan, and a building held sacred by Jews and Mohammedans as the tomb of the prophet, on the small river Shapur, or Shaour, near the modern town of Dizful. They were generally supposed to mark the site of the Susa of the Greeks—the capital of the ancient kingdom of Susiana or Elymais.

[1] *I.e.* the house or treasure of the prince; 'mal' may signify either.

[2] Daniel viii. 2. 'And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan *in* the palace, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.'

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There being thus two places within the boundaries of ancient Susiana called Sûsan, and there being moreover a traditionary tomb of Daniel in both of them, Sir Henry Rawlinson had endeavoured to explain the fact by conjecturing that there had been two cities of the same name, one distinguished as 'Shushan the Palace,' and to be identified with the ruins said to exist in the Bakhtiyari Mountains. It was accordingly of some importance that these ruins should be examined.

Mehemet Taki Khan being absent from the castle, his brother, Au Khan Baba, offered to give me letters for the chiefs of two small tribes which were encamped in the districts which I wished to visit. He warned me, however, that they were a very lawless set of fellows and most notorious robbers, and that, as they neither respected the laws of hospitality nor the precepts of the Koran, I should run no inconsiderable risk in trusting myself amongst them, even although under the protection of Mehemet Taki Khan. At that time I was not so generally known amongst these wild mountaineers as I afterwards came to be, as the guest and friend of their great chief. But I was resolved not to lose the opportunity of exploring these remains now that I was within reach of them.

Accordingly, one morning, accompanied by a guide and provided with letters for the two petty chiefs, who were named Mullah Mohammed and Mullah Feraj, I left the castle for the plain of Mal-Emir. I had deposited the little money I possessed with Katun-jan Khanum. She persuaded me to leave in her charge my double-barrelled gun, which I still retained, as the sight of it might expose me to danger—fire-arms being greatly prized. She was anxious, too, that I should let her keep my watch and compass, which were likely to excite the cupidity of the people among whom I was going. But as they were necessary to me for making observations and mapping my route, I would not part with them.

After crossing the plain of Tul I reached a range of low hills, which divides it from that of Mal-Emir. Before entering them I passed an 'Imaum-Zadeh,' or tomb of a

Musulman saint, surrounded by a large number of graves of persons whose relatives had brought their remains to be interred near those of the holy man. Those of chiefs and noted warriors were marked by headstones upon which were rudely sculptured the figure of a lion, and such emblems of prowess in war or in the chase as a gun, a sword, a spear, and a powder-flask. Those of the women had carved upon them some object of female use, such as a comb. Women wailing for their husbands or children were seated near some of the graves, rocking themselves to and fro, uttering their long, melancholy wail, tearing their hair, scratching their faces with their nails, and beating their naked bosoms. I rarely passed a Bakhtiyari burial-place without seeing women thus engaged, as they continued to mourn for long in this way for those whom they had lost.

In the hills I passed several remains of ancient buildings, which my guide said had belonged to the Atabegs, who formerly held sway in Luristan, and to whom all ruins in this part of the country are generally attributed. A spring at which we stopped was called 'Chesmeh Atabeghi,' or the Atabegs' spring. We arrived in the afternoon at a village named Alurgon, surrounded by pomegranate and fig-trees in full fruit, and by rice-fields. Near it were the ruins of a castle. It had formerly belonged to Hassan Khan, a powerful chief of the Char-Lang tribe, who, as I have mentioned, with his brother, Feth Ali Khan, and one of his sons, had been slain by Mehemet Taki Khan, in revenge for their treachery in delivering into the hands of Feth Ali Shah his father, Ali Khan. Hassan Khan's daughter, who had been married to Mehemet Taki Khan in order to bring the blood feud to an end, was from her rank considered among the tribes as his principal wife, but they did not live together. She resided in the ruined castle, but was too ill with intermittent fever to see me. She sent me sweetmeats and fruit, and a pillau and other dishes for supper. The elders of the village came to me in the evening, and, sitting round the fire, related to me the story of Hassan Khan's death—how Mehemet Taki Khan had

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fought with him hand to hand, and how he had slain Feth Ali Khan, pointing out the spot where he fell.

A narrow gorge, at the entrance of which were two ruined towers, apparently of the Sassanian period, and once intended for its defence, led into the plain of Mal-Emir. The chief, Mullah Mohammed,[3] for whom I had a letter from Au Khan Baba, was encamped among a number of artificial mounds marking the site of an ancient city of some size. The largest of them, about forty feet in height, was called the 'kala,' or castle.

Mullah Mohammed and his followers were living in huts constructed of reeds and boughs. I was received in the place reserved for guests, and delivered my letter from Au Khan Baba; but when I asked to be shown the inscriptions cut in the rock, which I had been told were not far distant, they seemed disposed to throw difficulties in my way. They wished to know why I desired to visit them. Was I in search of treasure? Were the Feringhi about to return to take the country? Finding that I was determined to see the inscriptions, which they admitted were not far off, whether they wished it or not, Mullah Chiragh, the brother of Mullah Mohammed, with two men, volunteered to accompany me. They led me to a narrow gorge in which was a large cavern containing a natural recess, on either side of which was a figure, much larger than life, sculptured in the rock. The one to the right, with a long curled beard, appeared, from the cap fitting close to the head with a double fold over the forehead, to be that of a 'mobed,' or priest of the ancient fire-worshippers. His robe reached to his feet, and his arms were folded on his breast. The other figure had a similar head-dress, but wore a short tunic, and his hands were joined in an attitude of prayer. They were both in high relief and skilfully executed. To the left of the figure first described was an inscription, consisting of thirty-six lines, in the cuneiform character.[4]

[3] Some of the chiefs of tribes among the Bakhtiyari country have this title of 'Mullah,' which does not imply that they are men of the law or have any religious character.

[4] This inscription is included in the first volume of cuneiform inscriptions published by me for the Trustees of the British Museum. According

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A similar inscription had once existed near the second figure, but it had been entirely effaced by the water percolating through the rock. On the dresses of both figures I could also trace remains of cuneiform inscriptions, but so much obliterated that I was unable to copy them.

On the opposite side of the cave, high up on the rocks, were two tablets, which I had no means of reaching. One of them contained a group of five figures, two of which were about half the size of the others. They appeared from their postures and priestly costumes to be engaged in some religious ceremony and in prayer. In the second tablet was a similar group of three figures. From below I could see that there were also remains of cuneiform inscriptions on these tablets, but they were out of my reach and I could not copy them.

At the further end of the gorge were the ruins of an edifice of dressed stone, which may have been a fire-temple or altar. At its entrance I found some remains of buildings which appeared to be of the Sassanian period. The sculptures in the gorge are of a much earlier epoch, probably of the eighth or seventh century B.C.

The cave in which I found these sculptures and inscriptions is known to the Bakhtiyari as the Shikefti-Salman, or cave of Salman, the 'lala,' or tutor of Ali, the son-in-law and successor of the Prophet Mohammed. Salman is believed by the Lurs of the sect of the Ali-Ilhai to have been one of the many incarnations of the Deity, and to have been buried in this place, which is accordingly held in great veneration.

Whilst I was copying the inscriptions and making a hasty sketch of the sculptures, I was subjected to every kind of annoyance and interruption by Mullah Chiragh and his companions. He declared that I had learnt from them where the treasure of which I was in search was buried, and insisted that I should at once disclose the place to him. A hole in the face of the rock above the tablets especially

to Professor Sayce, it relates to the restoration of certain temples, and the carving of sculptures and inscriptions by a king whose name he reads Takhi-hi-Kutur.

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excited his curiosity, and he refused to be satisfied with my repeated assurances that I was ignorant of the contents of the chamber to which he seemed convinced it must lead. He became at last so menacing that I had to draw my long knife or dagger, the only arm which I carried, and to prepare to defend myself as I best could. Seeing that I was determined to resist, he seized my saddle-bags, opened them, and proceeded to examine their contents. After a struggle I succeeded in recovering them from him. As I found it impossible to complete my examination, the mullah being determined to put every obstacle in my way, I reluctantly renounced the attempt, and remounting my horse returned, with my ruffianly companions, to the encampment, resolved to complain of them to Mullah Mohammed, and if I were unable to obtain redress or protection from him, to appeal to Mehemet Taki Khan.

I revisited Mal-Emir some months afterwards in order to complete and verify my copies of the inscriptions. At that time Mullah Mohammed and his tribe had moved to their pastures in the mountains, and the plain was deserted. I found myself consequently alone and able to examine the sculptures and inscriptions without annoyance or interruption. On this occasion I succeeded in climbing to the upper tablets, but it was not so easy to descend again. I could not for a long time find a way to do so. My horse was picketed below, and I felt pretty certain that if a stray Bakhtiyari happened to pass that way he would take possession of it, and very probably, suspecting that I was deciphering the inscriptions for some mischievous purpose or for the discovery of hidden treasures, would have a shot at me. In such case I offered a capital mark, and should have been brought down to the foot of the rock without further trouble. However, fortunately, I was not molested, and after remaining for a considerable time in a very unpleasant position, I succeeded in releasing myself from it by a desperate effort, and at the risk of breaking my neck.

My complaints to Mullah Mohammed against his brother for his insolent conduct were of no avail. I therefore announced my determination to leave his encampment on

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the following morning, as I was not free to examine, as I had intended, the rest of the plain of Mal-Emir, and to proceed at once to Sûsan. The mullah then tried to persuade me to start upon my journey in the middle of the night, as the distance to Sûsan, he said, was great, and the path over the mountains so very difficult that my horse would require rest more than once on the way. Suspecting that he had some evil design in giving me this advice, I declined to follow it. He then insisted upon seeing all that I had about me, and, taking possession of my saddle-bags, carefully scrutinised their contents. My watch and compass particularly attracted his attention. He had never seen anything of the kind before, and made me explain over and over again their use. The compass appeared to surprise and interest him most, as he discovered that it would enable him to find the 'kibla,' or the direction of the holy city of Mecca, to which Mohammedans are required to turn when in prayer. After completing his examination of myself and of my effects, he and his followers engaged in a long and noisy squabble with the men of a neighbouring encampment, whom they accused of having stolen some of their donkeys. The dispute, which led to a violent altercation, nearly ended in bloodshed.

I had evidently fallen amongst a set of robbers and ruffians, and I had reason to remember the warning given to me by Mehemet Taki Khan's wife. There was evidently no little risk of an attempt being made upon my life. The anxiety that I could not but feel, and my doubts as to whether I should return to Kala Tul or persist in my attempt to reach Sûsan, kept me from sleeping. Mullah Chiragh, the man who had accompanied me to the rock-cut tablets, roused me about midnight, and urged me to take my departure at once. But I positively refused to leave before daylight. Although this persistent attempt to induce me to travel in the dark was calculated to excite suspicion as to the intentions of my host, I determined to pursue my journey at all hazards, and as soon as the day dawned I left the inhospitable encampment. Mullah Mohammed sent with me a man who had, he said, undertaken to be my guide

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to the tents of Mullah Feraj, the chief of Sûsan, for whom I also had a letter from Au Baba Khan. I crossed the plain of Mal-Emir, which is only five and a half miles in breadth and about twelve miles in length. It is ill supplied with water, and that which is found in it is considered heavy and unwholesome. Consequently it is only inhabited by Mullah Mohammed's tribe in the winter months. At other times it is deserted. During the rainy season, when the torrents descend from the mountains by which it is surrounded, the greater part of it becomes a marsh, there being no sufficient outlet for the water.

I soon reached the foot of the mountains which divide the plain of Mal-Emir from the valley of Sûsan. Through a gap in this lofty serrated ridge passed the track which I was to follow. I began the ascent to it by a gentle but very stony path. After about an hour I found myself in a narrow gorge, in the bed of a torrent then dry. I had scarcely entered it when a man suddenly appeared on the edge of a rock above me, threatening to hurl a large stone upon me. The guide, who was leading my horse, from which, owing to the rough ground, I had been compelled to dismount, was a good deal in advance of me, and was evidently in league with my assailant, as he began to help himself to the contents of my saddle-bags. As I had left my double-barrelled gun at Kala Tul I was without other means of defence than my long dagger. I retreated into the bed of the torrent, and placed myself beyond the reach of the stone with which I was menaced, between two huge boulders, prepared to make the best resistance I was able, and to sell my life as dearly as possible. One or two other men soon appeared. They were without their matchlocks, but were armed with swords, which they drew and flourished in my face. Resistance would have been hopeless, and after some parley with the robbers I was compelled to deliver up my watch and my compass, and a few silver coins that I had with me. As they asked for the watch and compass and knew where I kept them, it was evident that they had been sent to rob me of them by my host of the previous night. Mullah Mohammed had apparently satisfied

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himself, by the examination that he had made of the contents of my saddle-bags, that there was nothing else in them worth having.

I considered myself fortunate in having escaped with my life, as my assailants would have had no scruple whatever in murdering me had they thought it necessary to do so to obtain my property, or from any other motive. I was, of course, much concerned at the loss of my watch and my compass, without which I could not make the observations required for mapping, however roughly, the country through which I passed. But I was not without hopes that, on my return to Kala Tul, Mehemet Taki Khan, whose guest and under whose protection I was, would take measures to have them restored to me.

I toiled up the difficult mountain track, following my guide, who still preceded me leading my horse, until we reached the summit of the pass, when he stopped and refused to proceed unless I gave him two tomans (about 1*l.*). Even if I had been disposed to yield to this outrageous demand I should have been unable to do so, as I had been deprived of all my money. As he found that he could get nothing from me, he turned back, leaving me ignorant of the way, and night advancing—no pleasant situation in which to find oneself in these wild and lonely mountains, where every man I was likely to meet would probably be a robber, if not something worse, and where my life would have been at the mercy of the first man who chose to take it.

There was, however, nothing to be done but to continue in the track which I had hitherto followed, upon the chance of coming to habitations of some kind in the valley below, to which it appeared to lead. The mountains, which had been hitherto bare and treeless, were on the opposite side thickly wooded with oak. From the summit of the pass I looked down upon a valley through which ran the river Karun. The tents and huts of the tribe encamped at Sûsan were visible, to the north, in the distance. Entering a dense forest, I descended rapidly by a very steep and difficult path, leading my horse after me. When I had almost attained the foot of the pass my guide rejoined me.

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We soon afterwards came upon a few poor Iliyât families, some in black tents and others bivouacking under the oak trees. They gave me some curds, sour milk, and bread, baked as usual in very thin cakes on convex iron plates. Leaving this small encampment we descended to the river and rode along its banks. I could trace here and there the remains of an ancient paved road, and the ruins of buildings and foundations of walls. The valley was in places very narrow, with precipitous rocks overhanging the river, and we had some difficulty in making our way along it.

The ruins of Sûsan, of which I was in search, were on the opposite bank of the Karun. I had been told that I should find a raft upon which I could cross the river, but there was none. Every now and then a man would arrive with his sheepskin, blow it up, and paddle himself upon it to the opposite bank. Others were floating in the same fashion down the stream. No one, however, seemed disposed to help me. My guide shouted to some people encamped on the further side, but either his voice was drowned by the noise of the rushing water, or those whom he hailed would give no heed to him. After I had waited for some time in the hope of finding means of crossing, a fakir belonging to the tomb of Daniel promised to inform Mullah Feraj, the chief of Sûsan, that I was the bearer of a letter to him from Au Baba Khan. A raft, he assured me, would then be prepared for me in the morning. As it was by this time nearly sunset, I made my way to a small encampment about a mile distant from the river, where I fortunately found a man who had been at Tabreez, where he had seen Europeans. He insisted upon my accepting his hospitality for the night. Protesting himself my brother, he gave me all the delicacies his tent could afford for supper.

My guide again deserted me, having made off in the night. I went down to the river bank, but there was no raft ready for me as the fakir had promised there would be. The Bakhtiyari, who were floating down or crossing backwards and forwards, were more disposed to make merry at my expense than to assist me. Determined not to be baffled, I resolved to swim my horse over the stream, and

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taking off part of my clothes I rode into it. It was shallower than I expected, the water only reaching halfway up my saddle, but it was so swift and strong that I had much difficulty in preventing my horse and myself from being carried away by it. However, I succeeded in gaining the opposite bank without accident.

The tent of Mullah Feraj was not far distant from the spot where I had landed. I rode directly to it. The chief received me civilly, bade me welcome, and directed a booth to be erected for my special use, which was speedily done, as there was an abundance of trees and bushes near. The mullah and his people were not less savage in appearance than the men of Mal-Emir, and their sinister looks were not reassuring. As soon as I was established in my hut the chief brought his mother, an aged, wrinkled old woman, and some of the elders of his tribe, to see me. I had to undergo a rigorous and searching cross-examination. I was the first Frank that had been seen in the mountains. Was I Christian, and consequently unclean? They had heard of Georgians and Armenians, was I either the one or the other? What was the object of my journey? Had I seen in my books that a treasure was concealed at Sûsan, and did I know, and could I point out to them, the place where it was buried? Were the Feringhi about to take possession of the country? and innumerable questions of the kind. The prevailing opinion seemed to be that I was either a kind of magician, to whom the jinns had given the power of finding buried gold, or a secret agent sent to spy out the land. I endeavoured to allay their suspicions by saying that I was a pilgrim who had come from afar to visit the tomb of the prophet Daniel, which was known to exist in their valley, and the renown of which had reached my country. I expressed a wish to go there at once, and asked for a guide to conduct me to the sacred spot. Several men volunteered to accompany me, evidently in the hope of sharing in the buried treasure for which they were still convinced I was seeking.

I rode through extensive rice-fields, crossed an ancient bed of the river now dry, and came to a number of natural

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mounds, one of which had been scarped, and had apparently at some former period been surrounded by a ditch. My guides pointed it out to me as the 'kala,' or castle. On the summit there were some remains of buildings. The so-called tomb of Daniel was not far distant, at the foot of the mountains which bound the valley of Sûsan to the north. I found it to be a modern building, standing upon a small stream, containing two rooms—one open to the sky—and surrounded by a grove of trees; but there was no reservoir with sacred fish, as described to Sir Henry Rawlinson, nor could I hear of any such fish being preserved elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Nor was the tomb of white marble, as his informant had stated, but a mean mud-built building, such as are constantly seen in the country over the tomb of some local saint. This was a fresh instance of Oriental exaggeration, proving how little trust can be placed in descriptions given by Easterns of things and places, not only of which they have heard, but which they may have seen. I was greatly disappointed, and was almost inclined to regret that I was exposing myself to so much danger and suffering on a fruitless expedition.

However, the spot is held very sacred by the Bakhtiyari, and the tradition that Daniel was buried there may be of very ancient origin. There is no doubt that throughout the mountains of Luristan the tomb of the prophet is believed to be covered by the 'Imaum-Zadeh,' or shrine, I have described. That the place and valley should be known as Sûsan, or Shushan, may add some weight to the tradition. A half-crazy dervish who had followed me to the place invited me to enter and worship at the tomb. I declined to do so, as I suspected that when he found that I was a Kafir (infidel), and had consequently polluted the sacred spot, he would denounce me to the ignorant and fanatical crowd by which I was surrounded, and the consequences might have been fatal. He could not understand why I hesitated to accept his invitation; but when one of the bystanders informed him that I was a Feringhi, and consequently an infidel and unclean, he seized a gun, and,

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pointing it at me, threatened to shoot me unless I repeated at once the formula of the Mohammedan profession of faith, 'There is no god but God, and Mohammed is His prophet!' Fortunately, before he could execute his menace he was disarmed. But a violent altercation took place as to the manner in which I should be treated. As a crowd of savage-looking armed men had now collected round me—men who would have made very light of cutting an unbeliever's throat—I thought it prudent to return at once to Mullah Feraj's tent. On reaching it I found that my saddle-bags, which I had left under his care, had been almost emptied of the few things that had remained in them after the repeated robberies to which since leaving Kala Tul I had been exposed. But these included my books and maps, which were precious to me. I complained loudly to the mullah of this violation of the laws of hospitality. He professed to be ashamed at what had occurred, and gave orders for the discovery of the thief, who was probably himself. My little property was ultimately restored to me.

The whole of the next day I was under much apprehension of ill-treatment on the part of these lawless savages. The brother of Mullah Feraj was in favour of compelling me to leave the encampment at once; but the mullah appeared to have some consideration for the letter of Au Khan Baba. The discussion of the previous afternoon as to my motives for coming to Sûsan, and as to the manner in which an infidel ought to be treated, were renewed. The reasons which were assigned for my visit would have been as amusing as they were ridiculous had they not been seriously entertained, and had they not endangered my life. According to one man, I was employed by the Shah to examine the country with a view to its conquest and occupation. Another gravely asserted that I was the brother of the King of England, who was already at Baghdad on his way to take possession of the mountains of the Bakhtiyari. According to a third, my forefathers had buried a great hoard of gold in a spot which was described in the books I had brought with me. One arrogant fellow, who pretended to

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be better informed than the rest, declared positively that there had been four treasures concealed at Sûsan, and even went so far as to describe the nature of each.

But I was still resolved, now that I had reached Sûsan, to examine the remains which were reported to exist there. I therefore asked to be shown the ruins of the bridge, and of the 'mesjid,' or temple, which Sir Henry Rawlinson had been informed were to be seen there. This request further increased the astonishment and suspicion of the mulla and his followers, who were utterly at a loss to account for the knowledge of their valley which my questions displayed. I endeavoured to explain to them that some years before an Englishman, interested in the ancient history of their country, had learnt from one of their own people that remains of the city which was once its capital still existed, and that, like some learned Musulman travellers, whose works were known to all true believers, he had written an account of what he had heard about them. I had read that account, and was desirous of gratifying my curiosity by visiting the ruins. They admitted that the bridge and the mesjid were near at hand, but when I expressed a wish to see them they seemed disposed to prevent me from doing so. However, I mounted my horse, and Mulla Feraj, seeing that I was determined to have my way, ordered one of his attendants to accompany me. I had not proceeded far when several armed men joined us. I perceived that their matchlocks were lighted. They were no doubt ready to fight for their share of the treasures which they were convinced I was about to discover. Being unarmed, I was unable to resist any violence that might be offered to me. I deemed it therefore best to assume an indifferent and unconcerned air, as if I entertained no suspicion of my unwelcome companions.

After crossing numerous swampy rice-fields we came to the Karun, and continued along its banks until we reached a narrow gorge in the mountains, through which the river issues into the valley of Sûsan. About a mile within this gorge, in a small open space, I found the ruins of what was called the mesjid, or temple. There was nothing above ground to show that an edifice of any importance had ever

stood there—no columns nor dressed stones, not even a mound, only some rough masonry, apparently the foundations of a building of the Sassanian period. These remains were, however, known to the Lurs as the Mesjidi-Suleiman, the temple of Solomon. At a short distance beyond them were the ruins of a bridge, of which four massive buttresses still resisted the force of the torrent. The river must have been crossed at a considerable height above the level of the stream by a single arch of great span, which was connected with the sides of the ravine by two smaller arches. I could trace on both banks an ancient paved causeway, a continuation, no doubt, of the road that I had seen in the valley of Sûsan. It was known as the 'Jeddai-Atabeg,' or Road of the Atabegs, to whom its construction was attributed by the Lurs; but it was evidently a much more ancient work, possibly of the time of the Kayanian kings, and the remains of one of the great highways which in the time of Darius led from the plains of Susiana to the highlands of Persia and to Persepolis. I traced it subsequently in many places between Mal-Emir and Shuster.

The bridge had been partly built of large roughly-hewn stones and partly of kiln-burnt bricks, united by tenacious cement. There was nothing that could give me a clue to the date of its construction, and, as far as I could ascertain by the hasty observations I was able to make, there were no inscriptions carved on the neighbouring rocks. But it was evident that it was a very ancient structure, not later than the Sassanian period, and probably very much earlier. Beyond this bridge, higher up the gorge, the river—here an angry, foaming torrent—was shut in by precipitous rocks, and the road which was once carried along them having been destroyed, there was no means of proceeding farther. The place was called by the Bakhtiyari 'Pâyi-rah,' *i.e.* foot of the road.

Before returning to the tents of Mulla Ferraj I followed the valley of Sûsan to some distance, passing on my way a few artificial mounds of no great size, and occasionally the foundations of ancient buildings, which were sufficient to show that at one time a city of some importance might have

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existed here. Black tents were scattered among them, the owners of which, with more hospitality than the behaviour of the mulla's followers had led me to expect, invited me to dismount and to eat bread with them. One old man, who protested that he was above one hundred years of age, and that he had lived in the reigns of six shahs, declared that he had never seen a Feringhi before in Sûsan, and had never heard of one having been there.

I was much struck by the attention I received from a man who told me that he had served in a Bakhtiyari regiment of regular troops raised by Abbas Mirza, in which were English officers. He so pressed me to breakfast with him that I could not refuse. To my surprise, he dipped his hand into the same dish with me—a thing that no Persian or Bakhtiyari had hitherto done—observing to those around him that he had seen Englishmen eat with the Prince and with other great personages, and that they were not like other Kafirs who were unclean. He invited me to pass the night in his tent, and when he found that I was unable to do so, he filled my saddle-bags with pomegranates and dried fruit.

In the evening, on my return to Mulla Feraj's encampment, the endless discussions about my object in coming to Sûsan were again revived. Fortunately, the attention of my hosts was soon diverted from this subject by two musicians who arrived at the tents and played on the drum and a kind of oboe. A crowd of men and women gathered round them, their savage, swarthy faces lighted up in a ghastly manner by a blazing fire. They seemed to be greatly excited, as those mountaineers usually are, by the wild music, expressing their feelings, according to the melody, by loud deep-drawn sighs or by warlike shouts.

It was only on the following morning, when the discussion and cross-examination about the object of my visit were resumed, that I heard for the first time that there was an inscription carved on the rocks near the Pâyi-rah. I was told that it was in the writing of the Feringhi, and only three or four lines in length, and that it was a 'telesm,' or talisman, which indicated the spot where the treasure of which I was



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in search was buried. Some of my tormentors were of opinion that I ought to be taken to it, and compelled by force to disclose the secret. Others insisted that I should not be allowed to see it. As they began to hold very menacing language, and seemed disposed to proceed to acts of violence, I thought it more prudent to give up any further attempt to explore the valley of Sûsan. I had learnt that the mother of Mulla Mohammed, the chief in whose tent I had stopped in Mal-Emir, was on a visit to Mulla Feraj, to whom she was related, and was to leave for her home in the course of the morning, accompanied by her female attendants and by some armed men. I determined to join the party, as I was not without apprehension that if I returned alone I might be robbed on my way by some of the mulla's people, or that, fearing I might complain to Mehemet Taki Khan of his treatment of me, he might even cause me to be murdered. His brothers had never ceased asking me for almost everything that I possessed—even for some of my clothes—and I was compelled to give them the bridle and the greater part of the trappings of my horse. Some of the contents of my saddle-bags had, moreover, been stolen. Even the shoes of my horse had been taken off.

I was not sorry when I turned my back upon the importunate and inhospitable Mulla Feraj and his tribe. I joined the small caravan going to Mal-Emir which had assembled near his encampment. At a short distance from it I passed, near the river bank, foundations of buildings, remains of ancient walls, and other ruins, which were known to the Bakhtiyari as Mali-Virun. My companions pointed out to me what their imagination led them to describe as streets, bazars, palaces, and castles. I could, however, trace what appeared to be a triple wall once protecting the city on the northern side. The masonry of these remains was of rounded stones from the river, united by a very tenacious mortar, characteristic of the Sassanian period. But the traditions of the Lur tribes point to these ruins as those of a very great and ancient city, and to the tomb of Daniel as the true burial-place of the prophet—the 'greater Daniel' as they term him. That on the river Shaour, in

the plains of Susiana, which is on the site of the ancient Susa, they assign to Daniel Askar, or the 'lesser Daniel, and hold it in less reverence.

We had to cross the Karun before reaching the hills which separated us from Mal-Emir. A small raft made of a few inflated skins and some bundles of reeds had been provided for the women, but its owner refused to take me across on it unless I paid him. This I was unable to do, as I had been robbed of all my money, After a good deal of wrangling, and on the intervention of Mulla Mohammed's mother, the matter was arranged by my giving the man medicine for his eyes. We were obliged to pass the night under some trees, where we found some Bakhtiyari resting on their way to their winter pastures in the low country. The women of our party were received by those of the encampment with wailings, as one of them had recently lost her husband. They all seated themselves round a fire, tearing their hair, beating their breasts, and howling, like the mourners at an Irish wake. After about an hour they set to work to cook the dinner. As the principal guest was the mother of a chief, a sheep was slain for her. These wanderers seemed, however, to be very poor, and were destitute of almost everything, eating bread made of acorns.

We left our forest encampment in the middle of the night, and having crossed the mountains before dawn, reached Mulla Mohammed's tents early in the day. Mulla Chiragh, his brother, whom I accused of having been the instigator of the robbery committed upon me, and of possessing my watch and compass, absolutely denied all knowledge of the matter. But on my arrival on the following morning at Kala Tul, I denounced him to Au Baba Khan as having treated with contempt the letter which he had given me, and as having brought disgrace upon the Bakhtiyari name by robbing and ill-treating one who had been his guest and had eaten his bread. He sent off a man at once with orders to bring back my watch and compass without fail. They were both recovered and restored to me, fortunately without having suffered material damage.

Early in November I had a severe attack of ague.

Kala Tul is, at this time of the year, very unhealthy, and in almost every family there were one or more of its members suffering from intermittent fever. I was so ill that Mehemet Taki Khan's wife proposed that I should accompany her and two of the children—one of them my little patient, Hussein Kuli—for change of air to Boulabas (a corruption of Abu'l-Abbas), a village on the Abi-Zard river, and in a small but highly-cultivated valley filled with fruit trees. Khatun-jan Khanum was received with great respect by the inhabitants, who came out to meet her. The best house, which was sufficiently spacious and of stone, but in a ruinous condition, was placed at her disposal. With rest and by the help of quinine, I soon recovered from my illness.

The village, which contained about three hundred houses, was built upon the site of an ancient town, a few remains of which still existed, and were known by the name of 'Kala Giaour,' or 'Kala Gebr'—the castle of the infidels. At a short distance from it was an 'Imaum-Zadeh,' or shrine, sacred to Solomon, who, according to local tradition, visited the spot, which is called Rawad. The river, which has its source among the snows of Mungasht, issues from the mountains not far from the village, through a grand gorge, wooded by magnificent trees. I remained some days at Abu'l-Abbas, nursed with the kindest care by Khatun-jan Khanum. As soon as I felt able to resume my wanderings I determined to pay a visit to Shefi'a Khan, whom I had accompanied from Isfahan. I was furnished by Khatun-jan with a letter to Zacchi Aga, the chief of a small tribe inhabiting the plain of Baghi-Malek. He was directed to send a guide with me to the tents of my friend, who was encamped near a spot where I had been told there were ancient inscriptions. I had scarcely reached Zacchi Aga's tents when I was seized with a fresh fit of ague.

Early next morning, however, I was able to continue my journey with a small caravan of men on foot with donkeys, laden with rice, going to Shuster. The owners assured me that their route lay through Shefi'a Khan's encampment. We crossed during the day one or two ranges of low hills,

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and an uncultivated, undulating country without inhabitants. In the distance, to the north-west, rose a barren mountain, called Ausemari. The head of the caravan informed me in the afternoon that he had learnt that Shefi'a Khan had recently moved his tents from the plain to the foot of this mountain, and that it would be out of his way to go to them. Showing me the direction in which he believed them to be, he advised me to strike across the country to them. It was already late in the afternoon, as our progress with the laden donkeys had been very slow. I was told, however, that I should be able to reach the tents before the sun went down As I put little trust in this assurance, I should have returned to Manjanic had I been able, but there would not have been time for me to reach the village before late at night, and it was far from safe to travel after dark. I therefore left the caravan and rode off in the direction of Ausemari.

I was now alone. Night was coming on. The country was dangerous, and I might fall in with a solitary robber or with horsemen on a raid. Lions, too, were not rare in those plains. There was no encampment to be seen in the distance, nor did I meet a human being. I began to fear that I should have to pass the night in this desert, without food for myself or my horse, and without even water. The sun had just disappeared when I perceived two men on foot. I urged on my tired horse and soon overtook them. Fortunately, they proved to be inoffensive people, and offered to conduct me to some tents which were near. I should probably not have discovered the small encampment had I not been guided by them to it, as it was carefully concealed in a deep gully, in order to escape observation from marauders. The 'Ket-Khudâ,' who was the chief of a few Bakhtiyari families, received me hospitably, and at once found provender for my horse and supper for myself.

Although I had been well received by the chief, I was by no means persuaded that he or some of his people might not have designs upon the little property I had with me. As he declared that the encampment of Shefi'a Khan was still far off among the hills, and declined to give me a guide to it, I made up my mind that, after following for a short

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distance the track which was pointed out to me, I would turn back and make the best of my way to Abu'l-Abbas. My suspicions had been aroused by seeing two men leave the tents early in the morning. They were confirmed when, on leaving the track and going in the opposite direction, I saw these men running after me and making signals for me to stop. I put my horse to a canter and was soon out of their sight.

I had not ridden far when I was seized with so severe an attack of ague that I had to dismount, and, hiding myself in a gully, to lie down on the ground, with the bridle of my horse fastened to my wrist. I remained delirious for two or three hours, as was usual with me. Fortunately I was not discovered. After this stage of the fever had passed I felt able to continue my journey, and reached Abu'l-Abbas soon after sunset.

Shortly after, on my return to Kala Tul, Shefi'a Khan himself came to the castle. When he had finished his business he invited me to return with him to his encampment. He and his family and followers were living in regular Iliyât fashion, in large black tents pitched in a valley in the rocky and treeless mountain of Ausemari. The country through which we rode to reach them was well watered and fertile. It was a favourite winter camping-ground of the Bakhtiyari, and their tents were to be seen in every direction. I found some of my travelling companions on our journey from Isfahan among the followers of the Khan, and received from them a very friendly welcome. During the few days I spent with him, he gave me much interesting information about the Bakhtiyari country and tribes. He was very intelligent, could describe with sufficient accuracy, and was always ready to communicate what he knew, not having those absurd suspicions as to my motives for asking questions and for visiting his country which had been the source of so much annoyance and danger to me. As he was Mehemet Taki Khan's principal adviser and vizir, and was employed in administering the affairs of the tribes, and in apportioning and collecting their respective contributions to the tribute payable to the

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Persian Government, he was better acquainted with all that concerned the Bakhtiyari and their history, the number of their families, that of the horsemen they could send to war, and other matters, than any one I knew. I found that the information he gave me could be relied on as trustworthy.

The winter had now set in, and whilst I was with Shefi'a Khan there were constant heavy rains, with thunder, lightning, and high winds. The 'lamerdoun,' or guest-tent, offered but little protection when these storms broke over us, and I was frequently drenched to the skin during the night. On one such occasion a pack of wolves made a descent in the darkness upon the sheep, and breaking through the tents, carried off nine of them. The screams of the women, the cries of the men, and the barking of the dogs—the thunder rolling in awful peals and the lightning flashing with the most dazzling brightness—added to the terrors of the night. Tents were blown down. Torrents from the hills swept into the plains carrying everything before them. We had to seek for refuge behind rocks and wherever we could obtain shelter. The horses, terrified, broke loose from their tethers and fled. Such a night I had never before, and have never since, witnessed.

The desolate hills of this part of Khuzistan abound in wild animals. In addition to wolves, which are much dreaded by the shepherds, lions, leopards, bears, lynxes, wild boar, hyenas, jackals, and other beasts of prey, and various species of wild sheep and goats, are found in great numbers in them. The Bakhtiyari chiefs delighted in the chase, and were constantly engaged in it.

To kill a lion, especially in single combat, was considered a great feat, and the figure of a lion rudely carved in stone is placed by the Bakhtiyari over the graves of their warriors, to denote that they were men of valour and intrepidity. Mehemet Taki Khan was renowned for his skill and cool courage in these encounters, and other chiefs were celebrated for victories they had achieved over this ferocious and wily beast. Whilst I was living with the Bakhtiyari I was present at more than one lion hunt. One afternoon when Mehemet Taki Khan was seated at the

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doorway of his castle with the elders, as was his wont, a man arrived breathless and in great excitement, declaring that in crossing the plain he had met a lion in his path. The beast, he said, was preparing to spring upon him, when he conjured it in the name of Ali to spare a poor unarmed man, who had never harmed any of its kin. Thereupon, the lion being a good Musulman and a Shi'a to boot, as some lions are believed to be, turned away and disappeared among some bushes.

The man, ungrateful to the lion who had spared him so generously, offered to conduct Mehemet Taki Khan to the spot where the beast had left him. Although the chief doubted the truth of the story, some horsemen and some matchlockmen on foot were assembled, and we left the castle with our guide. He led us to a kind of pit or hollow in the ground, filled with low bushes, in which, he said, the lion had concealed itself. Mehemet Taki Khan divided his horsemen into three parties, placing one of them under his brother, Au Khan Baba. Stones were thrown and guns fired into the thicket, and other means taken to drive the animal out of it, but in vain. The Khan's suspicions that the man had been frightened by a hyena or a wolf, and had invented the story of the lion, were confirmed. Whilst we were deliberating as to returning to Kala Tul, the animal, roused by a man who had descended into the hollow, suddenly sprang towards Au Khan Baba, with whom I had placed myself. He fired with his long gun and wounded the lion, which, however, passed by him and seized a matchlock-man named Mulla Ali, who in falling caught the dress of Mehemet Ali Beg, whom he dragged down. Both men were thus in the lion's power and in the most critical situation.

Mehemet Taki Khan himself jumped off his horse, and advancing towards the beast addressed it thus in a loud voice: 'O lion! these are not fit antagonists for thee. If thou desirest to meet an enemy worthy of thee, contend with me.' The animal did not appear disposed to abandon its prey, which it was holding down under its massive paws. It stood majestically as if defying its numerous foes. The

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chief approached it, and drawing the long pistol which he carried in his girdle, fired at its head. The bullet took effect, and the lion falling to the ground was quickly despatched by the guns, swords, and spears of Mehemet Taki Khan's followers.

The lion, which was pronounced to be an unusually large one and had a short black mane, was borne in triumph to the castle. Its skin was presented to me, but I was afterwards robbed of it as of other things.

Mehemet Ali Beg was seriously hurt, one of his arms being badly crushed and the flesh torn from one side of his face. The matchlock-man received one or two wounds of less consequence. During my residence in the Bakhtiyari Mountains the story of the great chief's valour and prowess, and how he had addressed the lion, formed a constant theme of conversation in the tents, and, I have no doubt, has remained a tradition amongst the tribes.

On occasions when I accompanied one of the chief's brothers on regular lion hunts we went to the banks of some stream covered with reeds and bushes, their usual haunts. Beaters were sent into the jungle and the horsemen remained outside in the plain. Generally only wild boars were driven out and were pursued and shot; sometimes a lion was disturbed, and leaving its lair bounded across the plain. It was followed by the horsemen, but was rarely overtaken and killed, unless it took refuge in the low brushwood. It seldom turned upon its pursuers when in the open, and gave no proof of the courage with which it is generally credited. But when suddenly disturbed, or surprised in its retreat, by the beaters, it attacked them with great fury, and more than once a man was killed in this manner.

The Asiatic lion appears to differ from his African fellow in courage and daring, as well as in size and strength. It will rarely attack a man unless provoked, or driven to do so by hunger, and at the sight of one usually slinks off and hides itself. In the night it will creep into an encampment and seize a bullock or a sheep or even a sleeping man. One of a party of Bakhtiyari with whom I was hunting at

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the foot of the hills near Shuster was thus carried off. We had to sleep on the ground in the open air. In the morning one of the men was missing, and his remains were discovered not far from the spot where we had passed the night.

The Susianian lion is, nevertheless, a formidable animal, and stories of encounters with it, and of travellers who have been attacked and devoured, form part of the staple of the evening's talk in a Lur tent. As to its strength, the Bakhtiyari allege that it can carry off a full-sized buffalo or an ox, but not a sheep, for, they say, when it bears away a buffalo it invokes the aid of Ali, but when a sheep it relies upon its own strength. Shefi'a Khan, however, attempted to explain this alleged fact to me by suggesting that whilst the lion could throw a large animal like a cow or buffalo over its back, it was obliged to trail a sheep on the ground, and to abandon it when pursued.

It is more to flocks and herds that the Asiatic lion is formidable than to man. Amongst them it makes great depredations, destroying and carrying away sheep and oxen. Buffaloes, however, are said to beat it off by placing themselves back to back, and meeting their assailant with their bulky foreheads and knotted horns. Horses are much terrified at the sight and smell of a lion. Its vicinity to an encampment is soon known by the uneasiness and fear shown by the horses, who snort and rear, and struggle to break away from their tethers. The young chiefs, as I have already mentioned, accustom their steeds to the animal by taking them up to a stuffed lion's skin.

Among some memoranda written at Kala Tul I find the following notes about lions and other wild beasts.

Lions abound in the district of Ram Hormuz and on the banks of the Karun. They also frequently ascend, in search of prey, to the higher valleys at the foot of the great chain of the Lur Mountains. During my residence here (Kala Tul) several have been seen in the neighbourhood, and a large lioness was killed a short time ago by a matchlock-man in the 'teng' (defile) of Halaugon. She measured 10½ feet in length. Lions in this country are sometimes

very bold and fierce, and are consequently much dreaded by the Iliyât. They frequently rush into the middle of an encampment, and carry off horses and other animals. I have heard many well-authenticated stories of such attacks. It is said that the buffalo does not fear a lion, and will even drive it away, whilst other animals are paralysed by fright at its approach. Therefore, in the plain of Ram Hormuz, the Bakhtiyari place male buffaloes outside the encampment as a guard. The Lurs pretend that on the approach of a lion the buffalo will summon it to retire, and if not obeyed will drive so furiously with its powerful horns at the beast, that it will be glad to take to its heels.

The Lurs divide lions into Musulmans and Kafirs (infidels). The first are of a tawny or light yellow colour, the second of a dark yellow, with black mane and black hair down the middle of the back.[5] If, they say, a man is attacked by a Musulman lion he must take off his cap and very humbly supplicate the animal in the name of Ali to have pity upon him. The proper formula to be used on the occasion is the following : 'Aï Gourba Ali, mun bendeh Ali am. As khana mun bigouzari. Be seri Ali'—*i.e.* 'O cat of Ali, I am the servant of Ali. Pass by my house (or family) by the head of Ali.' The lion will then generously spare the suppliant and depart. Such consideration must not, however, be expected from a Kafir lion. The Lurs firmly believe in this absurd story.

A single lion will frequently cause considerable mischief. During a period of three years one haunted the plain of Ram Hormuz. Scarcely a night passed without a human being, a horse, or a cow falling its victim. It never appeared in the same place for two days running. It cunningly evaded every attempt to destroy it. No place was secure from its attacks, and it would enter huts and tents in pursuit of its prey. It was at last killed when, in the spring, the Matamet with his army passed through the plain. During the night it had carried off a soldier, whose remains were found. The beast was traced to a thicket, and a

[5] Probably the lighter in colour are the females, the darker the males.

detachment of the Luristan regiment succeeded in slaying it, though not until it had severely wounded two men and had been pierced by several balls. I saw it when dead. It was unusually large, and of a very dark brown colour, in some parts of its body almost approaching to black.

Mehemet Ali Beg related to me how, on one occasion, as he was striking his tents to move up to the 'sardesirs,' or summer pastures in the mountains, a lion suddenly dashed into the midst of the women who were waiting to commence the march. Some were on horseback, others on foot. The greatest confusion and alarm prevailed. Several of the women were knocked down, but were not injured by the animal, which threw itself upon a horse. It happened to be that upon which Mehemet Ali Beg's wife was riding. He flew to her rescue, and addressing the savage beast, according to the custom of the Lurs, in some such words as 'O lion! what hast thou to do with women? Dost thou fear to face a man like me?' despatched it with a shot from his long gun.

The lion has not, I believe, been known to traverse the high chain of the Luristan Mountains into the valleys on the Persian side. In the plains of Khuzistan its usual places of concealment are the brushwood and jungle on the banks of rivers and streams and in the rice-grounds.

The Bakhtiyari Mountains contain leopards of great size and fierceness. They rarely, however, attack men, but frequently carry off cattle and sheep. Their skins were occasionally brought to Kala Tul. The chiefs make saddle-clothes of them.

I have only seen one kind of bear in the Bakhtiyari Country. It is of a pale dirty-brown colour, and attains a considerable size. It is not much feared by the Lurs, and rarely destroys sheep or cattle. It is probably the *Ursus syriacus*. The Bakhtiyari have a number of strange stories and traditions connected with the bear.

Whilst I was staying with Shefi'a Khan a horseman arrived from Kala Tul urging me to return there at once, as both Mehemet Taki Khan and his brother, Kelb Ali, were seriously ill. I accordingly left the encampment and was

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overtaken by another terrific thunderstorm. In crossing the hills I could scarcely retain my seat on my horse, such was the violence of the wind. Impetuous torrents swept through the gullies and watercourses which three or four days before had been entirely dry. We had to make long detours to avoid them, leaving the beaten tracks and scrambling over rocks and stony ground. The waters were out in all directions, and the plain of Tul had the appearance of a lake. In crossing a swollen stream my horse was carried from under me, but succeeded in swimming to the opposite bank. Encumbered by my heavy Bakhtiyari felt outer coat, which prevented me from using my arms, I was swept down to some distance, and should inevitably have been drowned had not my guide, who had crossed safely, run to my help.

Mehemet Taki Khan was suffering from a slight bilious attack, from which he speedily recovered. But his brother appeared to be in a hopeless state, as his fatal malady was making such rapid progress that even the most skilful physician would have been powerless to arrest it.

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## CHAPTER IX

*Demands upon Mehemet Taki Khan—He is declared in rebellion—Threatened invasion of his mountains—Requests me to go to Karak—The trade of Khuzistan—Leave for Karak - The Kuhghelu—Ram Hormuz—The Bahmei—Behbahan—Bender Dilum—Mirza Koma—Embark for Karak—Arrive there—Return to Kala Tul—March with Mirza Koma—Danger from Arabs—Reach the castle—Mehemet Taki Khan at Mal-Emir—Adventure with Baron de Bode—Join Mehemet Taki Khan—Effect of poetry on Bakhtiyari.*

AT the end of November Mehemet Taki Khan received letters from Tehran and elsewhere which much disquieted him. The Matamet, within whose government the Bakhtiyari tribes were included, had been constantly making demands upon him for arrears of tribute. Several persons having 'berâts,' or Government orders for money, upon him had arrived at the castle. The Matamet's 'shutur-bashi,' who had accompanied Shefi'a Khan from Isfahan, had been sent to collect ten thousand tomans (about 5,000*l.*), three thousand of which were to go to Tehran as part of the revenue which was due to the Shah, three thousand were for the Matamet himself, and the remainder was to satisfy various claims made upon the royal treasury by private individuals. The usual mode of settling such claims was by giving the claimants drafts upon villages, tribal chiefs, or wealthy notables, and leaving them to get them cashed as they best could. The bearers of these documents, which were frequently sold by the original possessors with a very large discount, generally quartered themselves upon the persons upon whom they were drawn, and remained for many months—even years—until the sum for which they were given was paid. Such was the case with some

'berâtdars,' as they were called, at Kala Tul. Their presence, as may be supposed, was far from being agreeable to the chief, but it was not considered prudent to dismiss them without first satisfying them by the payment of part, if not the whole, of their claims, and they were lodged in the castle and treated as guests.

Mehemet Taki Khan had hitherto evaded the payment of the sum demanded by the Matamet. He had not so much money at his command, and an attempt to collect it from the semi-independent tribes under his jurisdiction would have seriously weakened his influence and authority in the mountains. The Bakhtiyari had very little ready money, and what little they had they were not very willing to part with. During the whole time that I was with them I rarely saw a gold or silver coin, except such as were worn as ornaments by the women. They had little or no trade with the rest of Persia. Amongst themselves it was considered disgraceful 'to sell bread,' and as the laws of hospitality are universally recognised as obligatory upon Musulmans, no one was required to pay for the food which he might consume when in a Bakhtiyari tent. They cultivated sufficient corn and rice for their immediate wants; they made their clothes and their tents out of the wool and hair produced by their flocks and herds; and the few European goods they required were usually obtained from itinerant traders, who received produce in exchange for them.

To collect the sum demanded by the Matamet extreme measures would have been necessary, such as torture, without which Persians of all ranks would rarely part with their money, or the use of force in the case of a refractory tribe. To none of these measures would Mehemet Taki Khan have recourse. He therefore sought every kind of excuse and every means of delay to avoid the payment of the tribute and the other claims upon him.

Constant pressure was exercised upon him by official communications, but in vain. At length he received a letter from his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, who was kept at Tehran as a hostage for his loyalty and good behaviour, informing him that the Matamet had complained to the Shah

that he had been in secret correspondence with the exiled Persian princes at Baghdad, that he refused to pay his appointed tribute, had dishonoured the Government drafts upon him, and was therefore 'yaghi,' or in rebellion. His Majesty had consequently directed the Governor of Isfahan to take such measures to enforce the royal authority as he might deem necessary, and a military expedition was to be sent in the spring, as soon as the mountain passes were open, to invade and occupy the Bakhtiyari country.

The Persian Government had long been jealous of the power of Mehemet Taki Khan, who had succeeded in bringing so large a portion of the Bakhtiyari tribes under his sway, and suspected him of a design to throw off his allegiance altogether. The most exaggerated accounts of the wealth supposed to have been accumulated by the Bakhtiyari chief had also reached the Shah, who, after the fashion of Persian sovereigns, considered that the greater part, if not the whole of it, ought to be transferred to the royal coffers. Mehemet Taki Khan, to avoid war, had consented to the retention of his brother Ali Naghi at the capital as a nostage. But he writhed under constant exactions, he deplored the tyranny and maladministration which were the cause of widespread distress and disorder and were bringing the kingdom to ruin, and he despised the pusillanimous and corrupt Persian authorities. He had moreover, much contempt for the Persian regular army, which was at that time badly armed and ill-disciplined. But, nevertheless, he still hesitated, as is usually the case with such semi-independent tribal chiefs, to declare himself in open rebellion. He sought to temporise and to ward off, if possible, an invasion of his mountains, and a conflict in which some of the tribes he had brought under his authority might be induced by intrigues, at which Persians are adepts, to join the invaders against him.

Mehemet Taki Khan's anxiety was increased by the reports that reached him from Isfahan that the Matamet was already making preparations, by collecting a force of regular troops and artillery, to invade the Bakhtiyari

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Mountains as soon as the season would permit. Shefi'a Khan was hastily summoned to Kala Tul to give his advice as to the course to be pursued. It was decided at last, on his recommendation, that every effort should be made to come to an arrangement with the Matamet in order to prevent war, and that he himself should visit the various tribes under Mehemet Taki Khan's authority, with a view to collecting as much money as possible, but that measures of defence should not be taken which might furnish an excuse to the Persian Government to proclaim Mehemet Taki Khan in rebellion against the Shah.

Although the chief was ready to act upon Shefi'a Khan's advice, he was convinced that the Matamet had resolved to invade the Bakhtiyari Mountains and to make him a prisoner, whatever proofs he might give of his submission and of his loyalty. An expedition against him, if successful, would enrich its promoter. The inhabitants of the country invaded would be robbed and plundered by the Persian officials and soldiery, until they had scarcely the shirts on their backs left to them. He would be accused of being 'yaghi,' his property would be confiscated, and if he fell into the hands of the Matamet he would probably be put to death, or at any rate be sent, with his wives and family, a prisoner to Tehran, deprived of his sight, and kept in chains for the rest of his life.

He deemed it necessary, therefore, to take some precautions to prevent the consequences he anticipated. He knew that a quarrel between the English and Persian Governments had led to the recall of the British representative from Tehran, and to a suspension of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Rumours had reached him that they were on the verge of war. These rumours were confirmed by the news which came to Kala Tul of the occupation of Karak, in the Persian Gulf, by British troops. The report that an English army, with innumerable cannons, had taken possession of this island, and was about to cross to the mainland in order to advance upon Shuster and Shiraz, had spread through



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Luristan and among the Arab tribes inhabiting the plains between the mountains and the Euphrates. I do not think that Mehemet Taki Khan had entirely divested himself of the suspicion that I was a British political agent entrusted with some secret mission. He probably hoped that if war were to break out between England and Persia he might avail himself of the opportunity to proclaim his independence. He had at his command many thousands of the finest and most daring horsemen and most skilful matchlock-men in Persia, and he had reason to believe that the force already at his disposal might be greatly increased should he bring about a general rising against the Shah, to be supported by English money, bayonets, and artillery. He was desirous, therefore, of communicating with the British authorities at Karak, and learning whether, in the event of war, they would be prepared to accept his assistance, and to enter into an agreement with him to protect him against the vengeance of the Shah, and to recognise him as the supreme chief in Khuzistan on the conclusion of peace. He accordingly begged me to proceed to that island in order to ascertain, if possible, the intentions of the British Government, and to submit his proposals to the commander of the British forces there.

There were other reasons which induced me to accede to Mehemet Taki Khan's request to proceed to Karak. I was anxious to ascertain whether it would be possible for me to do anything to save, or prolong, the life of Au Kelb Ali, his brother, whose malady appeared to be making rapid progress. I might be able to obtain advice and medicines from some physician attached to the British force there, which would enable me, at least, to alleviate his sufferings. Mehemet Taki Khan, who had great affection for his brother, and the young chief's wife, who was nursing him with the tenderest care, were earnest in their entreaties that I should do so, and the Khan seemed to attach as much importance to my journey to Karak on this account as he did to its political object.

Again, it was now many months that I had been without

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news from England. I should, moreover, enjoy for a short time the society of my countrymen, of which I had been so long deprived.

Mehemet Taki Khan was a man of broad and enlightened views, notwithstanding his want of anything like education, and although he was only the chief of wild mountain tribes. Of an evening, when sitting together in the enderun, he had often spoken to me of his desire to put an end to the lawless habits of the Bakhtiyari, to introduce order and peace into his country, and to develop its resources. I pointed out to him how this could be best done, by encouraging trade and entering into communication with civilised nations. I showed him that the province of Khuzistan produced many things, such as cotton and indigo, that were highly prized in Europe, and that its carpets and other manufactures were greatly esteemed, and that British and other merchants might be encouraged to establish a trade in them, which would have the effect of inducing his people to engage in peaceful pursuits, and would enable them in return to obtain, from England and elsewhere, many necessaries and luxuries of which they were in need, and which would contribute greatly to their well-being. He informed me that, wishing to open such a trade between his mountains and India, he had entrusted, some years before, a Christian with a cargo of the produce of the country, which was shipped in a native vessel at Muhammera, at the mouth of the Karun. The ship, with its contents, was lost in the Persian Gulf on its way to Bombay.

He readily entered into my views, and authorised me to inform the British authorities at Karak that he was prepared to make roads through that part of the country which was under his authority and control, and which at that time extended to the plains inhabited by Arab tribes almost to the Shat-el-Arab, or Euphrates, and to the upper part of the Persian Gulf. He begged me to endeavour to induce British merchants to trade with his people, promising them complete security for themselves, their agents, and their property.

Mehemet Taki Khan was about to send Mehemet Ali

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Beg—he who had the adventure with the lion—upon a political mission to Mirza Koma, the chief of Behbahan,[1] a town in the low country between the great range and the Persian Gulf. I was to accompany him with a letter for the Mirza, requesting him to send me with a guide, or an escort, if necessary, to Bender Dilum, a small port on the Persian Gulf, where I should be able to find an Arab sailing-boat to take me to Karak. On December 8, that day having been pronounced propitious, I took leave of Mehemet Taki Khan and his wife and children, and rode off towards evening, with Mehemet Ali Beg, promising to return as soon as possible.

As we had left the castle late in the day we could not proceed beyond the plain of Baghi-Malek,[2] where we stopped at an encampment for the night. We started before sunrise on the following morning, as we had a long day's journey before us. We passed through the ruins of Manjanik, which I had already visted, and crossing a steep and rugged range of hills by a very stony track, obtained from the summit a fine view of the well-cultivated plain of Monjenou, bounded by the lofty mountain of Mungasht, now covered with snow. The high hills to the south of this plain were considered the boundary of the Bakhtiyari country. They are inhabited by the Bahmei, a branch of the great tribe of Kuhghelu, one of the most savage and lawless in Luristan. Their chief was at his castle of Kala Ala, at some distance from our road. The plain through which we passed had been of late so much exposed to their depredations that many villages in it had been abandoned by their inhabitants.

Although Mehemet Taki Khan had succeeded in bringing the Bahmei under his authority, and had more than once inflicted punishment upon them for their misdeeds, we should have run some risk had we met one of their 'chapows' or horsemen out on a foray. We had, therefore, to be on our guard during our journey in the

[1] These names were so pronounced by the Bakhtiyari. They should properly be written Kumo and Bihbihân.

[2] *I.e.* the king's garden.

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wild and deserted country through which we had to pass. A road had anciently been carried through the hills, and we came upon the ruins of an archway that had once crossed it, called 'Getchi-Dervoisa,' or the Limestone Gate. The Bakhtiyari call it 'Rustem's toll-house.' My companion pointed out near it an excavation in the rock, which he gravely assured me had been the manger of the renowned horse of that hero of Persian romance, and a tree about fifty yards distant from it to which the animal's hind legs had been tethered.

We descended from these barren hills into the rich and well-cultivated plain of Meï-Daoud, then covered with green crops. It was inhabited by a Bakhtiyari tribe called Mombeni, whose chief, Mulla Fezi, was known as the 'kalunter.' We could see in the distance his castle, on the river Ala, but did not go out of our way to it. The hills surrounding this plain abound in white gypsum, which the Bakhtiyari call 'getchi-oina' (looking-glass limestone).

Another range of low hills separated us from the plain of Ram Hormuz, corrupted by the Lurs into 'Rumes.' From an eminence which we reached at sunset, I obtained a glorious view over the vast alluvial plains which extend to the Shatel-Arab, or united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, inhabited by nomad Arabs of the tribe of Cha'b.[3] The villages which we could see beneath us were surrounded by the graceful palm—a tree that I had not seen since leaving the neighbourhood of Baghdad. It was dark before we reached the village of Ram Hormuz, on the river Ala—at this spot a considerable stream. We spent the night, with several other travellers, in the porch of the castle gate.

Ram Hormuz was a celebrated Sassanian city, where Manes, the founder of the Manichean sect, was put to death by King Behram, and his skin hung up as a warning to his disciples. Its site is marked by numerous mounds which surround the present village. We passed through the midst of them, but I did not perceive any ruins of

[3] The name is written Ka'b, but the Arabs of Khuzistan pronounce the K as Ch in this and other words.

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buildings above ground. The plain is exceedingly fertile, but was ill-cultivated. The chief of the tribe which inhabited it, one Abd'ullah Khan, lived in the small castle of Deh Ure. We did not stop there, but rested for the night at the village of Juma. About two miles distant from it there was a small white-domed Imaum Zadeh,[4] surrounded by palms and orange trees, which contained the tomb of a saint held in great veneration.

We followed the banks of the Ab-Ala through a thick jungle, from which we roused many wild boars, and what appeared to me to be large jackals, but which my companion declared were 'sag-gourgs' (dog-wolves), and, according to him, an altogether different animal. We passed during the day through a country which, in consequence of the depredations of the Bahmei tribe, had been almost reduced to a desert. The population had fled, leaving their villages to fall to ruins. The inhabitants of Joizou, where we spent the night, were of that tribe, and a most ill-looking set of ruffians. In the chief's house I saw a chair and several articles of attire which had evidently once belonged to a European. The chief alleged that they had been the property of a 'Feringhi' who had visited the village many years before and had died there. They had more probably belonged to some unfortunate traveller who had fallen a victim to these notorious robbers and cut-throats.

Next day we reached Behbahan, situated in an extensive plain separated from that of Ram Hormuz by hills of limestone and gypsum. The streams which descend from them are brackish and undrinkable. The town is about three and a half miles in circumference, and is surrounded by a mud-wall with equidistant circular towers and bastions. Its castle, known as 'Kala Naranj' (orange castle), has lofty mud walls, and is protected by a deep ditch. The place once contained a considerable population, but the constant tribal wars in which its inhabitants had been long engaged, together with the plague and bad government, had reduced it to little more than a heap of ruins.

[4] The name given to the shrines, or buildings raised over the tombs, of Musulman saints.

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The chief, Mirza Koma, was absent at Bender Dilum. I took advantage of a day's rest to go to the bath; my companion, Mehemet Ali Beg, to get helplessly drunk. From Behbahan the country is broken into low hills, and falls gradually in a series of table-lands to the Persian Gulf. These hills are also of limestone and gypsum, and water found in them is for the most part brackish. Between Behbahan and the sea there is another plain—that of Zeïtun—the principal village in which is Kala Cham, where we spent the night with Mirza Aga, the governor, and an uncle of Mirza Koma. He was a seyyid, and insisted upon entering into a religious discussion with me, which, however, he conducted fairly and good-humouredly, and without any show of fanaticism. The next day we had a ride of six farsaks to Bender Dilum, crossing low but rugged hills, and following and fording the river Zokereh. The brushwood on its banks swarmed with francolin (the black partridge or duroge).

Mirza Koma was lodged in a small mud fort, and the town was filled with his horsemen and matchlock-men. He was a man of polished manners and of an amiable disposition, and, although a seyyid, and consequently of Arab origin, not a fanatic, as are most descendants of the Prophet in Persia. His government was described to me as mild and just. He sought to restrain the marauding habits of the tribes under his rule, and to encourage them to settle in villages and to engage in agriculture. His title of Mirza is a corruption of 'Mir-Zadeh'—born of an emir or prince—and is that generally assumed in Khuzistan by seyyids of distinction. I delivered the letter for him given to me by Mehemet Taki Khan. He received me cordially, and ordered a small sailing-vessel to be at once got ready to take me to Karak.

Mirza Koma was then engaged in an expedition against Bushire, with the object of possessing himself of that place and of reinstating a certain Sheikh Hussein, its former chief, who had been expelled by the inhabitants and who had taken refuge at Behbahan—hoping thus to add this town to the other territories under his rule. With this object he was

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desirous of obtaining some old cannon which were at Karak, when the English took possession of the island. He claimed them as having belonged to Sheikh Hassein, and asked me to be the bearer of a letter to the British authorities there, requesting that he might be allowed to bring them away.

At sunset I went down to the shore and found a very rude and crank boat, manned by four half-naked Arabs, ready to receive me. The 'nâ khudâ,' or captain, said that we should reach Karak next day. I did not, therefore, take any other provisions with me than some bread and a few pomegranates. The wind was light and favourable, and we set our one large sail with the prospect of having a quick passage. But in the night it came on to blow from the southward, and a high sea soon arose. The 'nâ-khudâ' seemed to lose his head, and we were in some danger of foundering, owing to the leaky and rotten condition of the vessel. We beat about the whole of next day, making little progress. With the south wind there came a heavy downfall of rain. There was a kind of hold, in which were stored rice, fruit, and other produce for sale in the bazar established by the English troops in Karak. I obtained some protection from the storm in it, but my quarters were far from comfortable. The 'nâ-khudâ,' finding that I had no provisions with me except the pomegranates and bread, offered to cook me some rice with dried and grated shark's flesh, very much like sawdust in taste and appearance. The mess he made me was not savoury, but seemed to be the usual food of the Arab sailors. I was hungry, and did not refuse it. The water which I was given to drink from a tub was absolutely repulsive.

Fortunately the wind fell as the sun went down. A brisk northerly breeze sprang up, and on the following morning we anchored off Karak. I at once disembarked at the small landing-place which had been constructed for the use of native provision boats, and, passing the sepoy sentinels, made my way towards a house over which the British flag was flying. As I had conjectured, it was that of the chief authority in the island, Colonel Hennell, Resident of the East India Company at Bushire, who had left that port

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when the British mission was withdrawn from Tehran, and was in charge of the camp at Karak.

Dr. Mackenzie, an army surgeon whom I had met at Baghdad, offered me a bed in his temporary hut. My first thought was a bath, as the Arab boat in which I had spent so many hours was swarming with vermin.

A station had been formed at Karak for our Indian troops, who were kept there until the danger of war with Persia had passed. The English officers lived in small houses built after the Indian fashion, with verandahs and thatched roofs ; the men in huts constructed of reeds and sun-dried bricks. There was a village on the island, consisting of a few miserable hovels inhabited by poor fishermen. Since the English occupation an extensive native bazar had been opened, and was well supplied with provisions, such as meat, poultry, eggs, vegetables, and fruit, from the opposite coasts of Persia and Arabia, the natives of which, finding that they were paid in ready money, were eager to bring supplies to our market. At the time of my visit the climate was delightful ; but in summer the heat, I was told, was almost unbearable. Fever and other diseases then prevailed, and the troops suffered greatly. The island is a barren rock, and only supplied with water from rain collected in artificial reservoirs.

I remained about a fortnight in Karak, under the care of Dr. Mackenzie, who cured me of the ague or intermittent fever from which I had so long and severely suffered. He also renewed my small stock of medicines, and furnished me with some vaccine lymph, with which I hoped to vaccinate Mehemet Taki Khan's children, and to confer an important benefit upon my mountain friends. As regards the principal object of my visit to the island, Colonel Hennell informed me that, although the Government would have nothing to do with the Bakhtiyari chief's political views, it was not indisposed to meet his commercial projects. He was further of opinion that war between England and Persia would be avoided.

Having concluded all my business, I left Karak on January 7 for Bender Dilum in an Arab boat. The following

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morning, when we were in sight of our destination, the wind fell altogether and we lay motionless for twenty-four hours in a dead calm. I was again obliged to have recourse to the shark pillau of my 'nâ-khudâ.' A breeze which sprang up at noon next day enabled us to reach Bender Dilum about sunset. I was hospitably received by Haji Aga, the brother of Haji Hassan, the 'lala' or tutor of Mehemet Taki Khan's children, and I passed the night in his humble hut.

I was informed by my host that Mehemet Ali Beg, tired of waiting for me, and probably imagining that having once rejoined my countrymen I should not be disposed to leave them again, had left Bender Dilum for Kala Tul, taking my horse with him. A report had reached him, moreover, that the Matamet had already set out on his expedition against Mehemet Taki Khan with a large army. As he was one of the principal and most trusted retainers of the Bakhtiyari chief, and was expected to be with him in times of difficulty and in war, he considered it his duty to lose no time in returning to his master. Although his departure had caused me great inconvenience, I could scarcely be surprised at it.

Mirza Koma having learnt that the inhabitants of Bushire were not favourable to the return of Sheikh Hussein, and that he could not rely upon their co-operation, had renounced his intention of attacking the town, and was on his way back to Behbahan. I decided upon following him, as without his assistance and protection I should have great difficulty in reaching Kala Tul, especially as, in consequence of the rumours of war, the country through which I should have to pass was already in a very disturbed state. I hoped to be able to join him in a few hours, as he was moving slowly with his tents, irregular cavalry, and numerous camp-followers. But I was unable to hire a horse, and it was only with some difficulty that I procured a donkey to carry me and my saddle-bags. My progress was consequently slow, and I could only cross the sandy belt bordering the sea to the small Arab village of Liletain, where I passed the night.

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Next day I was able to procure a horse in the small village of Hussor, after a long and fatiguing ride upon my jaded ass. At sunset I reached Mirza Koma's tents. He received me very cordially, invited me to accompany him as his guest to Behbahan, and promised to assist me in returning to Kala Tul. The village of Ghenowa, where he was encamped, was filled with his horsemen and 'tufungjis' (matchlock-men). As the weather was delightfully warm, I passed the night on my small carpet in the open air.

It was January 25 before we reached Behbahan, as we were detained several days by heavy rains. The baggage animals had great difficulty in crossing the swollen torrents. A part of the plain had become a morass. To the great amusement of Mirza Koma, I sank on one occasion in a quagmire, from which I was dragged with my horse, not without some trouble, by his attendants. The country was already carpeted with flowers, and the jonquil and the narcissus—the Persians call it 'nerkis'—filled the air with the most grateful perfume. The plains and valleys of Behbahan deserve their reputation of being one of the 'bihishts,' or paradises, of Persia. The horsemen of Mirza Koma were constantly dismounting and gathering handfuls of narcissus, with which they adorned themselves and their horses. The chief himself would, every now and then, direct his carpet to be spread on a flowery bank near some stream, and invite me to smoke a kaleôn and to drink sherbet with him. Although we were in the month of January, the air was warm and balmy.

The Mirza, being a descendant of the Prophet and of a distinguished seyyid family, was preceded on his march by a large flag of green silk embroidered in gold with texts from the Koran. The standard-bearer was accompanied by musicians on horseback, beating drums and playing on a kind of oboe. The Mirza himself was escorted by some five hundred horsemen. He and many of his retainers rode handsome high-bred Arab mares. Some of the chiefs had with them their hawks and hounds—hunting and war going together—and scoured the plains in pursuit of game, with which they abounded. The principal sport consisted in

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capturing the 'houbara,' or middle-sized bustard. This bird is taken by a large falcon called 'chalk,' trained for the purpose. When it is frightened by the approach of the horsemen, it endeavours to escape by running or by concealing itself in the long grass. The falcon—released from its hood and raised high on the wrist of the sportsman—soon perceives its quarry, and skimming rapidly along the ground, rises on approaching it, and, without hovering above it, strikes at once. The bustard rarely attempts to evade its enemy by flight, but usually makes a gallant resistance, in which it sometimes proves victorious. The horsemen, to prevent their hawks from being injured, ride up at once, separate the combatants, kill the bustard, and reward the falcon with its victim's brains.

On approaching the villages the inhabitants came out to meet the Mirza, the women making the loud vibrating noise, called by the Arabs the 'tahlel,' by striking their mouths rapidly with the palms of their hands whilst uttering a shrill cry.

The principal inhabitants of Behbahan had left the town to meet their governor the day before his entry. He had encamped near a spring called the 'Chahi-Wali' (the Wali's well),[5] at a short distance from his capital, and the omens had designated the following day for an auspicious return to it. A crowd of men, on horseback and on foot, were assembled outside the walls to receive him. The horsemen galloped over the plain, engaging in mimic fight. Every one who carried a gun fired it off, and we passed through the gate amidst the shouts of the population and salutes of artillery. The houses were adorned with flags and hangings of bright colours, and their flat roofs covered with women.

The Mirza stopped at the entrance of the principal mosque and repeated a short prayer, whilst an almost naked dervish called down blessings upon his head in a stentorian voice. We then rode to the castle. The chief entered his enderun immediately after his arrival, and I was left to myself in a small room which had been assigned to me. To

[5] Wali was the title formerly given to the hereditary chief of the district of Behbahan.

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my great relief I found that Mehemet Taki Khan, convinced that I would keep my promise of returning to Kala Tul, had sent a man with a horse to meet me as soon as Mehemet Ali Beg had arrived there with mine.

I found, as I travelled towards Kala Tul, that the state of the country had changed considerably since I had passed through it only a short time before. Mehemet Taki Khan, anticipating the invasion of his mountains by the Persians, had summoned all the horsemen and matchlock-men of the tribes to join him, and the Bahmei, taking advantage of their absence, were plundering the villages and driving off the sheep and cattle. The road was consequently very unsafe, and I left Behbahan accompanied by ten armed men, whom my guide considered necessary for my protection. This borderland between the lawless mountain tribes of the Kuhghelu, the Cha'b Arabs, and the Bakhtiyari, is at all times subject to their depredations, and a very fertile district thus remains almost uninhabited and waste.

As the villagers feared to leave their homes, my guide was unable to procure an escort beyond the village of Sultanabad. Dreading lest he should fall into the hands of the enemies of his tribe, and thinking that he would have a better chance of getting safely through the dangerous tract without my company, he made off in the middle of the night, and left me to shift for myself. The inhabitants of Sultanabad informed me that on the previous day a body of Arab horsemen, commanded by the son of a certain sheikh Moslet, a notorious robber, had made a raid in the plain of Ram Hormuz, and had driven off cattle and sheep. I was earnestly warned against the danger of falling into the hands of these marauders, and of being robbed, if not murdered, were I to proceed alone. But I could not remain in the village for an indefinite time, and hoping for the best I went on my way. After I had ridden for some time without meeting anyone, I perceived in the distance a body of horsemen. I made up my mind that they were the Arabs who had been pillaging the district. As they must have seen me as soon as I saw them, and as it would have been utterly useless for me to attempt on my tired horse to escape from them,

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I decided to advance to meet them, and to make myself known. Fortunately, they proved to be Arabs under the command of a Cha'b sheikh named Ahmed, who, in the absence of Abd'ullah Khan, the chief of Ram Hormuz, had come to assist his people in defending themselves and their property.

In a raid which had taken place the day before, several villagers had been killed and wounded. Among the cattle captured were some cows belonging to a seyyid. He followed the Arabs, and appealed to their sheikh, who, out of respect for his sacred character as a descendant of the Prophet, gave them back to him. The old man, who was suffering from inflammation in his eyes, applied to me for medicine. He seemed to derive some benefit from the lotion I gave him, for the following morning he came to express his gratitude, and insisted upon my mounting his horse and accompanying him to his village. After he had served an excellent pillau for my breakfast, he sent one of his sons with me to visit the orange trees in the gardens of Anushirwan. In one of these gardens was an artificial mound which, according to a tradition, covers the remains of a palace of that renowned monarch of the Sassanian dynasty, and near the place I was shown his tomb and that of his son.

In the village of Ram Hormuz I found the man whom Mehemet Taki Khan had sent to conduct me to Kala Tul. I reproached him for his cowardice in leaving me. He excused himself by saying that if he had fallen into the hands of the Arabs, who were expected to make a 'chapou' on that very day in the plain, he would have had his throat cut, as they had a blood-feud with his tribe, whilst if they had taken me they would have done me no harm, but would only have left me naked. We set off together for Kala Tul.

On arriving at the castle I found that Mehemet Taki Khan had already left it, with the chiefs who had joined his standard, his retainers, and the horsemen and matchlockmen collected from the tribes. Khatun-jan Khanum and the other inmates of the enderun were delighted to see me.

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I learnt from her all that had taken place during my absence. The Matamet, finding that he was unable to obtain the money he had demanded from Mehemet Taki Khan as the tribute of the Bakhtiyari tribes, and accusing him of being in rebellion against the Shah, had determined to undertake an expedition against him. Large arrears of taxes were also due from the cities of Shuster and Dizful, and from the Arab population of Khuzistan, and he intended to enforce their payment at the same time. He had already commenced his march, and had entered the mountains by the Zenda-rud and Zerda-kuh. The Shah had commanded Ali Naghi Khan, Mehemet Taki Khan's brother, to accompany the governor of Isfahan as a hostage and as his guide to Kala Tul. Mehemet Taki Khan, uncertain as to the course he should pursue, whether to submit or resist, had gone to Mal-Emir, where he had encamped with his followers. The Matamet would have to descend from the high mountains into that plain, and the Bakhtiyari chief would be able to determine how to act. His wives and his family, and those of his relations and of his adherents, were in great alarm at the prospect of a war and the possibility of an occupation of their country by the Persian troops, who, they knew, would commit every manner of excess and outrage upon them. They were already making preparations to leave Kala Tul, and to seek for safety with their children and property in the almost inaccessible mountains in which the tribe had their 'sardesirs,' or summer pastures.

Khatun-jan Khanum, who had been left in charge of the castle, feared lest the Bahmei tribe and the Arabs under the son of Sheikh Moslet, taking advantage of Mehemet Taki Khan's absence from Kala Tul, would plunder the inhabitants of the country in its neighbourhood, as they had already done those of the plain of Ram Hormuz. It was rumoured that a 'chapou' party had been seen at no great distance from the village, and much alarm was felt lest it should be attacked, as it was without sufficient means of defence. The Khanum, therefore, decided to send out as many horsemen and matchlock-men as could be collected together, under the command of Au Azeez, one of her

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relations, to reconnoitre and to hold the enemy in check. I accompanied the young chieftain. We concealed ourselves during the day in the low hills beyond Manjanik, and resumed our march after nightfall.

It was scarcely dawn when we saw in the distance a company of horsemen. We could not at first make out whether they were marauders, or peaceful traders on their way to Shuster. My companions, keeping out of sight in a ravine, made preparations to fall upon them. Hidden behind a rock, I watched the party as they drew near, and thought that I perceived among them a European wearing a cap with a gold-lace band. I begged my Bakhtiyari friends to remain concealed until I could ascertain who this European might be. Approaching him alone I called to him in French. He was not a little surprised at being addressed in that language by a Bakhtiyari, for whom, on account of my dress, he at first mistook me. I found him to be the Baron de Bode, the Secretary of the Russian Embassy, whose acquaintance I had made in the Shah's camp at Hamadan. He was accompanied by an escort of irregular horse, which had been furnished to him by the Persian authorities, and had a train of servants and baggage mules. He informed me that he was on his way to join the Matamet, of whose movements I was able to give him some information.

I returned to my companions and warned them of the danger of attacking and robbing a member of the Russian Embassy. If he happened to be killed in the affray the Russian Government would, I said, inevitably insist upon redress, and the consequences might prove very serious to Mehemet Taki Khan and his tribe. They acted on my advice, and allowed the Baron to pass unmolested--still, however, remaining concealed in the ravine. It was only some years after, when I met him in a London drawing-room, that I informed him of the danger which he had run ; for had I not restrained Au Azeez and his followers, they would probably have fired a volley into his party, which would have had fatal results.

As we saw no enemy, and had consequently reason to

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believe that there was no ground for the alarm of the inhabitants of Kala Tul, we returned in the course of the day to the castle.

I soon joined Mehemet Taki Khan at his camp in the plain of Mal-Emir, taking with me his two eldest boys, whom their mother committed to my care. He informed me that he had determined not to oppose the passage of the mountains by the Matamet, but to receive him as a guest, and by protesting his loyalty and subjection to the Shah to endeavour to avoid a conflict. He hoped to conciliate the governor of Isfahan by presents, and by the payment of so much of the tribute claimed from him as he might be able to collect from the tribes which recognised his authority. Consequently his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, was not only acting as a guide to the Persian army through the mountains, but the Bakhtiyari on the way had received orders to help in the transport of the guns, which the Persian artillerymen, without their assistance, could not have dragged over the steep and rocky passes of the great range which separates the centre of Persia from the province of Khuzistan.

Mehemet Taki Khan's camp occupied a large area. It was composed of the usual black tents and of huts constructed of reeds and boughs of trees. He had collected a force of eight thousand men, including horsemen and matchlockmen on foot. Most of the tribes acknowledging his authority, including the Arabs from the plains around Shuster, had furnished their contingents. A more motley and a wilder and more savage set of men it would have been difficult to bring together. They were very warlike in their demonstrations, constantly firing off their loaded guns, to the great danger of those who might be near, dancing their war-dance and shouting their war-songs. They only awaited a word from Mehemet Taki Khan to fall upon the Matamet and his regular troops. Encumbered as these were with artillery, baggage, and the usual following of a Persian army, in the difficult mountain passes and narrow defiles, they might easily have been cut to pieces.

I frequently witnessed whilst in Mehemet Taki Khan's



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camp the effect which poetry had upon men who knew no pity and who were ready to take human life upon the smallest provocation or for the lowest greed. It might be supposed that such men were insensible to all feelings and emotions except those excited by hatred of their enemies, cupidity, or revenge. Yet they would stand until late in the night in a circle round Mehemet Taki Khan, as he sat on his carpet before a blazing fire which cast a lurid light upon their ferocious countenances—rather those of demons than of human beings—to listen with the utmost eagerness to Shefi'a Khan, who, seated by the side of the chief, would recite, with a loud voice and in a kind of chant, episodes from the 'Shah-Nameh,' describing the deeds of Rustem, the mythical Persian hero, or the loves of Khosrau and Shirin. Or sometimes one of those poets or minstrels who wander from encampment to encampment among the tribes would sing, with quavering voice, the odes of Hafiz or Saadi, or improvise verses in honour of the great chieftain, relating how he had overcome his enemies in battle and in single combat, and had risen to be the head of the Bakhtiyari by his valour, his wisdom, his justice, and his charity to the poor. The excitement of these ruthless warriors knew no bounds. When the wonderful exploits of Rustem were described—how with one blow of his sword he cut horse and rider in two, or alone vanquished legions of enemies—their savage countenances became even more savage. They would shout and yell, draw their swords, and challenge imaginary foes. When the death of some favourite hero was the poet's theme, they would weep, beat their breasts, and utter a doleful wail, heaping curses upon the head of him who had caused it. But when they listened to the moving tale of the loves of Khosrau and his mistress, they would heave the deepest sighs—the tears running down their cheeks—and follow the verses with a running accompaniment of 'Waï! waï!'

Such was probably the effect of the Homeric ballads when recited or sung of old in the camps of the Greeks, or when they marched to combat. Such a scene as I have described must be witnessed to fully understand the effect of poetry upon a warlike and emotional race.

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Mehemet Taki Khan himself was as susceptible to it as his wild followers. I have seen him, when we were sitting together of an evening in the enderun at Kala Tul, sob like a child as he recited or listened to some favourite verses. When I expressed to him my surprise that he, who had seen so much of war and bloodshed, and had himself slain so many enemies, should be thus moved to tears by poetry, he replied, 'Ya, Sahib! I cannot help it. They burn my heart!'

The shrill notes of a kind of oboe, not unlike those of a Scotch bagpipe, and the monotonous beat of the drum, were heard night and day in the tents of the Bakhtiyari. They appeared to afford as much delight and to cause almost as much excitement to these wild mountaineers as their beloved poetry.

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## CHAPTER X

*Arrival of the Matamet—My horse stolen—Negotiations with the Matamet—The Matamet at Kala Tul—Sculptures and inscriptions in Mal-Emir—Kul Faraun—Shefi'a Khan made prisoner—Hussein Kuli—Arrival at Shuster with the hostages—Interview with the Matamet—Return to Kala Tul—War against Mehemet Taki Khan—Return to Shuster.*

SHORTLY after my arrival at Mehemet Taki Khan's encampment, news came that the Matamet, with his troops and artillery, had succeeded in crossing a pass of the Zerdakuh, and was descending the valleys which led into Mal-Emir. Preparations were made by the Bakhtiyari chief for the reception of his guest in a manner becoming the rank of so exalted a personage. At the same time, he desired to show the Persians that they would have to encounter an imposing force if they attempted to carry out any scheme for the seizure by violence of his person or his property. Accompanied by his two little sons, and by a large retinue of horsemen mounted upon the finest Arab horses, he went to meet the Matamet. The road by which the Eunuch entered the plain was lined by several thousand men, armed with matchlocks, which they discharged incessantly, whilst clouds of Bakhtiyari and Arab horsemen engaged in mimic fight—pursuing each other, bringing up their horses on their haunches when at full speed, firing their guns or pistols as they turned back in their saddles, and performing various other feats for which their ancestors in Parthian times were renowned.

The Matamet appeared surrounded by his officers and guards, and followed by a motley crowd of horsemen. Before him walked the 'farrashes,' dealing blows right and left with their long sticks, on pretence of clearing the way for the

great man. They were preceded by 'lûtis,' or buffoons, by Lur musicians with oboes and drums, and by a number of dervishes invoking Allah and the Prophet with loud cries, and calling down blessings upon the Matamet's head. His regular troops, with the artillery and baggage-mules and a crowd of camp-followers, closed the procession. Sheep and oxen were slain before him as he rode along, by way of sacrifice, according to the custom of the country.

Mehemet Taki Khan sent his two sons in advance to welcome his guest. They were taken from their horses as the Matamet approached, and were lifted up by their attendants to be kissed by him. The chief, who soon followed them, dismounted to show due respect to the representative of the Shah. I was with him, and was at once recognised by the Matamet, who inquired after my health, and expressed his surprise at finding me in the Bakhtiyari Mountains.

The Persian tents were pitched at the opposite end of the plain to that occupied by the encampment of the Bakhtiyari chief, and about two miles distant from it. The Matamet's spacious double pavilion was lined with Cashmere shawls, and furnished with the finest carpets and silk hangings. Those of some of the high officials who accompanied him were scarcely less rich and costly. The troops were quartered in small bell-shaped tents, and in huts of boughs, which they speedily constructed. The camp-followers, a motley rabble, were scattered about, living as they best could in the open air. They were for the most part thieves and arrant scoundrels, who robbed and maltreated any one who, unprotected, fell into their hands. They were constantly brought before the Matamet, charged with some misdeed, and received summary punishment. The 'ferrashes' who administered the bastinado were rarely idle, and I never visited the Persian head-quarters without hearing the slashing sound of the long flexible switches and the cries of the victims, who probably in most cases fully deserved their punishment. It was only by such means that anything like order and discipline were maintained, as the soldiers were scarcely less lawless and given to crime

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than the crowd of idle and worthless vagabonds who followed in the wake of the Persian army.

The Baron de Bode had arrived in Mal-Emir a day or two before the Persian army. His tent was pitched near to that of the Matamet. I frequently visited him, and whilst with him picketed my horse outside his tent, not having any attendant to look after it. One day, when about to return to the Bakhtiyari encampment, I found that the animal had disappeared. Notwithstanding a search made by the servants of the Baron and by some 'ferrashes' sent by the Matamet, I failed to recover it. It had been stolen by some adroit thief.

I had to return on foot to the Bakhtiyari tents. Mehemet Ali Beg, who had accompanied me to Bender Dilum, was of opinion that my horse had been stolen by a Persian 'serbáz,' or soldier, who had deserted. He knew, he said, the road which such deserters, who were numerous, were in the habit of taking, and he offered to go with me in pursuit of the thief. I readily agreed. Mehemet Taki Khan lent me a horse, the Beg collected a few horsemen, and we galloped across the plain to the foot of the mountains dividing Mal-Emir from Sûsan, of which we commenced the ascent by a very precipitous track. He declared he could distinguish recent traces of men with horses, amongst whom he was persuaded was the thief of whom we were in search. It was already late in the day when we left the tents, and night had come on when we reached a small plateau on the mountain side. There we perceived several men sitting round a fire at which they appeared to be cooking their supper. Some of them wore the black lambskin cap and uniform of the Persian regular troops. Horses were picketed near them, and amongst them we recognised the one that had been stolen from me. The moment they saw us they sprang to their feet and prepared to defend themselves. We charged in amongst them. I drew the long pistol that I carried in my belt, and, as a soldier armed with a musket seized the bridle of my horse, I discharged it at him. It missed fire, and at the same moment I received a blow upon the back of my head from an iron mace, and fell in-

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sensible from my saddle. When I recovered my senses I found myself stretched upon the ground, whilst Mehemet Ali Beg was bathing my temples with cold water. Fortunately I wore a thick coarse Bakhtiyari 'lung' wound like a turban round my felt cap, otherwise I should probably have been killed on the spot. The only ill effect that I experienced from the blow was a pain in the head, which lasted me for some days.

Not only had my horse been recovered, but three others which had also been stolen were taken. In the affray two of the 'ser-báz' had been wounded, one very severely, and remained our prisoners. The rest had made their escape. We returned in triumph, and Mehemet Ali Beg related what had happened to me to a sympathetic audience.

Some days passed before I felt well enough to ride to the Matamet's camp. I found that the Baron de Bode had left it for Shuster. We did not meet again until some years after in London.

The Matamet and Mehemet Taki Khan remained for forty days encamped in the plain of Mal-Emir. During this time negotiations were going on between them—the wily Persian endeavouring to outwit the Bakhtiyari chief and to get him into his power. Mehemet Taki Khan, on the other hand, was uncertain as to the course which he should pursue, but was determined not to trust himself in the hands of a cruel and unscrupulous eunuch, who stopped at no crime to rid himself of an enemy, or to extract money from rich and poor alike, and in whose promises and oaths no trust could be placed.

Ali Naghi Khan had arrived at Mal-Emir with the Matamet. He had been offered by the Shah, at Tehran, the government of the Bakhtiyari tribes and of the whole of the province of Khuzistan for his brother, on condition that he would undertake to assist two regiments of regular troops and three guns to cross the mountains. It was alleged that they were to be sent for no other purpose than to collect the arrears of revenue due from the districts and towns of Shuster, Dizful, and Hawizah. Whilst he was hesitating to agree to this proposal, which he suspected covered a plot to

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obtain possession of some strong positions in the Bakhtiyari country, and to raise the tribes against Mehemet Taki Khan, the Matamet had placed himself at the head of the force which had now succeeded, with the chief's assistance, in reaching the low country to the west of the great range.

Ali Naghi Khan had from the first been in favour of temporising, and of avoiding a collision with the regular troops of the Shah, as well as any act of open rebellion against the authority of the Persian Government. It was through his advice that Mehemet Taki Khan had allowed the Persian army to cross the mountains, where the passes might have been held successfully against it by a handful of determined men. He still earnestly advised the same policy, and he was constantly going backwards and forwards from one encampment to the other, endeavouring to prevent war.

On arriving at Mal-Emir the Matamet called upon Mehemet Taki Khan to dismiss his followers, with the exception of a few attendants, and to pitch his tent in the midst of the Persian camp. He professed himself ready to take a solemn oath on the Koran that no harm should come to the Bakhtiyari chief, but that he should be treated with honour and installed in the government of Khuzistan. It was not likely that Mehemet Taki Khan, knowing with whom he had to deal, would fall into the trap. He declined to accept these conditions, and refused to trust himself in the Matamet's hands, believing that he would be made a prisoner by treachery if not by force.

Mehemet Taki Khan learnt soon after that the Matamet intended to attack the Bakhtiyari camp, and that with this view he had commenced intrigues amongst the tribal chiefs. He was now convinced that the real object of the Persian expedition was to seize him, and to send him a prisoner to Tehran. He regretted, when it was too late, that he had acted upon his brother's advice, and had allowed the Matamet to cross the mountains. He not only made preparations for his own defence against the projected attack, but he proposed to his adherents that they should forestall it by falling upon the Persian camp by night.

Meetings were held in his tent to discuss the matter.

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Most of his followers approved of the plan ; but Ali Naghi Khan strongly opposed it, urging that even if it should prove successful it could only end in the ultimate ruin of his brother, as the Shah would take measures to revenge a defeat of his army. He advised that whilst preparations were made to repel any attack upon the encampment, a temporising policy should be continued. The Matamet, he thought, finding that he could neither seize the chief by treachery nor by force, would get tired of remaining in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, and if he could obtain a sufficient sum of money and suitable presents would leave them for the plains of Shuster.

Mehemet Taki Khan still hesitated, but yielded to his brother's counsels at the last moment, when his followers were ready, one night, to fall upon the Persian camp with every prospect of success.

Ali Naghi Khan's advice seemed to have been justified when the Matamet announced his intention of striking his tent and marching to Shuster. He took the road to Kala Tul, where he remained encamped in the plain for two days, on one of which an entertainment was given to him in the castle. Every precaution was taken by Mehemet Taki Khan to prevent a surprise, and the upper rooms were filled with armed men ready to resist any attempt on the part of the Persian troops to seize him. The Matamet had, on the other hand, placed a considerable body of horsemen and regular troops in the courtyard and round the building, for his own security, as the mistrust was mutual. As he ascended, on horseback, the mound on which the castle stood, the usual sacrifice of sheep and bullocks was made before him, and he was presented by the Bakhtiyari chief with five high-bred Arab horses, twelve fine mules, a Cashmere shawl of great value, and two hundred tomans (100*l.*) in money on a silver salver. Presents were likewise distributed among his secretaries and principal officers. Mehemet Taki Khan had further furnished provisions to the Persian troops during the time they had been encamped in the plain of Mal-Emir and had been in the Bakhtiyari country. These calls upon him had well-nigh exhausted

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his resources, and he was under the necessity of calling upon his tribes to send their quota of the supplies demanded by the Matamet—a measure which naturally caused much discontent.

In Mal-Emir I discovered various rock-sculptures and inscriptions of a very early period; the most remarkable being those in a ravine called Kul-Faraoun, where I counted no less than 341 figures, contained in five tablets, and accompanied by a perfectly preserved inscription of twenty-four lines in the Susianian cuneiform character.

Sûsan, which I revisited, was deserted, Mulla Mohammed and his tribe having fled to the mountains in fear of the Persian troops. I discovered nothing there that I had not seen on my previous visit. The inscription which I had been assured existed in the ravine near the ruins of the bridge, and which I had been led to believe was in the cuneiform character, proved to be a few Persian letters rudely cut on a stone. Such disappointments frequently befell me. It was impossible to trust the description given by the ignorant Bakhtiyari of any ruin or 'writing' which they pretended to have seen.

The Matamet having left Kala Tul and proceeded on his way to the plains, there was every reason to expect that, satisfied with Mehemet Taki Khan's submission, and with the money and presents he had extorted from the Bakhtiyari chief, he would, after collecting the arrears of revenue due from Shuster and Dizful, return to the seat of his government at Isfahan. But the cunning eunuch had effected his first and main object, which was to conceal his designs against Mehemet Taki Khan until he had safely crossed the mountains and had established himself in the open country, where he could best avail himself of his artillery and regular troops, and carry on in security his intrigues among the tribes, which he was endeavouring to detach from their chief.

Mehemet Taki Khan had sent his brother Ali Naghi with the Matamet to Shuster as a mark of respect. On his way thither the Matamet, when passing through the tribe of Gunduzlu and that of Suhunni, of which Shefi'a Khan, it will be remembered, was the head, invited that chief and others

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to accompany him. They did so, and were shortly afterwards treacherously made prisoners, and thrown into chains.

The Matamet, having thus Ali Naghi Khan and some of the most influential Bakhtiyari chiefs in his power, summoned Mehemet Taki Khan to Shuster. He refused to obey the summons unless hostages were given to his family and his tribe for his safety. This condition was rejected by the Matamet, who proclaimed the Bakhtiyari chief 'yaghi,' or in rebellion to the Shah, and commenced preparations to march against him.

Mehemet Taki Khan then offered to give further hostages for his loyalty. The Matamet, knowing the affection of the Bakhtiyari chief for his eldest son, demanded that the boy and the eldest son of Ali Naghi Khan should be delivered into his hands. He took, at the same time, a solemn oath on the Koran, that if they were made over to him he would abandon his expedition and would return with his army to Isfahan.

Both Mehemet Taki Khan and his wife Khatun-jan were in despair at the thought of losing their child. Ali Naghi Khan, who had consented to deliver over his own son, was sent to Kala Tul to endeavour to induce his brother to give up Hussein Kuli. He urged the chief to comply with the Matamet's demand, in order to save his country from invasion and to avoid bloodshed. Although Mehemet Taki Khan had ample experience of Persian perfidy, and feared for the safety of his child when once in the Matamet's power, he was still unwilling to bring a war upon his people. Again listening to the counsels of his brother, he endeavoured to reconcile himself to the sacrifice. But Khatun-jan refused to part with her boy, and denounced Ali Naghi Khan as a traitor to his brother, and as having been the cause, through his evil advice, of the misfortunes which had befallen her husband and the Bakhtiyari tribes. There was weeping and wailing in the enderun —all the women joining in her lamentations. Mehemet Taki Khan was overwhelmed with grief, for he greatly loved his son, and it was long before he could muster sufficient resolution to surrender him. It was with greater difficulty

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that he could overcome the almost frenzied opposition of the boy's mother. When Hussein Kuli was placed on his horse, ready to leave the castle, she dragged him off again, and, clinging to him, refused to let him go. He was at last taken by force from her by the attendants. When she found that her efforts to retain him were of no avail, she consented to his departure on condition that I accompanied him to Shuster and watched over his safety, as she believed that my presence would prevent the Matamet from treating the boy with cruelty. I consented to do so to satisfy her, but with little hope of being able to protect him, should there be any intention on the part of the Matamet to commit so gross an outrage as to injure the innocent child who had been placed in his hands.

When at length we rode through the castle gate, Mehemet Taki Khan, unable to control his feelings, seated himself in the porch, sobbing like a woman, and beating his naked breast. Hussein Kuli's mother, with the other ladies of the enderun and their attendants, followed us on foot, wailing and crying aloud. When we reached the low hills which separate the plain of Tul from that of Baghi-Malek, and the castle was about to disappear from view, they stopped, and cutting off their long tresses trampled them in the dust—the way in which the Bakhtiyari women are accustomed to show grief and despair. Then, after Khatun-jan had again kissed her son, they slowly returned with her, still weeping, to Kala Tul.

Hussein Kuli, although much moved at parting with his father and mother, and by the heartrending scenes which he had witnessed, showed no signs of fear. He was mounted on Mehemet Taki Khan's favourite mare Julfa, an Arab of the purest breed. He rode the beautiful and spirited creature with the most perfect confidence and grace. His dress was that of a Bakhtiyari chief. Over a long 'jubba,' or robe of flowered silk, the lower part of which was inserted into a pair of ample cloth trousers, he wore a close-fitting felt coat. From under a felt skull-cap fell his luxuriant locks. Round his waist was buckled the leathern belt, or 'kesh-kemer,' from which hung the powder-

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flask and various things required for loading and cleaning his gun, and in it were thrust a long pistol and a jewel-handled dagger. His silver-mounted sword was passed through his saddle-girths on one side, and on the other an inlaid iron mace. Across his saddle-bow he carried a gun of small size and of Khorassan damascene work, which his father had had expressly made for him. With his bright, intelligent, and handsome countenance, he was one of the most beautiful boys I ever saw, and the very picture of a young warrior. His cousin, Au Assad, Ali Naghi Khan's son, was about six years older. He was more plainly dressed and unarmed, and suspended round his neck was a copy of the Koran, for notwithstanding his youth he had the reputation of being a mulla deeply versed in the holy volume. His father and mother brought him to me and placed him under my protection. We were accompanied by a small body of horsemen, under the command of a brave and trusted retainer of the chief, named Au Isfendiar.

We stopped for the night at the tents of Shefi'a Khan, where we found the women bewailing with piteous lamentations the treacherous seizure of their chief, whom they believed already doomed to the most cruel tortures and to death. The men of the tribe, hearing that Mehemet Taki Khan's son had arrived, gathered round us in the evening, cursing the Matamet and all Persians, and vowing that none of the race who fell into their hands should escape alive. Their looks and gestures seemed to show that they would be as good as their word. We met with no adventures on our road, and reached Shuster on the fifth day, early in the afternoon.

Au Isfendiar and his companions, fearing to put themselves into the Matamet's power, remained at Boleïti, a village near Shuster, on the Ab Gargar, an ancient canal derived from the Karun. I crossed the bridge leading into the town with the two boys and their 'lala' or tutor. The Matamet was living in the castle, an ancient and much-ruined stronghold built upon a rock overhanging the river. He received us at once. He could not conceal the smile of satisfaction and triumph which passed over his bloated

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and repulsive features when the children stood before him. I saw at once that he had no intention of keeping the oath he had taken, to renounce the expedition against Mehemet Taki Khan, now that he had secured his son as a hostage. He was seated on a carpet spread on a terrace overlooking the Karun, which wound beneath. In a small plain on the opposite side of the river were the tents of his troops. Horsemen belonging to the tribes of Jaffer Kuli Khan and Ali Riza Khan, two Bakhtiyari chiefs at enmity with Mehemet Taki Khan, were engaged in mimic fight, pursuing each other and discharging their guns and pistols. He addressed Hussein Kuli sternly in his thin, shrill voice. 'Why,' he asked, 'have you not brought your father with you? Is he not coming to Shuster to see me?' 'No,' replied the boy, with an undaunted air, his hand resting on his gun. 'What if I were to send those soldiers' (pointing to the horsemen careering in the plain beneath) 'to fetch him?' rejoined the Matamet. 'Let them go to Kala Tul,' answered Hussein Kuli, grasping his dagger. 'They will all come back naked, like this,' putting his forefinger into his mouth and then withdrawing it and holding it up, a significant gesture employed by the Bakhtiyari to denote that they have stripped a man to his skin.

The Matamet could not help laughing and admiring the boy's courage and calm intrepidity. But, addressing him in a menacing tone, 'Has not your father,' he asked, 'got much gold?' 'I know nothing of such things, as I am a child,' was the answer. 'You know, however, the place where he conceals it,' said the eunuch, 'and if you do not tell me where it is willingly, I shall have to make you,' giving the boy to understand that he would be subjected to the bastinado or some other torture. Nothing daunted, 'It is not likely,' he replied, 'that my father should have shown me the spot where he hides his money. If I knew I should not tell you, and if I were compelled to do so he would not let you have it.'

The Matamet, finding that he could get nothing out of the brave boy by threats, ordered a Shusteri chief, one Au Mohammed Zamaun, to keep him and his cousin in close

confinement with their 'lala.' I was as astonished at the courage and extraordinary self-possession of Hussein Kuli, as I was disgusted with the brutality and treachery of the Matamet. Even some of the Persian officers who had witnessed the scene I have described, accustomed as they were to the eunuch's perfidy, showed their pity for its innocent victims. They followed the children when they were led out of his presence and covered them with kisses.

After exchanging a few words with the Matamet I retired, resolved to return at once to Kala Tul to inform Mehemet Taki Khan of what had taken place. Without acquainting any one with my intention, fearing lest it might become known and that I might be stopped, I hurried out of the town and putting my horse to a brisk pace made the best of my way across the plain, without following the beaten track, in the direction of the mountains. Although the country was now in a very disturbed state, and bands of marauders were plundering travellers and caravans, I was not molested. The Bakhtiyari at whose tents I stopped at night expressed the greatest indignation when they learnt the manner in which the son of their chief had been treated, but were enthusiastic in their admiration of the courage and daring of the boy, making me describe over and over again the scene between him and the Matamet. One old lady threw her arms round my neck, exclaiming, 'No true Bakhtiyari ever died in his bed. Hussein Kuli will not bring shame upon his tribe.'

When I reached the castle and informed Mehemet Taki Khan of what had occurred, he no longer doubted that the Matamet had all along intended to deceive him, and was determined to get him into his hands, to depose him from his chieftainship, and to send him a prisoner to Tehran. Resistance was now too late, and he bitterly repented that he had listened to the advice of his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, and had not either prevented the Persian troops from entering the mountains or attacked them when entangled in the narrow defiles and difficult passes where they would have been in his power. He was very proud, however, of the behaviour of his son, who, he declared, was worthy of his race.

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Khatun-jan Khanum made up her mind that her boy was for ever lost to her, and broke out into touching lamentations, reproving her husband for having trusted a cruel and treacherous eunuch—a 'Kafir' who held no oath sacred, and did not even respect the innocence of childhood. It was impossible to console her.

My anticipations were well founded. The very day on which the Matamet had the hostages in his power he commenced preparations to leave Shuster at the head of his troops, to march against the Bakhtiyari chief. At the same time he sent Mohammed Hussein Khan, one of the Bakhtiyari chiefs whom he had also treacherously seized, to inform Mehemet Taki Khan that, unless he surrendered, the two boys would be put to death.

The force under the command of the Matamet had now been increased by two regiments of 'serbâz' and some artillery which he had received from the northern districts of Luristan, and by a large number of horsemen and matchlock men who had been furnished to him by Mehemet Taki Khan's enemies and rivals, and by the chief of the Faili—a Lur tribe inhabiting the mountains to the north of the Bakhtiyari country—and by some Arab sheikhs within the government of Shuster. In the meanwhile several of the tribes had been detached by bribes and intrigues from Mehemet Taki Khan, whilst others, fearing to be attacked by the Persians, were unwilling to send their armed men, who were required for the defence of their families, to his assistance. He was consequently no longer in a position to offer an effective resistance. Still hoping that by temporising and negotiating he might avoid war, he sent his brother, Au Kerim, to Shuster to offer fresh terms to the Matamet, proposing to follow him in a few days with such a force as he could collect for his protection against a surprise. I accompanied Au Kerim. The country between Kala Tul and Shuster had been almost deserted by its inhabitants, and we were obliged to take precautions—concealing ourselves during the greater part of the day, travelling by night, and keeping away from beaten tracks—to avoid being discovered.

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## CHAPTER XI

*Mehemet Taki Khan leaves the mountains—Plan to carry off Hussein Kuli—Leave Shuster—The naphtha springs—Join some dervishes—Return to Shuster—Description of the town—Descend the Karun—Robbed of my money—Leave Ahwaz for Fellahiyah—Alarm and flight of the Arabs—Construct a raft—Float into the musif of the Cha'b sheikh—Sheikh Thamer—Arrival of Mirza Koma.*

MEHEMET TAKI KHAN, who had been induced to leave Kala Tul on the promise that if he would enter into personal communication with the Matamet war might still be avoided, moved with his followers into the plain about nine miles to the east of Shuster. But before entering the town, or approaching nearer to it, he required some sufficient guarantee for his safety in the event of his being sent to Tehran to make submission to the Shah, and that he should not be treated as a prisoner, but should be allowed to return to his mountains.

The Matamet, however, refused to give a pledge which would satisfy the Bakhtiyari chief. Ali Naghi Khan then advised that his brother should occupy the 'diz,' or hill fort, of Mungasht, which the Bakhtiyari deem impregnable, or should betake himself to the Tangi-Chevel, a mountain stronghold which, it was believed, could be successfully defended by a small body of men against any number of troops that the Matamet could bring against it. But Mehemet Taki Khan, still wishing to spare his tribes a war in which their crops then ripening would be destroyed and their country devastated, whatever might be its issue, decided upon taking refuge with the Cha'b Arabs, whose sheikh was in alliance with him, and who were in the habit

of encamping within his territories. He believed that in the marshes in which they dwelt, near the Shat-el-Arab, he would be safe from pursuit. Hearing that he had failed to come to an understanding with the Matamet, and was returning towards Kala Tul, I determined to join him.

Before leaving Shuster I had agreed with some Bakhtiyari, who were there, to make an attempt to rescue Hussein Kuli and to take him back to his father. There would have been no great difficulty in doing so, and all our arrangements were completed, when, at the last moment, the boy's 'lala,' who was in the plot, fearing either for his own safety or for that of his charge, refused to let him leave the house. The child was to have been disguised as a girl, and to have been taken out of the city with the help of one of the servants of Au Mohammed Zamaun, in whose custody he had been placed by the Matamet.

There were several Bakhtiyari horsemen in Shuster who had accompanied Au Kerim, and who, like myself, were anxious to rejoin the chief. It was arranged that they should leave the city early one morning, one by one, so as to pass through the gates without attracting the attention of the guards, and meet at a small village not far distant, belonging to Mehemet Taki Khan. This plan was carried out successfully, and when we had assembled we took the road to Kala Tul. We had not proceeded far when we perceived that we were being followed by a party of horsemen. As they were gaining upon us we put our horses to a gallop, and striking into the hills managed to evade our pursuers by hiding ourselves in a ravine.

We reached about midday some naphtha, or bitumen, springs, where there was a small building serving, in peaceful times, for the guards placed over them by Mehemet Taki Khan, to whom they belonged.[1] In consequence of the disturbed state of the country, this spot, which was well concealed in the hills, was frequently made a place of meeting for parties out on forays. My horse, which had been ill-fed and was very weak, could proceed no further. I

[1] I believe that these springs produced the 'mumia,' a sort of mineral pitch highly prized by the Persians for the healing qualities ascribed to it.

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could not detain my companions, who unwillingly left me, as they could not remain without running great risk of being discovered. I resolved to rest my horse for a few hours and then to endeavour to find the tents of Lufti Aga, a Gunduzlu chief, who was encamped on the Ab Gargar. Fortunately no one came near the place during the day, and I was not disturbed. When I left the springs, soon after sunset, my horse, although it had fed voraciously upon the grass which grew in abundance near the springs, was still too weak for me to remount, and I had to lead it by the halter. I knew the direction of the track, but my progress was very slow, as I was obliged to use great caution and watchfulness, there being much danger of my falling into the hands of robbers. It was nearly midnight when the bark of dogs and the light of fires in the distance showed me that I must be near an encampment. It proved to be the one of which I was in search, and Lufti Aga, whom I disturbed in his sleep, received me with his wonted hospitality.

I had hoped that a good feed of barley and some hours' rest would have enabled my horse to proceed on the following morning, and as three Arab horsemen were going to Ram Hormuz, I left the encampment with them. We had ridden a few miles when my horse fell and could carry me no farther. I returned on foot, leading it, to the tents.

By the help of Lufti Aga, I managed to exchange my wearied horse, with the addition of three tomans, for a strong mare. The Aga having found a man to accompany me on foot to Ram Hormuz, I made a fresh start in the evening, my host urging me to travel by night to avoid the Lur and Arab marauders, who were scouring the country. My guide was as much in dread of lions as of robbers. In the grey of the morning we perceived in the distance a number of men coming towards us. My companion immediately took to his heels and made for the hills, where he could conceal himself. I thought that it would be useless for me to attempt to follow him on horseback over the steep and stony ground. As I must have been already seen, and could scarcely hope to escape if pursued, it appeared to me that my most prudent course was to make the best of

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matters, and to continue on my road without showing any hesitation.

As I approached the party I perceived that it consisted of some fifteen men on foot. As I was well armed and on horseback, I had no reason to fear a meeting. I, therefore, rode up to them, and found that they were dervishes who had been living on the charity of Mehemet Taki Khan, and had been wandering among the tribes. The country being now deserted and in a very unsafe state on account of the departure of the Bakhtiyari chief from Kala Tul, they were going to Shuster. With them was one Mohammed Reshid Khan, a ghulâm, who had been sent by the Matamet with letters to Mirza Koma. He and his servant had been robbed of their arms and horses and stripped of their clothes on the plain of Ram Hormuz. They were walking in their shirts and drawers, overcome with fatigue and in great distress.

I learnt from the dervishes that Mehemet Taki Khan had not returned to Kala Tul, but had passed through Ram Hormuz on his way, they thought, to Fellahiyah, the residence of Sheikh Thamer, the chief of the Cha'b Arabs. The country, they assured me, was overrun with Arab horsemen, who had already plundered most of the villages, and through whom it would be impossible for me to make my way in safety.

As I had no longer any object in continuing my journey to Kala Tul—Mehemet Taki Khan being neither there nor in the neighbourhood—I determined to join the dervishes and to return with them to Shuster. They were a picturesque and motley crew. One or two were what the Persians call 'luti,' young men with well-dyed curls, long garments, and conical cloth caps embroidered in many colours—debauched and dissolute fellows, who, under the guise of poverty and affecting abstinence and piety, were given to every manner of vice. Others were half-naked savages, with long hair hanging down their backs, and with the skins of gazelles on their shoulders—barefooted, dirty, and covered with vermin. They carried heavy iron maces, and seemed more disposed to exact than to ask for charity. As they went

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along they shouted, 'Yah Allah! yah Mohammed! yah Ali!' One of the party was a hideous negro, with enormous projecting lips and of most ferocious mien. He wore nothing but a lion's skin, and carried a huge hatchet in his hand. They all had, slung from their shoulders, the carved cocoanut-shell which is indispensable to the dervish, and serves for carrying food and for drinking purposes. Round their necks they wore charms and amulets, with beads and coloured strings and tassels.

I joined this strange and forbidding company. They were going to a deserted castle called Darabeed, in which they intended to conceal themselves during the day, as they feared to meet one of the 'chapous,' or plundering parties. The ghulâm, who had been walking all night with bare feet, having been robbed of his shoes and stockings, was so footsore that he could scarcely crawl along. He seemed to suffer so much pain that I gave him my horse to ride whilst I walked. We soon reached the ruined castle. The dervishes had a little bread and a few onions, which they invited the ghulâm and myself to share with them, and, the konar or jujub trees being in fruit, we managed to make a sufficient meal. We then laid down to sleep, my horse having first been picketed in the luxuriant grass which had sprung up in the courtyard of the building.

We continued our journey in the evening to the naphtha springs, and took possession of the deserted guard-house. We had no food but the stale bread and onions and the konar fruit.

The following day I again lent my horse to Mohammed Reshid Khan, and went on foot with the dervishes. Notwithstanding their misfortunes and fatigues, my companions were a merry set. The 'luti' danced and sang to the accompaniment of a noise made by snapping the forefingers of both hands together. The others related legends of Hazret Ali and the Imaums, and recounted their adventures. They showed no desire to avoid my society, although as a Christian I was unclean to them, but were ready to eat with me, declaring that they were 'sufis,' or freethinkers, and that men of all creeds were brothers. Most Persian

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dervishes, although they have great pretensions to sanctity, by which they impose upon the people, high and low, are without any religion. They are, however, credited with working miracles, and with being able to give efficacious charms. They are consequently always welcome in house or tent. There is invariably a woman who wants a child, or a girl a husband, or an old man a philter, or a youth protection from wounds by sword or gun, or a whole family with sore eyes—they all come to the dervish, who is ready to prescribe a charm as a remedy for every ill, or to give an amulet which is warranted to preserve the wearer against every accident. In return he receives from the poor food and entertainment, and from the wealthy presents in money as well as in kind. Although these dervishes are rank impostors, and generally arrant scoundrels, they maintain their influence over the ignorant and superstitious Persians of all classes, who greatly fear, and do not dare to offend, them. Consequently no one ventures to refuse them admission into their houses, and even into the enderun, or women's apartments. Sometimes they will demand a specific sum of money from a rich man, and if he refuses to pay it will establish themselves in the gateway or porch of his dwelling, or outside close to it, and, enclosing a small plot of ground, sow wheat or plant flowers, and remain until what they ask for is paid to them, howling hideously night and day, calling upon Mohammed, Ali, and the Imaums, or blowing with a buffalo's horn so as to disturb the whole neighbourhood. The owner and inmates of the house are helpless. They do not dare to remove by force the holy man. If they attempted to do so they would excite a commotion which might lead to fatal consequences amongst a fanatical population who look upon the dervishes as under the particular protection and inspiration of Ali. They are consequently under the necessity of satisfying their unwelcome guest or of submitting to the nuisance as long as he chooses to remain—which is sometimes for many months—watching his growing corn, tending his flowers, blowing his horn, heaping imprecations upon the head of the owner of the house, and prophesying every manner of disease and

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calamity for him, his wives, and his children. It is the fear that these prophecies may be fulfilled that generally leads his victim to submit to the extortion practised upon him.

Before nightfall we came upon some families of the Gunduzlu tribe who were moving into the hills. They gave us such food as they possessed; but they were unable to afford us shelter, as they had not yet pitched their tents, and we were obliged to sleep under the sky. As it rained heavily during the night, we were soon drenched to the skin. The next day we reached Shuster, and I parted from my dervish companions. Although they were a reckless and debauched set, they treated me with kindness, shared the little food they had with me, and entertained me by their proceedings. I learnt something from them of dervish life, and consequently of Eastern manners and habits little known to Europeans. When they reached the town the company broke up and they separated—some of the party quartering themselves, unbidden, in the manner I have described, on the wealthier inhabitants; others going to the caravanserais, or wandering about the bazars, trusting to charity for their living. I went to the house of one Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, whom I had met at Kala Tul, and who was much esteemed by Mehemet Taki Khan. This excellent man, who received me with the most generous hospitality, proved subsequently a very true and useful friend to me.

Shuster was at one time a prosperous and wealthy city, as is proved by the many well-built houses which it contains, for the most part, however, deserted and falling to ruins. The plague, the cholera, and bad government had reduced it to a very poverty-stricken and desolate state. The plague alone, which had desolated the province of Khuzistan in 1831 and 1832, had, it was said, carried off nearly 20,000 of its inhabitants.

Situated on two navigable streams—the main body of the river Karun and the Ab-Gargar, an ancient canal which receives a large part of its waters—and at the foot of the mountains over which passes the highway to Isfahan and to the centre of Persia, the city is admirably fitted for the development of an important commerce.

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The houses are mostly built of stone, and some are very spacious and handsome, and have been richly decorated after the Persian fashion. They are provided with extensive 'serd-âbs,'[2] or underground apartments, known in Khuzistan as 'shâdrewan,' which are excavated to a considerable depth in the rock, and are ventilated and kept cool by lofty air-chimneys. In these cellars the Shusteris pass the day during the summer months, when the great heat renders the rooms almost uninhabitable.

The climate of Shuster is considered very healthy, and the water the best in Persia. But the heat in summer is very great, proving not unfrequently fatal to those who are exposed to it.

The inhabitants of the city and neighbourhood are mostly of Arab descent, and speak the Arabic language, as well as the Lur dialect of the Persian. Their costume, too, is more that of the town Arab than of the Persian.

Whilst the Bakhtiyari and other Lur tribes were committing depredations in the country outside Shuster, the Matamet's soldiers were plundering the bazars and robbing the inhabitants within. I had the misfortune to lose my horse, which was stolen the day after my return to the town. I was unable to recover it, and had not money to purchase another. I could not, therefore, carry out my intention of resuming my search after Mehemet Taki Khan. As it was reported that the Bakhtiyari chief had succeeded in reaching the territory of the Cha'b Arabs, I resolved to find my way to Fellahiyah, the residence of their principal sheikh, on the river Jerrahi, which I had crossed near its source on my way to Behbahan. But I could not do so alone and on foot. Whilst in doubt as to the course I should pursue, I learnt that a boat was about to leave Shuster for Ahwaz, an Arab settlement on the Karun, between forty and fifty miles below the town. I determined to take a passage in it, trusting to chance to find some means of reaching Fellahiyah from that place.

The boat, which was an undecked one, was moored near the village of Husseinabad, about five miles below

[2] Literally, 'cold water.'

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Shuster. It belonged to an Arab of Ahwaz, and was chiefly used for carrying firewood for sale, and was small and dirty. There were already several persons on board, and I had some difficulty in finding sufficient space to spread my carpet. My fellow-passengers were two Bakhtiyari, one or two Persians, and some dervishes, amongst whom I recognised some of my late travelling-companions. They were all on the pilgrimage to Kerbela, intending to float down the Karun to its junction with the Shat-el-Arab, and to make their way thence through Basra to the holy city.

We began our voyage at sunset, and continued it through the night. I had secured a place in the fore part of the vessel, which was raised above that occupied by the other passengers. I had provided myself with a piece of lead attached to a string for sounding as we went along, which I could do in the darkness without being observed, as I desired to ascertain whether the river was fit for navigation. We reached the Arab village of Weis in the middle of the day and remained there for some hours, resuming our voyage in the evening. During the night a high wind interfered with our progress, and we stopped for the greater part of next day whilst the crew cut wood, which was found in abundance on the right bank of the river, and loaded the vessel with it, to the great inconvenience of the passengers.

We again floated down the stream, passing encampments of the Arab tribe of Anafeja, under one Sheikh Zendi, whose tent was pitched on the river bank, and two small 'kúts,' or earth-built forts, constructed by him for the purpose of exacting blackmail from boats and rafts. We reached Ahwaz before daylight.

On landing I tendered to the 'nâ-khudâ,' or captain, the customary fare, which amounted to a few pence. It was indignantly rejected. As I was a Feringhi and an Englishman—supposed to be a person of boundless wealth—I was expected to pay at least as much as if I had hired the whole boat for myself. I refused to give more than my fellow-passengers. Having been treated exactly like them, I was determined to pay like them.

The dispute with the 'nâ-khudâ' and his crew led to

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high words. Their friends, who had come to the bank to receive them on their arrival, joined in it. At one time affairs became so serious that I was compelled to raise my gun in self-defence, as they menaced me with their swords and the heavy wooden clubs which Arabs are in the habit of carrying. Fortunately, before it became necessary for me to do more than threaten to shoot the first man who attempted to lay hands upon me, a friendly seyyid, whom I had known at Shuster, appeared upon the scene. He placed himself between me and my assailants, and restored peace. Through his intervention the money I had originally tendered was accepted by the 'nâ-khudâ,' who, however, retained my saddle, which he refused to give up.

As I knew no one at Ahwaz, a small Arab town, or rather village, of mud hovels and reed-built huts, I accompanied my fellow-passengers to the 'musif'[3] of the owner of the boat, who was a man of some importance in the place. When the time came for settling their accounts with him for their passage, the pilgrims to Kerbela declared that they were absolutely without money, as they had expected that, engaged as they were in performing the sacred duty imposed upon all 'Shi'as' of a pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Ali and the Imaums Hussein and Hassan, they could rely upon the charity and hospitality of good Musulmans during their journey. The owner of the boat did not view matters in the same light, but insisted upon the full payment of their fares.

Finding that they could not influence him by appeals to him as a true believer and by calling upon Hazret Ali, they sought to soften his heart by breaking out into lamentations and weeping aloud in chorus; but with no better result. This was probably not the first time that the crafty Arab had to deal with 'Kerbelayis.'[4] He thought that by remaining firm, and threatening to confiscate the little property they had with them, he would end by obtaining his due.

[3] The 'musif' is the part of a house or tent reserved for guests by all Arabs, except the very poorest.

[4] Pilgrims to Kerbela are, as I have already mentioned, so called in Persia.

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However, they continued to sob aloud in the most heartrending manner, until one of the party, apparently touched by their well-simulated grief, offered to pay not only their fares to Ahwaz, but to bear the expenses of their journey as far as Basra, whence they could make their way on foot to the holy cities, depending on the hospitality of the Arabs they would meet on their way. This instance of generosity on the part of a Persian caused me some surprise, and led me to suspect that there must be something out of the common which had led to it. I bethought me of my own resources. Hitherto I had concealed the few gold pieces that I possessed in a wash-leather belt which I wore next my skin. As this belt had produced an irritation which inconvenienced me, I had taken it off before leaving Shuster, thinking that I had nothing more to fear from robbers, and had put it into my pocket. I now found that I had been robbed of it, and had absolutely nothing left except five 'kirâns,' about five shillings.

I had no doubt whatever but that the generous Persian was the thief, and that he had picked my pocket while I was asleep in the boat. I accused him of the theft, which, of course, he indignantly denied. There was nobody to whom I could appeal for justice. The sheikh in whose 'musif' we were lodged, and who, with a strange inconsistency not uncommon in the Arab character, had fed us sumptuously with pillaus and a sheep boiled whole, whilst he was wrangling with us for a few pence, had seized my saddle. He was one of the principal men in the place, and I could not expect to obtain redress from him, nor from the head of the tribe to which the town belonged, who was evidently in league with him.

There was nothing to be done but to hire a mule and a guide to Fellahiyah, where I hoped to meet Mehemet Taki Khan. But there was only one mule to be found, and for its hire I was asked an exorbitant price, which I was not able, had I been willing, to pay. As I was meditating in the evening over my somewhat forlorn position, and revolving in my mind how I could best extricate myself from it, I learnt that a Persian officer had arrived, and was in the

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'musif' of the principal sheikh. I went to him at once. I found that he was one of the Matamet's principal ghulâms, who was returning from a mission upon which he had been sent to Sheikh Thamer, of the Cha'b Arabs. He had seen me in the Persian camp, and consequently knew that I had been treated with civility and attention by his master. He was surprised to find me there alone and in trouble. To allay any suspicions he might entertain as to my object in seeking to join Mehemet Taki Khan, who had now been proclaimed to be in open rebellion to the Shah, I explained to him that I had left some of my effects with the Bakhtiyari chief, which I desired to recover. I had heard, I said, that he was at Fellahiyah, and I was on my way thither to him. The ghulâm at first protested that Mehemet Taki Khan had not taken refuge with the Cha'b sheikh, but had gone to the mountains with a large following of horsemen. Finding that I was bent upon continuing my journey, he declared that it would be impossible for me to pass through the country between Ahwaz and Fellahiyah, as the Arabs had fled from it in consequence of the rumoured advance of the Matamet's army.

Finding, however, that he could not turn me from my purpose, he undertook to obtain a mule to take me to Fellahiyah, and to compel the owner of the boat to give up my saddle and my carpet, which he had also seized. He accordingly sent for the sheikh of the town, and succeeded in doing both; but the sum asked for the hire of the mule, although not so exorbitant as that at first demanded, was still more than I was able to pay. Commiserating me in my difficulties, he professed himself ready to buy my saddle, and generously proposed to give me about one-fourth of its value. I could not bargain with so great a man, and, as I had no other course open to me, I was under the necessity of accepting his offer. He paid me ten kirâns for my saddle, and the owner of the mule agreed, for that sum, half of which he was no doubt forced to pay to the ghulâm, to be ready at daybreak on the following morning.

At one time Ahwaz was a city of much importance—the capital of the province of Khuzistan and the winter residence

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of the Arsacid kings. It was celebrated for its sugar plantations, and carried on a large trade with India. All traces of its ancient prosperity had disappeared, and it had become a mere collection of Arab huts.

As the ghulâm had informed me, the country between Ahwaz and Fellahiyah had been abandoned by its usual Arab population, and during my long ride I did not see a single human being. It was fortunate that such was the case, as the only persons we were likely to meet were robbers and Arab horsemen taking advantage of the general disorder to plunder anybody they might fall in with. As both my guide and myself carried fire-arms, I had no fear of single robbers, or of a small party of Arabs armed only with spears. The heat was intense, and we only found brackish water to allay our thirst once during the day.

The plains between the rivers Karun and Jerrahi were now a parched and dreary waste with occasional remains of ancient cultivation, and of former habitations, marked by low mounds strewed with bricks and potsherds. The heat was intense and I had to ride about thirty miles, the owner of the mule walking by my side. It was evening before we found ourselves at Kareiba, a large village of huts built of reeds and mats, on the banks of the Jerrahi. I dismounted at the 'musif' of the sheikh, who was a seyyid.

Before daybreak on the following morning a messenger arrived from Thamer, the chief of the Cha'b upon whose territories I had now entered, with orders for the sheikh to abandon the village at once, and to move with its inhabitants and their property to the neighbourhood of Fellahiyah. Similar orders were sent to the Arab settlements higher up on the river. It was reported that Mehemet Taki Khan had crossed the Jerrahi on the previous night, about three miles above Kareiba, and that the Matamet had already left Shuster with a large force in his pursuit. But my host, the seyyid, pretended to be entirely ignorant on the subject, and maintained that not only had the Bakhtiyari chief not entered the Cha'b country, but that he had turned back to the mountains.

The village now became a scene of great confusion and

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excitement. The men and women began to pull down the huts, and to bind together the reeds of which they were constructed in order to make rafts on which to float down with their families and their property to Fellahiyah. Domestic utensils, such as caldrons, cooking-pots, and iron plates for baking bread, with quilts, carpets, sacks of corn and rice, and the poultry, which had been in the meanwhile captured by the naked children, were piled upon them. The herdsmen were collecting their cattle and their flocks. All were screaming at the top of their voices, and sometimes the men, ceasing from their work, and joining hands, would dance in a circle, shouting their war-song.

Already rafts similarly loaded began to float past the village, the orders of the Cha'b sheikh having been promptly obeyed by the Arabs on the upper part of the river. The inhabitants of Kareiba showed great activity in making their preparations, and early in the afternoon they had for the most part already departed on their rafts, and the village was nearly deserted. Those that remained were in great alarm, expecting every moment that the Matamet's irregular cavalry would sweep down upon them.

The country between Kareiba and Fellahiyah had been placed under water by destroying the dykes and embankments of the river and of the canals, so that it was impassable by horsemen, and I could go no farther. Every one was too much occupied with his own affairs to attend to a guest and a stranger. The 'musif' had been pulled down, and the owner could with difficulty prevail upon his women to prepare for me a mess of boiled millet and sour curds, which was barely sufficient to satisfy my hunger after a long fast.

Rafts, with their loads of men, women, and children, and their miscellaneous cargoes of domestic furniture, provisions, and poultry, were leaving one by one. My guide informed me that, although he had engaged to accompany me to Fellahiyah, he could not, as the waters were out, reach that place. As he could not remain in the deserted village, he declared that he must make his way back at

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once with his mule to Ahwaz, and, mounting the beast, started off at a brisk trot across the plain.

At sunset the sheikh was ready to leave, his wives, children, and property having been already placed in a large flat-bottomed wicker-boat, coated with bitumen—the only one belonging to the village. As there was plenty of room in it, I expected that he would allow me to accompany him; but when I asked him for a passage he curtly refused to permit an infidel Christian to be with his women and to pollute his vessel. Then, turning sulkily away, he got into it himself and pushed it into the middle of the stream. He was the last to leave the village, which was now completely abandoned by its inhabitants, and I was left standing alone on the river-bank.

The only course left to me was to follow the example of the Arabs, and to make a raft for myself. As the moon would not rise for some time, I spread my carpet on some reeds and mats which I had collected together, hoping to get a little sleep, as I was much fatigued. But I was soon surrounded by hungry dogs which had been left behind and were howling piteously. It was with difficulty that I could keep them off with a long stick. The discordant cries of hundreds of jackals, seeking for offal amongst the remains of the huts, added to the frightful chorus. It was not impossible that lions, which are found in the jungle and brushwood on the banks of the rivers in this part of Khuzistan, and other beasts of prey, might be attracted to the spot. But what I had more reason to fear than the dogs and wild animals were the bands of horsemen, and especially the Bowi Arabs, who were scouring the plain in all directions in search of plunder. Had I been discovered by them, I should at least have been stripped to the skin and left to my fate, if nothing worse had befallen me.

My position was by no means a pleasant one. I sat for some time in the darkness, keeping off the dogs and waiting for the moon. When she rose I gathered together all the canes and reeds that I could find. There was no want of them, and I had soon collected a sufficient number to make, with one or two tent-poles which had been left behind, a

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raft sufficiently large to bear me. I had no difficulty in binding them together with withes and twisted straw taken from the roofs of the huts, as I had seen the Arabs do.

At length my raft was ready. I placed myself upon it, with a tent-pole to guide it, and pushing it from the bank trusted myself to the sluggish stream. The dogs followed me, barking and howling, until a deep watercourse stopped them. I floated along gently, keeping as well as I could in the centre of the river.

The river-banks presented a scene of extraordinary bustle and excitement. They were thickly inhabited, and there seemed to be an endless succession of reed huts upon them. These their owners were now busy in destroying for the purpose of making rafts. The whole population was engaged in this occupation and in driving herds of buffaloes and camels and flocks of sheep through the mud and water, and swimming them across the stream and the numerous canals for irrigation which were derived from it on both sides. Some were floating across the river on inflated sheepskins, carrying their children on their shoulders and bundles on their heads. Even the women and girls, divesting themselves of their long blue shirts—their only garment—were helping to convey their goods and chattels to the opposite side of the river, which was considered safer from the hostile incursions of marauding horsemen than the western bank. There was a general flight. Everywhere men sent by the Cha'b chief were breaking down the dams in order to flood the country. The crops which were ripe had been set on fire, and on all sides clouds of smoke rose into the clear sky. A thickly peopled and highly cultivated region was thus utterly devastated in a few hours.

I passed almost unobserved among the numberless rafts, and unnoticed by the Arabs on the banks. At length I came to an extensive grove of palm-trees, where the river appeared to divide itself into two principal branches. I asked some men who, like myself, were descending the stream which of the two I should follow to reach Fellahiyah. They pointed to the one to the right. The other,

which they called the Jungeri, would take me, they said, to the sea. Both were equally crowded with rafts, and their banks with Arabs preparing for flight.

The date grove through which I was floating extended for about two miles. The river then divided itself into three channels, the entrances to which were almost blocked up with rafts. I succeeded with some difficulty in forcing my way into the centre one, which being the broadest appeared to be the one most likely to lead to Fellahiyah. Its banks were thickly peopled, but the inhabitants of the reed huts seemed to consider themselves secure from attack, as they were not, like those on the upper part of the river, removing their property. They were surrounded by a deep marsh, through which an enemy could not pass. Early in the afternoon I found myself suddenly in the midst of a spacious enclosure formed by screens of reeds and matting. It was partly protected from the sun by mats raised upon poles. The stream, which had been much reduced in size by the numerous watercourses for irrigation derived from it, passed through the centre of this court. I perceived on both sides rows of Arabs seated on carpets. Attendants were hurrying about with 'finjans,' or little coffee-cups, and with 'narghils,' or water-pipes, formed of the shell of the cocoa-nut, such as are usually smoked by the Arabs.[5]

Pushing my raft to the bank, I landed, and was informed that I was in the 'musif' of Sheikh Thamer, the chief of the great Arab tribe of Cha'b. The sheikh himself was seated, with some of his guests, at the upper end of the enclosure. When I presented myself to him, he invited me to be seated, making room for me by his side. In answer to his question whence I came and where I was going, I explained to him that I was an English traveller coming from Shuster on account of the disturbed state of the country. I deemed it prudent not to inform him before strangers of the object of my visit to Fellahiyah. He had known several officers in the navy of the East India Company, belonging to vessels of war which had been at Muhammera, and he was in correspondence with the Company's political agent at Basra,

[5] The Persian 'kaleôn.'

from whom he had received kindness and assistance on various occasions when in trouble. He was consequently disposed to be very civil to an Englishman, and he welcomed me cordially to his 'musif.' I related to him my adventures since leaving Shuster, which appeared to afford him much amusement; but he heartily cursed the Persian who had robbed me, and 'the dog, the son of a dog,' of a ghulâm, who had cheated me. Learning that I had eaten nothing during thirty-six hours except my light repast of millet and curds on the previous day, he ordered one of his attendants to fetch some food for me from the harem, and I was speedily served with some mutton boiled to shreds and with bread soaked in sour milk after the Arab fashion.

The countenance of Sheikh Thamer was not prepossessing. He was tall and had a somewhat commanding appearance, but his features were coarse and vulgar—unlike those of the generality of high-bred Bedouins. His forehead was almost as prominent as that of a negro, and he probably had black blood in his veins, like the descendants of many Arabs who had renounced their nomad lives, and had married slaves. He wore an 'abba,' or cloak, richly embroidered with gold, over a gown of figured muslin. In a girdle round his waist he carried a long gold-mounted pistol, and the sheath of his sword was ornamented with the same precious metal. His head-dress consisted of a 'tarbush,' or red cap, round which was twisted a 'lung,' or long shawl, of Indian manufacture, one end of which was allowed to fall far down his back. This head-dress, which according to tradition was that of the Prophet, is generally worn by the Arabs of Khuzistan, as well as by the Bakhtiyari. The sheikh's hands and feet were dyed almost black with henna. Like a true Arab, he wore no drawers nor trousers, and went bare-footed.[6] He maintained more state and ceremony than are usual among Arab chiefs. A space was set apart for him with large bolsters on a fine carpet, on which he sat alone, the crowd of petty sheikhs and armed retainers

[6] The Turks were in the habit of denouncing the Arabs as 'Kafirs' (infidels), 'without religion, without drawers, and without saddles'—the words rhyming in a jingling way.

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keeping at a respectful distance—some standing, others squatting on the 'nemuds,' or felt rugs, spread along the sides of the 'musif.'

Sheikh Thamer was undoubtedly, for an Arab, a remarkable man. The country over which he ruled owed much of the prosperity which it then enjoyed to the encouragement which he gave to agriculture and commerce, and to the protection which he afforded to strangers and merchants in his territories. Canals and watercourses for irrigation, upon which the fertility of the soil mainly depended, were kept in good repair, and new works of the kind were frequently undertaken. He had also declared Muhammera a free port, and it had become an important depot for merchandise, not only for the supply of the province of Khuzistan, but of the adjoining Turkish territories. It had consequently greatly interfered with the trade of Basra, and the revenues derived by the Turkish Government from that port had seriously diminished. On this account the Porte had sent an expedition against it, and had bombarded it—a proceeding which threatened to lead to a war between Turkey and Persia, the latter claiming the island formed by the Karun, the Hafar, and the Shat-el-Arab, on which the town stands, as Persian territory.

The sheikh was known to be untrustworthy and treacherous, and to have upon his head the blood of more than one relation, whom he had murdered in order to attain the chieftainship. But he was very generous to seyyids and mullas, who, in consequence, flocked to Fellahiyah and condoned his evil deeds.

After we had talked for some time about the events which had occurred in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, and I had answered many questions that he put to me concerning the movements and forces of the Matamet, he rose to depart. I followed him as he was leaving the 'musif,' and asked him to see me in private. He led me to the women's apartments, a spacious hut constructed of the finest matting and canes, and divided into several compartments by screens made of reeds bound together by twisted worsted of different colours worked into patterns. Jars for cooling water, of

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partly baked porous clay and of elegant shape, stood on stands and were suspended to the poles which supported the covering of the hut. On the ground were spread handsome carpets.

When we were seated I informed the sheikh that the object of my coming to Fellahiyah was to see Mehemet Taki Khan, who, I had reason to know, had taken refuge in his territories. I asked him, therefore, to furnish me with a guide to conduct me to the Bakhtiyari chief. He called Allah to witness that Mehemet Taki Khan was not in the Cha'b country, and that he did not know where the chief was to be found. It was true, he said, that Mehemet Taki Khan had thought of taking refuge with him, but he had turned back towards the mountains, and had probably reached a place of safety in them.

I was convinced that Sheikh Thamer was not telling me the truth ; but, finding that it was useless to press him further, I returned to the 'musif,' determined to remain there until I could discover where Mehemet Taki Khan was concealed.

I spread my carpet in that part of it which was reserved for visitors of distinction. In the evening I was not a little surprised to see my old friend Mirza Koma, the governor of Behbahan, enter the 'musif,' accompanied by one Muhammed Ali Khan, the chief of the Noui tribe, whom I also knew. They had arrived in Fellahiyah accompanied by about fifty horsemen. The whole party, covered with mud and showing evident signs of having suffered great privations, had a wretched and forlorn appearance. Their horses, too, seemed to be nearly starved and could scarcely walk. The Mirza was glad to see me, and after supper related to me what had occurred since we parted at Behbahan, how he had been betrayed, like Mehemet Taki Khan, by the Persians, his son made prisoner, and his town taken and sacked, and how he had escaped with a few followers to Fellahiyah.

On my condoling with him upon his misfortunes, he replied with his usual good-humour, 'God is great! This is the fifth time that I have been driven from Behbahan, a fugitive, without wife or family, and naked. When those dogs of

Persians have stripped the flesh off the bone they will leave it to me to gnaw.'

It was late before the inmates of the 'musif' could compose themselves to sleep, for Arabs never tire of chattering. I had not slept the previous night, and the events of the day had added not a little to my fatigue. I was not sorry when I could stretch myself upon my carpet, to take the rest of which I was so greatly in need. I sank at once into a profound sleep.

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## CHAPTER XII

*Discover a Bakhtiyari—Join Mehemet Taki Khan—His flight from Kala Tul—The Bakhtiyari encampment—Fellahiyah fortified—The sheikh's artillery—Mir Mohanna—Arrival of Arab warriors—Attempts to obtain surrender of Mehemet Taki Khan—He leaves for the Matamet's camp—Is betrayed and thrown into chains—Negotiations with Sheikh Thamer—Night attack upon the Persian camp—Release of Au Kerim—The Matamet withdraws—Sufferings of Mehemet Taki Khan's family—Muhammera—The Bakhtiyari fugitives depart—Attacked by Arabs—Mission of Au Kerim to the Il-Khani—The Bahmehi chief—Au Kerim and the author made prisoners—Our escape—Au Kerim captured—A grateful seyyid—Reach Shuster—Murder of Au Kerim.*

I SLEPT until I was awoke at daybreak by my fellow-inmates of the 'musif,' who had risen to say their morning prayers. After I had partaken of coffee, which, as is customary, was handed round to the guests, I went for a stroll through the bazar—a long lane formed by open booths of reeds and matting, in which were displayed, for sale, the produce of the country, such as fruits of various kinds, dates, rice and corn, with bread newly baked, and hot 'kebâbs,' and a fair supply of English cotton prints, cutlery and hardware. It was crowded with Arabs, who were wrangling over their morning purchases, and with women who had brought from a distance butter, sour curds, and clotted cream made from buffalo's milk.

As I was wandering about, watching the busy scene, I was accosted in the Bakhtiyari dialect by a man wearing an Arab dress. Notwithstanding his disguise, I recognised at once Mehemet Taki Khan's relation, Au Azeez. I asked him where I could find the chief. He appeared unwilling to say anything on the subject, but proposed that we should

leave the crowd for some retired spot where he could speak with me without being overheard or watched. I followed him into one of the palm-groves outside Fellahiyah. When he saw that we were alone, he told me that Mehemet Taki Khan had sent him to the bazar to make some purchases, and that the chief and his family were not far distant, but that the place where he was concealed was difficult to reach, as it was in the middle of a marsh—the country having been flooded by the destruction of the dams and dykes. It was some time before he consented to show me the way to it. He first declared that the water was everywhere so deep that I could not wade through it, and when I insisted that where he had passed I could pass also, he said that the strictest orders had been given that no one was to be told of Mehemet Taki Khan's hiding-place, or to be allowed to go there, and that he had been made to disguise himself as an Arab before visiting Fellahiyah so that it might not be known or suspected that there were any Bakhtiyari in the neighbourhood. At length, seeing that I was determined to find out the chief myself if he would not take me to him, he promised that, after having finished his business in the bazar, he would return to me and show me the way.

I waited for him for some time, scarcely expecting that he would return ; but he was as good as his word. He came back as he had promised, and we set off together. After passing through the palm-groves which surround Fellahiyah we came out upon the open country, and soon found ourselves on the edge of a marsh. We had to wade through it for a considerable distance—constantly sinking deep into the mud, and having frequently to swim over watercourses, or to cross them with the water reaching to our armpits. Weak from fever, I was almost exhausted by the exertions I had to make under a burning sun, when I perceived a white tent in the distance. It was that of Mehemet Taki Khan. It had been pitched upon some dry ground on the bank of a small canal, and was only accessible through the marshes surrounding it.

I was wet through and covered with mud when I reached the encampment, which consisted of a number of black

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Arab tents and of huts of mats and reeds. I was at once recognised by some Bakhtiyari friends, who cried out, 'Sahab ovaid!'[1]—(the Sahib has come!)—and men and women ran out to meet me. I found Mehemet Taki Khan living, in consequence of the heat, in one of the booths built of matting and a kind of dry grass, over which water was constantly thrown to cool the air within. He was dyeing his hair and beard, which were plastered with henna. My unexpected appearance gave him and his wife Khatun-jan unfeigned delight. They overwhelmed me with questions about little Hussein Kuli, their son, whom I had left at Shuster in confinement with his cousin, and about Au Kerim, the chief's brother, who, although he had gone on a mission of peace, relying upon a safe-conduct from the Matamet, had been thrown into prison. I was made to relate all my adventures since we parted, and they both declared that, notwithstanding the reliance which they placed upon my friendship, they had been convinced that they were never to see me more, as they could not believe that I would go through so many hardships for their sakes.

Mehemet Taki Khan then informed me of what had passed with respect to himself. Although unwilling, he said, to bring war upon his country, which of late years, under his rule, had attained to some prosperity, and to appear in open rebellion against the Shah, he could not trust himself in the hands of the Matamet without a valid guarantee that he should not be sent in chains to Tehran, and there deprived of his life, or of what was even worse, his sight. Such had been the fate of every one who had confided in the word of the eunuch and his like. He denounced the Persian court and the Persian authorities in general as a perjured and infamous race, who were bringing Persia to ruin, and who were jealous and suspicious of every one who, like himself, endeavoured to govern justly. They feared his influence and authority over the tribes, and had determined to destroy him. He deeply regretted that he had yielded to his

[1] 'Ovaid' is a Bakhtiyari corruption of 'omad' (is come). I was called by Mehemet Taki Khan and the mountaineers 'Sahab,' a corruption of Sahib—sir or master—and by my Persian friends 'Sahib Khan Bakhtiyari.'

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brother's counsels, and had not opposed, when he could have done so with certainty of success, the passage by the Persian army over the mountains. When once the Matamet had descended into the plains and had reached Shuster, it was too late to have recourse to arms, for the cunning eunuch had succeeded in detaching from their allegiance to him some of his most powerful adherents, and in sowing dissensions amongst the tribes, which would no longer unite with him in fighting the common enemy.

Such being the case, he had determined upon taking the only course left to him—that of seeking refuge with his friend and ally, Sheikh Thamer. But he wished those who had remained faithful to him to withdraw to the stronghold of Munghast, where the Persians were not likely to follow them. They had insisted, however, upon remaining with him, and between four and five thousand families, with their flocks and herds, had abandoned their tents and were prepared to emigrate to the Cha'b country. The season was unusually late, and there had been much rain, so that the rivers and torrents were almost impassable. Some of his followers had crossed the river Kurdistan, when, in consequence of a storm, it rose suddenly, and the rest were unable to join their companions. Mehemet Taki Khan and his family were among them. The Matamet and his troops were already in pursuit of the fugitives, and his irregular horse, which attacked them, were with difficulty held in check until the waters had subsided. They had scarcely crossed the river when it rose again and cut off their pursuers. They had, however, been compelled to abandon many of their horses and mules, and much of the property which they had carried with them in their flight. As, at the same time, they had lost the greater part of their provisions, Mehemet Taki Khan at last succeeded in persuading his followers to leave him and to make their way back to the mountains.

His wives and family, and those of his brothers, and his immediate attendants and retainers, with three of the principal chiefs and some horsemen, had remained with him. On their way to Fellahiyah they had been attacked by the

Sherifaut Arabs, who had succeeded in plundering them of the greater part of the little property that remained to them.

Mehemet Taki Khan, like a good Musulman, was resigned to his fate; but he could not reconcile himself to the heat and monotony of the plains, and sighed for his mountains. 'We shall, Inshallah!' he said, pointing to the snowy peaks of Munghast just visible on the horizon, 'drink snow up there together before the summer is over.' He was, however, unable to restrain his indignation and anger when he spoke of the treacherous treatment of Au Kerim.

Ali Naghi Khan was not so calm under his misfortunes as his brother. He cursed the Matamet and his own folly for having allowed himself to be duped by the crafty and unscrupulous eunuch. Speaking of his son he exclaimed, 'I sacrificed my only child for him'—pointing to Mehemet Taki Khan—'and had I a thousand sons they should all be his now. That boy was his soul! Ah, Sahab! those were right who said at Mal-Emir that we were being betrayed by that "gourum-ság" of a Persian, and that we ought to fall upon him and his "ser-bâz." It was my fault that he was spared; but the time for my revenge may come yet!'

Khatun-jan Khanum called me to her tent and gave me a few things which I had left at Kala Tul and which, even in her flight, she had carefully kept for me. She wept bitterly as she related all the sufferings that she and her children had undergone since I had seen her. She was inconsolable for the loss of her son. 'Ah, Sahab!' she said, 'the Khan now repents him that he did not take my advice and refuse to give up Hussein Kuli, for he loved that boy better than his life, and he will never be happy again now that he has lost him.'

I passed the greater part of the night in visiting my friends, and hearing from them over and over again the story of the hardships and dangers to which they had been exposed in their retreat. The wives of the chiefs and the younger women, who had been brought up with as much luxury as could be found in an Iliyat tent, had suffered most from hunger and the privations they had undergone. They were all plunged in grief, as there was scarcely one

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among them who had not lost some one dear to her. Sitting together in groups on the bare ground, they rarely ceased from that melancholy wail of 'Wai, wai!' which the Bakhtiyari women are accustomed to make when some great calamity has befallen them.

On the following morning I returned, wading as before through the marsh, to Fellahiyah with a letter from Mehemet Taki Khan to Sheikh Thamer, asking him to treat me with confidence and to communicate to me the state of affairs. The sheikh was somewhat ashamed of himself for having called Allah to witness that he told the truth when he denied that the Bakhtiyari chief had taken refuge in the Cha'b country. He excused himself by saying that, in order to save his country from a disastrous invasion by the Persians, he had endeavoured to conceal even from his own people that Mehemet Taki Khan had sought his protection and was actually in the neighbourhood of Fellahiyah. If the Persians, he added, should attempt to enter his territory with the object of seizing Mehemet Taki Khan, or thinking to compel him to surrender his guest, he would defend himself to the last, counting upon the fidelity and devotion of his tribe. To render Fellahiyah inaccessible to the Persian troops and artillery he had flooded the whole of the surrounding plain.

I was constantly passing to and fro between Sheikh Thamer's 'musif' and Mehemet Taki Khan's encampment, but I spent my time principally in the latter. I had thus occasion to see much of Mehemet Taki Khan, and to appreciate still more than I had even previously done his noble character and fine qualities. Had he been encouraged and supported by a wise and far-seeing Government, he would have done much towards civilising the wild tribes that he had brought under his sway, putting a stop to their lawless and predatory habits, and introducing commerce and agriculture amongst them. But by attempting such things he had only incurred the suspicion and disfavour of the Persian Government, which had determined to destroy him.

The day after my first visit to Mehemet Taki Khan, a

Cha'b sheikh, named Mir Mohanna, whom I had known at Kala Tul, where, in consequence of some tribal dispute he had taken refuge, arrived at Fellahiyah. He invited me to reside in his 'musif.' As that of Sheikh Thamer was always crowded with guests, who were constantly arriving by night as well as by day, and I could get little rest in it, I gladly accepted his invitation.

Mir Mohanna was the most renowned warrior of the Cha'b tribe, and his exploits were the constant theme of the Arabs of Khuzistan. He maintained his reputation by going out daily with a body of horsemen and engaging in skirmishes with hostile tribes and with the Persian cavalry, generally bringing back horses and mares and other booty.

Arabs from the neighbouring tribes came in large numbers to Fellahiyah, accompanied by the wild music of drums and oboes, displaying their flags and singing their war-songs. When they reached the town they danced in a circle round their sheikhs and standard-bearer, yelling their war-cries, and chanting, in chorus, some impromptu verses in defiance of the enemy, or in praise of Sheikh Thamer—such as 'Let no one give his daughter to the Bowi' (an Arab tribe hostile to the Cha'b), 'Thamer is a burning fire,' 'Thamer is the lion of war'—accompanying the words with fierce gestures, brandishing their swords and spears, and discharging their matchlocks. This dancing, and yelling, and firing, never ceased night or day. The faces and limbs of these Arabs were almost black from constant exposure to the sun. They were nearly naked, and their hair was plaited in long tresses shining with grease.

Jaffer Ali Khan, a Persian nobleman in the confidence of the Matamet, and a swaggering fellow, was sent to attempt to intimidate Sheikh Thamer. I was in the 'mejlis'[2] when he addressed the assembled Arabs. He upbraided the sheikh for having denied that he had protected Mehemet Taki Khan. Who, then, he asked, had enabled the Bakhtiyari chief to take refuge in the Cha'b territories? He threatened the tribe with the vengeance of the Matamet, who would utterly exterminate it if it did not at once submit

[2] An assembly for the discussion of affairs.

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to his authority, and deliver up a rebellious subject of the Shah.

Mir Mohanna replied in an eloquent and spirited speech to the vain-glorious Persian, refusing to surrender the Bakhtiyari chief. He was greatly applauded by the assembly and by the crowd of armed men who had gathered round the 'musif.' They shouted and brandished their swords, and hurled defiance against the Persians. Jaffer Ali Khan, who was as cowardly as he was boastful—like most Persians—intimidated by the menacing language of the Arabs, made a hasty retreat, and returned to the Matamet's camp.

The Matamet having thus failed in his attempts to induce Sheikh Thamer to deliver up Mehemet Taki Khan, advanced with his troops to about twelve miles from Fellahiyah. He had been joined by the Wali of Hawizah with a considerable body of horsemen, and by the sheikh of the Bowi, a large Arab tribe inhabiting the banks of the Shat-el-Arab, to both of whom he had promised the chieftainship of the Cha'b should Sheikh Thamer fall into his hands. Notwithstanding this assistance he was unable to make any progress, as, the embankments and dykes having been destroyed, the country was under water.

The Matamet, finding that he could not advance further, and that his troops were suffering severely from illness caused by the malaria of the marshes, and increased by the great heat which had now set in, resumed negotiations, and sought to obtain by fraud what he could not effect by force. He sent Shefi'a Khan to Fellahiyah with a letter for Mehemet Taki Khan. At first Sheik Thamer refused to allow Shefi'a Khan to see the Bakhtiyari chief, but at last consented, in the hope that the further invasion of his country might be prevented. The Matamet in his letter reminded Mehemet Taki Khan that three of his family—his son, his brother, and his nephew—were still held as hostages, and threatened that in the event of his persisting in not obeying the commands of the Shah and in not presenting himself in the Persian camp, they would be put to death. If, however, he would submit, all would be

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forgotten and forgiven ; he would be taken into the royal favour again and be confirmed in the chieftainship of the Bakhtiyari tribes, and be named, in addition, governor of the whole province of Khuzistan. If he would go to Tehran, ample security being given for his safety, he would be well received and be invested with a 'khilát,' or robe of honour, by the Shah himself, Ali Naghi Khan, his brother, being appointed to act for him during his absence. The Matamet ended his letter by saying that as he had been a convert from the Christian faith, and some might consequently doubt whether he was sufficiently impressed with the sanctity of a Musulman oath, he was prepared to send to Fellahiyah his nephew, Suleiman Khan, an Armenian and the general of his army, together with a 'mujtehed,' or high priest of Islam, who would each take an oath, according to the forms of their respective creeds, that if Mehemet Taki Khan would surrender he would receive the treatment promised to him.

Shefi'a Khan was satisfied that in this instance the Matamet was sincere, and he succeeded in persuading Mehemet Taki Khan to receive Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed,' and to trust to oaths which had so often been broken. The two accordingly arrived next day. Sheikh Thamer made great preparations to receive them. His Arab horsemen and matchlock-men were drawn up in long lines, and his rusty guns placed at the entrance to the town. He hoped that this warlike display would have its due effect upon the Persian general. The 'mujtehed' arrived first, Suleiman Khan being unwilling to venture into the sheikh's power until he had received a proper safe-conduct, which was given to him through the 'mujtehed,' who from his sacred character did not require one. Two days were spent in negotiations. The General was plausible and conciliating, and pleased the sheikh by praising his preparations for defence and exaggerating his importance. At length Mehemet Taki Khan, who had come to Fellahiyah, was persuaded to yield, and consented to accompany Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed' to the Persian camp, on their taking the proffered oaths, and a further engagement that

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in three days the Matamet would leave the territories of the Cha'b sheikh.

When the negotiations had been thus concluded Mehemet Taki Khan returned to his encampment, which had been brought nearer to the town in consequence of the approach of the Persian troops. I accompanied him and his brothers to bathe in a neighbouring canal. We had left the water and had seated ourselves in a palm grove when we perceived a number of Bakhtiyari men and women coming towards us, headed by Khatun-jan Khanum, closely veiled. They surrounded us, and, with tears, besought the chief not to leave Fellahiyah to place himself in the hands of the Matamet. His brothers joined in their entreaties, and declared that they would prevent him from doing so. Shefi'a Khan, who was the orator on all such occasions, pointed out to them the certain advantage of the step that Mehemet Taki Khan was about to take and the favourable disposition of the Matamet towards him. Of this he was himself, at the time, firmly persuaded.

The women then turned upon him, accusing him of having been the principal cause of their misfortunes. The men, too, charged him with having prevailed upon Mehemet Taki Khan to desert them.

'You have taken my son from me,' exclaimed Khatun-jan, addressing her husband, 'and now you would leave me and your other children without protection. Look at these families; they would not desert you in the hour of danger, and will you now desert them? How can you trust to one who has already over and over again forsworn himself? Remain here and fight like a brave man, and wallah! wallah! there is not a woman here who will not be by your side.'

The chief was much affected, and, undecided as to the course he should pursue, mounted his horse and returned to Fellahiyah. Sheikh Thamer was unwilling that Mehemet Taki Khan should trust himself in the hands of the Matamet. The Bakhtiyari chief, on the other hand, was reluctant to involve his host in a war, and believed that the Matamet was in this instance to be trusted. The repre-

sentations of Shefi'a Khan, Suleiman Khan, and the 'mujtehed' in the end prevailed, and Mehemet Taki Khan consented to accompany them on the following morning to the Persian camp.

Next day Suleiman Khan breakfasted in the Bakhtiyari encampment, and boats were prepared to take him and the chief to the Matamet's tents. After breakfast Khatunjan Khanun, with the ladies and women veiled, came to him and besought him to respect the salt that he had eaten.[3] He endeavoured to comfort them, and made fresh protestations of the sincerity of the Matamet. At length Mehemet Taki Khan embarked in a boat which was in readiness for him. I accompanied him. His wife and her women followed us along the banks, sobbing loudly. They continued to do so for some time, and would not listen to the earnest entreaties of Mehemet Taki Khan to return to their tents. At length they were persuaded to leave the chief, foreboding the unhappy fate that awaited him.

Some of his faithful followers who could not be induced to quit him followed us to the Persian camp, which was on the right bank of a broad and deep canal. In the midst of the tents was the splendid pavilion of the Matamet, with its gilded ornaments glittering in the sun. We landed and entered it, accompanied by Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed.' No sooner were we in the eunuch's presence than, addressing Mehemet Taki Khan in a loud and imperious tone, he accused him of being a rebel to the Shah, and ordered him to be put into chains. He was then dragged away by the 'farrashes,' without being allowed to speak, and taken to a tent near the park of artillery, where his brother, Au Kerim, was already confined as a prisoner.

Convinced as I had been that the Bakhtiyari chief had been decoyed into the hands of the Matamet, who would not respect his oath any more than he had done on other occasions, I was astounded at this shameful and audacious violation of it. Not having apparently been observed by him, I left the tent and followed Suleiman Khan, who had invited me to be his guest. He was downcast and seemed

[3] *I.e.* Not to betray one whose guest he had been.

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thoroughly ashamed of the ignoble part that he had been made to play in this scandalous affair. He was a Georgian Christian and nearly related to the Matamet. He had lived at Tehran, where he had become acquainted with Englishmen in the Persian service. He had risen, in the army disciplined by Major Hart and other British officers, to the rank of 'ser-tip,' or general. He could not, therefore, but be aware of the disgust and indignation that I must naturally feel at the infamous breach of faith committed by the Matamet. He endeavoured to persuade me that he had himself been deceived and was an innocent victim in the matter.

I had no wish to remain in the Persian camp, and resolved to return at once to Fellahiyah. Without communicating my intention to any one, I left Suleiman Khan's tent at nightfall, and crossed the canal on a small raft belonging to an Arab, without being interfered with. I then took the direction of Fellahiyah. I did not reach Sheikh Thamer's 'musif' until late in the morning, as I was unable, not knowing my way, to make much progress through the marshes during the night, and had to stop for some hours on the first dry spot that I could find. The news that Mehemet Taki Khan had been betrayed and thrown into chains had already reached the sheikh, and I found him seated in council with a number of Arab chiefs and the elders of his tribe, who were discussing, with much excitement, the conduct of the Matamet in violating his oath, and cursing him loudly as a 'Kâfir,' a dog, and a Persian. They were deliberating as to the course to be pursued in consequence of this outrage upon them and their religion when a messenger arrived from the Matamet with a letter demanding the immediate payment of 12,000 tomans (about 6,000*l.*), as the condition for the withdrawal of his army, which had been considerably reinforced by the arrival of three more regiments of regular troops, with guns, and a large body of irregular Lur and Arab horsemen.

Sheikh Thamer and the 'mejlis' decided upon refusing to pay the money, and upon continuing, with energy, their preparations for defence. The Matamet, well aware of the

difficulty of invading the sheikh's territories, owing to the nature of the country, considered it best to negotiate, and knowing that Thamer was a devout Musulman, sent a seyyid, who enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity among the Arabs, to treat with him. This holy personage succeeded in persuading the sheikh that if he would at once pay 5,000 tomans, the Matamet would withdraw on the following day, and would formally instal Ali Naghi Khan as governor of the Bakhtiyari country.

Although Sheikh Thamer and his councillors were of opinion that Fellahiyah, owing to its strong position, could be successfully defended against any attempt on the part of the Persians to possess themselves of it, they considered that it would be more prudent and of more advantage to the Cha'b, who were already suffering grievously from the destruction of their crops and palm groves and the desertion of their villages, to avoid a continuation of hostilities. They therefore accepted the terms of the Matamet, and handed over the money to the seyyid.

The Matamet had no sooner secured it than he refused to retire until every member of Mehemet Taki Khan's family, and all his followers who had taken refuge with Sheikh Thamer, were delivered up to him. The Cha'b would not consent to violate the first of religious duties by giving up a guest. Even the poorest Arab tribes have been known to resist, at every cost, an attempt to compel them to surrender those who had placed themselves under their protection and eaten their bread. The sheikh having indignantly refused to comply with this demand, the Persian camp was moved nearer to Fellahiyah, to the side of a large canal called the Ummu-Sucker.

A council was held by the Cha'b elders, at which the Bakhtiyari chiefs who were still left at Fellahiyah, including Mehemet Taki Khan's brothers, Ali Naghi, Kelb Ali, and Khan Baba, were present, to discuss the measures to be taken under the circumstances. It was unanimously decided to make a night attack upon the Persian camp, with a view to rescuing Mehemet Taki Khan and his brother Au Kerim. This resolution was no sooner taken than prepara-

tions were made to put it into execution. A spy was sent to ascertain the position of the tents in which the two chiefs were confined. Ali Naghi Khan took the chief command. Sheikh Thamer was to remain at Fellahiyah, being unwilling to compromise himself too deeply with the Matamet, and to appear in open rebellion to the Persian Government. The horsemen and matchlock-men were ordered to advance as far as they could without attracting the attention of the enemy. I accompanied Au Khan Baba to a ruined Imaum-Zadeh built a little above the level of the marsh. Au Kelb Ali was too ill to take any part in the expedition. His malady had made terrible progress under the privations he had suffered, and he was near his end.

Everything being in readiness for the attack, orders were given that upon a preconcerted signal the horsemen and matchlock-men should move forward so as to reach the Persian camp about an hour after midnight. We all advanced as it had been arranged, and, crossing the Ummu-Sucker canal without having been observed, awaited the moment to attack.

The camp of an Eastern army has rarely any proper outposts, and we were almost in the midst of the Persian tents before our approach was perceived. A scene of indescribable tumult and confusion ensued. The matchlock-men kept up a continuous but random fire in the dark. The Arabs who were not armed with guns were cutting down with their swords indiscriminately all whom they met. Bakhtiyari and Arab horsemen dashed into the encampment yelling their war-cries. The horses of the Persians, alarmed by the firing and the shouts, broke from their tethers and galloped wildly about, adding to the general disorder. I kept close to Au Khan Baba, who made his way to the park of artillery, near which, he had learnt, were the tents in which his brothers were confined. I was so near the guns that I could see and hear Suleiman Khan giving his orders, and was almost in front of them when the gunners were commanded to fire grape into a seething crowd which appeared to be advancing on the Matamet's pavilion. It consisted mainly of a Persian regiment, which, having failed to form,

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was falling back in disorder. It was afterwards found to have lost a number of men from this volley.

Before the Bakhtiyari and the Arabs could reach Mehemet Taki Khan, he had been taken from the tent in which he had been confined. The Persians, suspecting that the main object of the attack upon their camp was the release of the Bakhtiyari chief, had removed him as soon as the first alarm was given. I learnt afterwards that he had been led into the presence of the Matamet, who threatened to put him to death if the attempt to rescue him was likely to succeed. He was still heavily chained. The Matamet was surrounded by his 'ferrashes' and other attendants, several of whom fell by his side.

As the first onslaught had not proved successful, and the troops were now under arms and had formed under the command of their officers, it was evident that it was useless to continue the attack. The Cha'b had already lost a good many men, and amongst them one of their principal sheikhs. They began to waver and to retire. The firing gradually slackened and ere long ceased. The Bakhtiyari under Ali Naghi Khan remained to the last. Fortunately, the darkness allowed them to withdraw with little loss. I made my way back to the ford by which we had crossed the canal, and which was already crowded by the retreating Arabs. The Lur and other horsemen serving with the Persians had not pursued us, and we were allowed to pass over unmolested. The disorder and confusion were so great that, had we been followed and attacked, few could have escaped.

I was still with Au Khan Baba. We had scarcely reached the edge of the marsh when we saw a group of Arab matchlock-men, who, instead of retiring rapidly like the rest, had halted. Riding up to them to inquire the reason, we found that they had with them Au Kerim. The Arabs had succeeded in penetrating to the tent in which he was kept before his guards had been able to remove him. As he was chained by the wrists and ankles, they had dragged him out of the camp, and had succeeded in getting him as far as the marsh; but he could go no further, as it was necessary to wade for a considerable distance in deep

water. His liberators were endeavouring to free him from his fetters, but had failed to do so. As we could afford them no help, not having any means of removing the iron rivets, and there being no time to lose, we placed him on a horse belonging to one of Au Khan Baba's followers, and after arranging his heavy chains so as to spare him as much pain and inconvenience as possible, we resumed our retreat.

We crossed the extensive marsh and the flooded country without accident, and reached Fellahiyah early in the morning. A blacksmith was immediately sent for, and Au Kerim's chains removed.

Although the attack upon the Persian camp had not the result hoped for, as Mehemet Taki Khan still remained a prisoner in the Matamet's hands, his brother, one of the bravest and most popular of the Bakhtiyari chiefs, had been released, Shefi'a Khan had effected his escape, a brother of Ali Riza Khan, whom the Matamet had recently appointed governor of the Bakhtiyari tribes, had been slain, and the Persians, having lost a large number of men, were greatly discouraged. The Matamet endeavoured to throw a bridge over one of the canals which separated his army from Fellahiyah, but he met with so vigorous a resistance from the Arabs that he was forced to abandon the attempt. Finding, after three days, that his troops were too much disheartened, even could he succeed in bridging the canal, to fight their way through the marshes and flooded country between them and the capital of the Cha'b Arabs, he raised his camp and returned to Shuster.

During the events which I have described Mehemet Taki Khan's unfortunate family, and those of his brothers and of such of his followers as had accompanied him in his retreat from the mountains, had remained near Fellahiyah. Khatun-jan Khanum was overwhelmed with despair at the fate which had befallen her husband—a fate which she had predicted for him when, trusting to the solemn promises and oaths of the Matamet, he consented to place himself in the eunuch's power. I was constantly in the Bakhtiyari encampment, and could not but be deeply moved by the grief and sufferings of its unhappy inmates. They had been

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reduced from a position of comfort and comparative wealth to absolute want, and were dependent for their daily food upon the hospitality of the Cha'b sheikh, under whose protection they were living. The wives and relatives of those who had been made prisoners by the Persians passed the days in lamentations. They could not doubt that the fate of the captives, if not death, would be one worse than death—the most excruciating tortures, deprivation of sight, and perpetual imprisonment. They well knew the cruel and vindictive character of the Matamet, and his ingenuity and delight in inventing new and exquisite sufferings for those who fell into his hands and were accused of rebellion against his authority.

Others who had lost their husbands or their sons through the dissensions and conflicts which the Matamet's intrigues and treachery had brought about among the tribes, were loud and fervent in the curses which they invoked upon him and their enemies. The widow of a chief described to me how her only son had taken refuge in a tower from Jaffer Kuli Khan, his rival, and after defending himself until further resistance was hopeless, had blown it up and had perished with his followers. 'May Allah grant,' she exclaimed, lifting up her skinny hands to heaven, 'that Jaffer Kuli Khan may one day be my prisoner! I will cut open his body, tear out his heart, make kibâbs of it, and eat them!' And she would, I doubt not, have been as good as her word. I shall never forget her gesture and the expression of her face in the moonlight as she looked upwards and uttered this horrible threat in the most solemn tones, in which the despair of the mother and the vengeance of the savage were mingled.

The malarious exhalations of the marsh in which the refugees were encamped, and the summer heat, which in the Cha'b country is very hurtful even to the native population, had caused much sickness among the Bakhtiyari. There was scarcely one of them who was not suffering more or less severely from fever. The children, moreover, were afflicted with ophthalmia. My stock of quinine and other medicines was nearly exhausted. I had myself been exposed to

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constant attacks of ague, and the heat had become almost unbearable to me—the thermometer sometimes registering during the day about 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and above 100 at night in the black Arab tents, although open on all sides to catch the air. To have remained much longer in this stifling and unwholesome atmosphere would have been certain death to many of the fugitives.

As the Matamet had now retired, and it was believed that the road to the mountains was open, or, at least, that so strong a party of armed and desperate men as we could muster could succeed in making their way to them, Khatunjan determined to leave the Cha'b territory, and to seek refuge with her children in the summer pastures of a friendly chief and near relation, upon whose protection she thought she could depend. Preparations were therefore made for their departure as soon as the scouts, who had been sent out to examine the state of the country through which the fugitives would have to pass, had returned.

I had resolved to accompany them. Ali Naghi Khan had made the necessary preparations for the departure of the Bakhtiyari families for the mountains, and late one evening, after innumerable delays, we commenced our march. The women and children rode horses and mules, seated on piles of carpets, coverlets, and cooking utensils. The men were only partly mounted, many being without horses. Mehemet Taki Khan's three brothers and Shefi'a Khan, with the horsemen, were to guard the front and rear of the caravan and to send out scouts to warn it of the approach of an enemy or of a marauding party.

One Mir Mathkur was to accompany us until we reached the mountains. He was sent with us by Sheikh Thamer, as he was related to the chief of the Sherifaut, an Arab tribe of notoriously bad character, at whose tents we were to stop on our way, and would consequently, it was believed, be able to protect the fugitives during their passage through its territory.

The Sherifaut were encamped at a day's journey from Fellahiyah. We reached their nearest tents long after the sun was up, and after a very fatiguing journey through the

night—the women and children suffering greatly from thirst, as no drinking water had been found on our way. Such tents as we possessed were pitched, and the Arabs brought us bread and 'leben' (sour milk). Our reception appeared to be friendly, and we had no reason to apprehend that the sheikh of the tribe had any hostile intentions with regard to us. He himself was living at some distance, and Mir Mathkur rode off to see him.

He returned late in the afternoon. He was much dejected, and informed us that the sheikh had given orders that we were not to be allowed to proceed, and had sent to inform the Matamet that Mehemet Taki Khan's family were detained in his tents, and that he was ready to surrender them. Ali Naghi Khan and the other Bakhtiyari chiefs declared that rather than give themselves up they would cut their way through the Arabs or die in the attempt. He then ordered preparations to be made for our immediate departure. The women were placed with the utmost despatch on the baggage animals, and the men mounted their horses, the Arabs of the encampment in which we had sought rest not appearing disposed to interfere with us. Mir Mathkur, thinking that he might succeed in inducing the sheikh of the Sherifaut to abandon his intention of giving up Mehemet Taki Khan's family, returned to that chief's tent.

We were provided with bread for two or three days, the water-skins had been filled, and the women had been told to conceal their gold and silver ornaments about their persons. The tents and the greater part of the heavy baggage were to be abandoned, for we had to pass through hostile tribes, and should probably have to fight our way. We started shortly before sunset—the women and children in front, the horsemen in the rear in case the Arabs should attack us. We had not gone far when some of the women insisted upon returning to look for some jewellery which they had forgotten. This delayed us for some time. We had scarcely resumed our march when a large body of Arabs, on horseback and on foot, were seen coming towards us. It was evident that an attempt was to be made to stop us. Ali Naghi Khan, tearing open his dress and exposing his

breast, as is the custom of the Bakhtiyari when they wish to show that they are bent upon some desperate enterprise, cried out to his followers : 'They come to seize your wives and your children. They will be given over to the "ser-bâz" to be dishonoured. Let us be men ! Let us be men !'

The women were made to hurry on as fast as possible ; the horsemen and matchlock-men, who were about sixty in number, prepared to meet the enemy. Although some of our pursuers carried guns, they were for the most part only armed with the long Arab lance. They advanced towards us brandishing their swords, threatening us with their quivering spears, and shouting their war-cries. They were at once checked and driven back by a well-directed fire from the Bakhtiyari, which brought more than one of them to the ground. They then separated and began to career around us in Bedouin fashion, but fearing to approach, and only occasionally discharging a gun at us. They continued these manœuvres for some time, following us as we slowly advanced, the Bakhtiyari only returning their fire when they came too near to us. At length, finding that we were determined and able to resist the attempt to stop us, they slowly withdrew and left us. Au Azeez and another horseman, one of Ali Naghi Khan's wives, and two of the women had been slightly wounded. The Arabs had shown the want of courage and dash of which they are accused by the Bakhtiyari. Although they greatly exceeded us in numbers, they had but few firearms, and an Arab never likes to expose his mare to the chance of being killed or wounded by a musket-ball.

After some rest in a ravine, in which we concealed ourselves, we resumed our journey and reached in the night the Zeytun hills. The heat had been intense during the day, and the suffering from want of water very great. One of the women and two children had died on the way and were hastily buried.

The following day we passed through a country familiar to the Bakhtiyari, and we were consequently able to find water. By a forced march we reached an encampment near a small village called Kai Kaus. The tribe to which the

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tents belonged were the Taïbi, a branch of the Kuhghelu. Their chief was a young man of handsome appearance. He received us hospitably and supplied us with provisions, but he entreated us not to remain with him, as he feared that the Matamet might learn that he was harbouring the family and retainers of Mehemet Taki Khan, and he was not strong enough to protect them, however desirous he was of doing so. The Kuhghelu, he said, had declared for the Government, and would at once seize the fugitives and deliver them up. He advised us, therefore, to make the best of our way to the mountains, where in the 'yâylaks'[4] and fastnesses we would find a safe refuge from the Persian troops.

The object of Ali Naghi Khan and Khatun-jan Khanum in endeavouring to pass through the country of the Kuhghelu, instead of making at once for the Bakhtiyari Mountains, was to place themselves under the protection of Khalyl Khan, a chief of the Bahmehi, a branch of that tribe. But our host warned us that it would be impossible for us to reach the castle of Khalyl Khan, as the Kuhghelu were in arms, and that we should undoubtedly be attacked and made prisoners by them if we attempted to do so. They were not like Arabs, armed only with spears, and were brave and daring warriors.

The chiefs held a council, in which Khatun-jan Khanum took part. After much discussion it was decided that we should renounce the attempt to reach the Bakhtiyari 'yâylaks'; as the tribes were now in the greatest disorder, having been detached from their allegiance to Mehemet Taki Khan, and being at war with each other, it was believed that their mountains would not afford us a secure place of refuge. It was determined, therefore, to send a messenger to the Il-Khani, the chief of the Kashgoi, a powerful tribe of Turkish origin inhabiting the mountainous country near Shiraz, and consequently not within the jurisdiction of the Matamet, to ask his protection. If it were accorded, the fugitives could then proceed to his tents, or at any rate the ladies and the women could be sent to them. It was

[4] The 'yâylaks' are the summer pasture-grounds of the tribes in the highest parts of the mountains.

thought that the chief would not deny hospitality and protection to the family of the head of another great tribe who were in misfortune, especially as the Iliyats of the Kashgoi and Bakhtiyari tribes encamp near each other during the hot season in the summer pastures, and had always maintained friendly relations. He enjoyed, moreover, the reputation of being a brave and generous man. Au Kerim was chosen to proceed to the Il-Khani on this mission. I offered to accompany him.

Au Kerim, who was well acquainted with the country through which we had to pass, struck at once into the mountains in order to avoid the Kuhghelu and the Arabs who were out on plundering expeditions in the plains. We learnt from our host where we were most likely to find the tents of the Bahmehi, who, Au Kerim thought, from the family connection between the head of their tribe and himself, would be willing to give us a friendly reception. To avoid observation as much as possible, we determined to travel by night and to conceal ourselves during the day.

As the tribes had left the low country, and had driven their flocks and herds to the summer pastures, we kept in the mountains, following difficult and dangerous tracks. We passed many encampments of Iliyats, and were everywhere hospitably received. The Bahmehi, whom we had some cause to fear on account of their recent quarrel with Mehemet Taki Khan, showed us no hostility. We stopped at their tents, and they gave us such help as we required, furnishing us with guides through their rugged country, in many parts covered with forests.

On the third day we arrived in the evening at a small castle, standing on the spur of a mountain overlooking the plains between Behbahan and Shiraz. It belonged to Khalyl Khan, the brother of one of Mehemet Taki Khan's wives, and one of the principal chiefs of the Bahmehi tribe, whose protection it had been Khatun-jan Khanum's first intention to seek. Au Kerim had decided upon stopping there, as he believed that its owner, from his family connection with Mehemet Taki Khan, would help us by his influence to pass through the Mamesenni—a lawless tribe

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inhabiting the country which separated us from that occupied by the dependents of the Il-Khani.

The chief was from home, but was expected to return before nightfall. We seated ourselves in his 'lamerdoun,' or guest-room, and his wife sent us such refreshments as are usually placed before guests on their arrival—fruits, cheese, curds, and thin cakes of unleavened bread. She soon afterwards came herself to speak with Au Kerim about the object of his visit, and expressed much sympathy for her kinswoman Khatun-jan Khanum, being herself a Bakhtiyari.

Late in the evening the chief himself arrived—a tall and rather handsome man, but with a savage, sinister expression, armed to the teeth, and shabbily dressed in the Lur cap and outer coat of felt. He was followed by a few horsemen as ill-looking as himself. We had already eaten our supper when he entered the 'lamerdoun.' After exchanging salutes with us very coldly, he retired into the 'enderun.' Au Kerim argued ill from this reception, and warned me that we had little civility to expect from our host, who, he said, was a 'ghurum-sag' and a notorious robber.

Shortly afterwards Khalyl Khan reappeared at the door, and beckoned Au Kerim to follow him. They went out together, and I soon heard high words between them in an adjoining room. The discussion continued for some time, and ended in a violent quarrel, in which several persons joined. Then there appeared to be a struggle, and shortly afterwards Au Kerim was led back, held by two armed men, and followed by the chief himself. On arriving at the castle he had hung up his arms in the 'lamerdoun.' I had done the same, but had we retained them any attempt at resistance would have been useless. Caught as we were in a trap, and surrounded by Khalyl Khan's retainers, had we sought to defend ourselves, and blood had flowed, we should have been instantly cut to pieces. There was nothing, therefore, to be done but to submit.

Au Kerim continued to protest loudly and energetically against the treatment that he was receiving, and against this flagrant breach of hospitality. The Bahmehi chief was equally

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vehement in accusing his prisoner of various misdeeds in justification of his conduct. Au Kerim was led into an inner room between the 'lamerdoun' and the 'enderun.' Khalyl Khan then directed me, in a peremptory tone, to follow my companion. I did not consider it prudent either to make any remonstrance, or to declare my character of an Englishman. I was in the hands of lawless men, who would not have respected it, but who, on the contrary, would probably have considered it their duty to murder a European and an infidel, as they were as fanatical as they were ignorant. I thought it best, therefore, not to add to the irritation of our treacherous host by opposing him, and taking my saddle-bags, which contained a few things that were precious to me—my medicines, my compass, and my note-books—I followed Au Kerim. We were no sooner within the room than the door was closed upon us and bolted from the outside. A pan of grease, with a lighted cotton wick in it, stood in a recess in the wall. The only furniture was an old felt carpet, worn into rags, upon which we seated ourselves, looking at each other somewhat disconsolately.

Au Kerim then denounced Khalyl Khan in the strongest terms that his vocabulary could afford, but in a low voice lest he should be overheard, for there are some insults which, among the Lurs, can only be washed out with blood. He related to me that some years before there had been a blood-feud between his family and that of the Bahmehi chief, but that it had been compromised by the marriage of his sister with Mehemet Taki Khan. Consequently there was no longer 'blood between them,' and although our host was known to be capable of any villainy, it could scarcely be believed that he had any other intention than that of taking our horses and little property, and leaving us to shift for ourselves in his inhospitable mountains. He would not dare to do us any bodily harm, at the risk of bringing upon himself the vengeance of the Bakhtiyari tribes. Au Kerim thought, therefore, that by the morning, after he had got over the effects of the debauch in which he was in the habit of indulging, he

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would probably allow us to continue our way after having robbed us.

Knowing the bloodthirsty and savage character of the Bahmehi, I did not feel the same confidence as my companion as to our fate. I was labouring under too much anxiety, and overwhelmed by too many thoughts to be able to sleep. To be murdered in cold blood by a barbarian, far away from all help or sympathy, the place and cause of one's death to be probably for ever unknown, and the author of it to escape with impunity, was a fate which could not be contemplated with indifference.

We could hear the voices of the chief and his companions in the adjoining room, and the sounds of wild Lur music. They were evidently carousing. Khalyl Khan had the reputation of being given to arak and wine—a rare vice among the mountain tribes. At length all was quiet, and the carousers had apparently retired to rest.

It was some time after midnight when we were disturbed by the withdrawal of the bolt of the door. Au Kerim sprang to his feet, and I followed his example, not knowing who was about to enter and with what intent. The chief's wife, whom we had seen in the afternoon after our arrival, stepped stealthily into the room. She denounced her husband to Au Kerim, in a whisper, as a ruffian who had no respect for the ties of family or the duties of hospitality. She would not, she said, have the blood of a kinsman upon her head, and she had come to release the guest whom he had treacherously seized. The gate of the castle was open. Khalyl Khan, after his debauch, was fast asleep, and Au Kerim could take his horse and depart, and God be with him! Then, addressing me, she said, 'What have we to do with you, a stranger, and what have you done to us that we should do you harm? Go with him, and let not your blood be also upon our heads.'

Our arms were still hanging up in the 'lamerdoun.' We took them and went down, with as little noise as possible, to the yard, where our horses, with their saddles on, had been tethered for the night. The chief's wife accompanied us to the gate, which had not been closed, and, wishing us

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again 'God speed,' left us when we had passed through it. Fortunately, with the exception of one or two attendants who were sleeping in the yard, and who, seeing their master's wife, did not attempt to interfere with us, there appeared to be no one else except Khalyl Khan in the small mud fort half in ruins. The chiefs' retainers lived in reed huts or black tents at the foot of the mound upon which the castle stood. Those who had shared in our host's debauch had retired to their homes below, and were no doubt in a drunken sleep. Our only fear was that the barking of the village dogs might cause an alarm.

As soon as we were out of the gate we led our horses down the precipitous descent, in an opposite direction to the village. We proceeded as cautiously and noiselessly as possible, and when we were at a short distance from the foot of the mound we descended the mountain-side over rocks, loose stones, and bushes, as fast as we could.

Au Kerim, believing that after the outrage we had experienced from Khalyl Khan he could no longer trust the Bahmehi, and that without the protection he had expected to obtain from that chief he could not venture among the Mamesenni, resolved to descend at once into the low country at the foot of the mountains. We could then follow the caravan track to Shiraz, on which we should find many villages, trusting to chance for arriving at some place whence we might at least communicate with the Il-Khani, and obtain his aid to reach his tents.

It was with great difficulty that we could drag our horses to the foot of the high mountain range. A stony, hilly country, at this time of the year uninhabited—the tribes being in the summer pastures, with their flocks and herds—still separated us from the plain of Behbahan. We were at some distance from the castle when, about midday, we perceived that we were being pursued by a party of horsemen. Au Kerim, who was mounted on a high-bred Arab mare, put her to full speed. Khatun-jan Khanum had lent me one of Mehemet Taki Khan's horses, which was strong and fast, and I was able to keep up with my companion. Both our animals were tired, and the heat on these bare



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and rocky hills, reflecting the burning rays of the sun, was intense.

We were following a long, narrow valley, through which ran the Tab, a small stream, one of the confluents of the river Jerrahi. It wound through the flat alluvial land formed by the various changes in its course. We could, therefore, gallop our horses, and were gaining on our pursuers, when Au Kerim's mare stumbled and fell, throwing her rider over her head. I was a little behind him, and when I came up to him he was on the ground evidently in much pain and unable to rise. His mare had run away. I was about to dismount to help him, but he entreated me to leave him, and to fly as fast as my horse could carry me, as I could not be of any use to him, and he would be unable to protect me. He advised me to strike into the hills as soon as I could do so, and to conceal myself in some ravine during the rest of the day. If he escaped, and were able and allowed to follow me, he would, he said, find by the traces of my horse's hoofs the direction I had taken, and would rejoin me.

I saw that I could be of no assistance to him, and to remain with him would have been to risk my life unnecessarily. The horsemen who were in pursuit, and were rapidly approaching us, were too numerous to admit of the possibility of resistance. There was absolutely nothing to be done but to follow his injunctions. With a heavy heart and a sad presentiment of the fate which awaited him, I urged on my horse, and, following his advice, turned into the hills by a track which led through a narrow defile.

After awhile, seeing that I was not followed, I endeavoured to discover some sheltered spot, well hidden in the hills, where I could find water and grass for my horse and shade for myself, as the midday heat and scorching rays of the sun were almost beyond endurance. I had not slept for nearly thirty-six hours, and had eaten nothing since the previous night. I was suffering from excruciating thirst, and I dreaded lest an attack of the intermittent fever, which had never left me, might come on, and that I should be delirious and helpless. My horse, greatly distressed from

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want of food and water, could scarcely carry me any longer. I was in despair, not knowing what to do or which way to turn, when I happily came to a retired place where there was an abundant spring, shaded by a few stunted konar trees. The soil around produced an ample supply of grass. I owed this welcome discovery to my horse, which suddenly began to neigh and to sniff the air—a sign that water was near. I gave it the rein, and it turned immediately to the spot, which was so well concealed that I should not probably have found it but for the instinct of the animal.

I was beyond measure thankful when I found myself in this oasis and was able to take some rest. Fortunately I still had some thin cakes of unleavened bread and a few dried figs, which Khatun-jan Khanum had crammed into my saddle-bags. As my small stock of provisions would not suffice for long, and as I could not foresee when I might reach tents in which I could safely trust myself, I ate sparingly. My horse had made a rush at the spring. After it had drunk sufficiently I tethered it in the grass, and, stretching myself in the shade of a tree, fell at once asleep.

The sun was setting when I awoke. My horse was still feeding in the long grass. No one had disturbed me in my retreat. I pondered over my position and the course which it would be most prudent for me to pursue. It would have been vain to seek Au Kerim, who must have fallen into the hands of our pursuers, whoever they may have been. It would be equally useless for me to continue the journey upon which we had set out together. I could do nothing on behalf of my Bakhtiyari friends with the Il-Khani, to whom I was unknown, even if I could succeed in reaching his tent, which was very doubtful. I could not tell where Mehemet Taki Khan's family had gone, and to attempt to rejoin them through the country which intervened between us, inhabited by the Bakhtiyari who had revolted against their former chief, would have been too great a risk. After well considering and weighing the alternatives, I came to the conclusion that my best course was to endeavour to reach Shuster, and there to present myself to the Matamet, who would not venture to do more than send me out of the



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country. I should thus be able to learn the fate of the Bakhtiyari chiefs and their families, and to decide upon my future plans.

In our flight Au Kerim had followed a valley in the direction of Behbahan. My horse, although still much fatigued, had been refreshed by food and rest. It was night before I resumed my journey. The heat had diminished, and a slight breeze from the mountains, from which I was not far distant, cooled the air. I was able to steer my course with the aid of my compass, which I had luckily preserved, and which I carried in a pouch attached to my belt. The hills among which I was wandering, although low, were so precipitous and stony, and so constantly intersected by deep ravines, that I had very great difficulty in making my way across them.

After four or five hours' alternate riding and walking, without meeting any human being or any wild beasts—of which I was in some fear, as lions are frequently found in these hills—and only having been disturbed by an occasional hyena crossing my path, or by the jackals, which often set up their dismal howl almost from under the feet of my horse, I reached the plain of Behbahan. The distant barking of dogs told me that I was near tents or a village. I advanced cautiously, and could just distinguish in the dawn a few low huts. I disturbed a man who was sleeping on the ground, and who sprang up with his spear, evidently taking me for a thief. I gave him the usual Musulman salutation—which he returned, although still on his guard—and then explained to him that I was a harmless traveller who had lost his way, and was in search of hospitality.

He informed me that the village belonged to one of those half Lur, half Arab tribes which tend their herds of buffaloes in the plains and marshes near the rivers of Khuzistan. He directed me to the hut of the sheikh, who invited me to enter, and gave me and my horse some food, of which we were both much in need.

After I had been allowed to take a little rest, I had to answer the many questions that he put to me as to my object in travelling alone in those parts, whence I came,

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and where I was going. I told him that I was a friend of Mirza Koma, of Behbahan, and that I was seeking to reach that place, having been obliged to leave the mountains in consequence of the disorders that had broken out there since Mehemet Taki Khan had been deposed from the chieftainship of the Bakhtiyari. He was satisfied with my explanation, and as his small tribe belonged to Mirza Koma, he offered to send a guide with me, if I wished for one.

I spent the day in the hut of the hospitable sheikh, and resumed my journey at nightfall. He warned me that there were roving parties both of Kuhghelu and Arabs in the plain, and advised me to keep among the hills. He sent a man with me as a guide, who professed to be in mortal fear of lions, which, he declared, abounded at this season of the year in the ravines, and frequently attacked solitary travellers at night. However, we neither saw nor heard any, and in the early morning I could see, at no great distance, the gardens and palm trees of Behbahan.

I thought it desirable not to enter the town and present myself to Mirza Koma's successor, for things had changed since my visit there in the winter. As it was known that I had been with Mehemet Taki Khan, who was accused of rebellion against the Shah and was now in chains, he might have considered it his duty to arrest me and to send me a prisoner to the Matamet. At any rate, I thought it better not to run the risk. Keeping, therefore, in the gardens on the outskirts of the town, I spent the day in the hut of a gardener.

In the evening I was again on horseback, and, passing round the town in the open country, joined the main caravan track from Shuster to Behbahan and Shiraz, over which I had twice travelled, and with which I was consequently acquainted. Noting carefully the direction, I kept at some distance from it.

In the morning I stopped at a small village near Sultanabad and the so-called gardens of Anushirwan, where I found my old friend the seyyid, whose eyes had been almost cured by the lotion which I had given him on my former

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visit. He was surprised to see me back again, and I had to explain how I had been with Mehemet Taki Khan to Fellahiyah, and had accompanied his wife and family to the mountains, whence I was now returning. He professed the greatest affection for the Bakhtiyari chief, whose generous charities to seyyids and other holy men he loudly extolled, bewailing his unhappy fate. As the country between Ram Hormuz and Shuster had been entirely deserted by its population, and was infested by marauding parties of all kinds, it would be impossible, he said, for me to pass through it with safety. He, therefore, pressed me to remain as his guest until I might find an opportunity of joining a well-protected caravan going to that city.

I was not sorry to avail myself of his offer of hospitality for two days, in order to rest myself and my wearied horse. I passed them pleasantly with this good old man, stretched for the most part of the time in the shade of his orange trees, and listening to his stories about the mountain tribes. He was very loth to let me depart, as he was persuaded that I was incurring an almost certain risk of being robbed and murdered. However, as it was very improbable that any caravan would be going to Shuster in the then disordered state of the country and in the heat of summer, and as I might have to wait an indefinite time before hearing of one, I determined to continue my journey alone, notwithstanding his friendly remonstrances. Seeing that I was resolved to go, he insisted upon replenishing my saddle-bags with bread and dried fruit, declaring that I would find neither tents nor villages on my way, and consequently would have nothing to eat. Indeed, he advised me to avoid them as much as possible.

I gratefully acknowledged his kindness and took my leave of him. He sent his son to put me on a track which led through the hills to the south of the plain of Ram Hormuz, and which he considered much safer than that through the plain. He also described to me—a matter of great importance at that time of the year—where I should find water; but advised me not to remain at pools after sunset, for it was then that lions and other beasts of prey,

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having slept all day in their lairs, came at night to drink. The youth rode with me for about two hours, when, showing me the track which his father had indicated, he turned back.

I was now alone again, and left to my own resources. Following the advice of the seyyid, I avoided as much as possible the plain, and kept in the broken ground and in the hills to the south of it, travelling by night and concealing myself in ravines and hollows during the day. Fortunately, owing to his directions I was able to find water near which I could stop—and where there was water there was grass for my horse. There were also trees, generally the konar, in the shade of which I could protect myself from the scorching sun. The fruit of this tree, and a kind of wild garlic, with the bread and dried figs with which the good old seyyid had provided me, were sufficient to appease my hunger.

With the exception of an occasional hyena or jackal I did not see a single living creature until, on the third morning, I perceived in the distance some flocks which I conjectured must belong to the Gunduzlu. A shepherd informed me that I was at no great distance from the tents of Lufti Aga. I rode to them and received a warm welcome from him. He informed me that the Matamet had returned to Shuster, that Mehemet Taki Khan was kept by him in chains, and that Ali Naghi Khan had been made prisoner and sent to Tehran. The heat, he said, had for the present stopped all military operations. The greatest disorder and anarchy prevailed amongst the Bakhtiyari and the Arabs, as, without a chief whom they respected, and who was able to maintain some authority over them, they were fighting among themselves, and were plundering and maltreating the peaceable inhabitants of the province.

I was only about eight miles from Shuster. Some Gunduzlu horsemen were leaving the encampment for the city in the night. I accompanied them, and crossing the bridge over the Ab Gargar passed through the eastern gate as the sun rose, not a little thankful that I had performed my journey in safety. When I related my adventures to my Bakhtiyari and Shusteri friends, they declared that I must have been under the special protection of Hazret Ali, as

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without it no single horseman could have passed through the country which I had traversed without being murdered by robbers or devoured by lions.

It was not until long after that I learnt the fate of my unfortunate friend, Au Kerim. He had been captured by Khalyl Khan and his horsemen, who were our pursuers. The Bahmehi chief, fearing that if he were to put his kinsman to death there would be a perpetual blood-feud between him and the Bakhtiyari, had given over his prisoner to Ali Riza Khan, Mehemet Taki Khan's rival, who had been appointed chief of the tribes in his stead by the Matamet. There was 'blood' between the two chiefs and their families. Ali Riza Khan led Au Kerim to Baghi-Malek, and told him to prepare for death. The unhappy youth covered his face with his hands and was immediately shot dead.

Had I fallen into the hands of Khalyl Khan I might have shared the same fate. The death of Au Kerim caused me sincere grief. Of all the brothers of Mehemet Taki Khan he was the one who possessed the most estimable qualities, and for whom I entertained the greatest friendship.

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## CHAPTER XIII

*Interview with the Matamet—A young Georgian—Persian cruelty—Mulla Feraju-Allah—Leave for Hawizah—An inhospitable desert—The Kerkhah—Arab buffalo-keepers—Sheikh Faras—His 'musif'—The Hawizah Arabs—Taken for a Georgian—Reach Hawizah—The Sabæans—Join caravan to Basra—A lion—Reach the Euphrates—An English merchant-ship—Arrive at Basra.*

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LEAVING the horsemen who had accompanied me from the Gunduzlu tents, I rode at once to the castle where the Matamet was residing. There was little difficulty then in appearing before any Eastern official, however exalted his rank. The eunuch was already holding his morning reception, listening to complaints, administering justice, ordering the bastinado, and attending to other business—for he kept early hours. He was seated on his gilded chair in a large chamber excavated in the rock, and not much above the level of the Karun. It was a kind of 'serd-âb,' or underground summer apartment, in which he took refuge from the great heat which prevails at Shuster during this season of the year.

I was permitted to enter, and he at once perceived me. He inquired whence I came, and where I had been since he had seen me in his encampment near Fellahiyah. I told him that having received great kindness and hospitality from Mehemet Taki Khan's family, and having left some property with them, I had returned to them and had accompanied them to the mountains; and that being no longer able to pursue the object of my visit to Khuzistan, which was to examine its ancient monuments, as the tribes were at war and the country in a state of dangerous disorder,

I had resolved to return to Shuster in order to find the means of reaching some place whence I could continue my journey eastwards.

He observed that I had run great risks, and that had I been killed the British Government would, as usual, have held that of the Shah responsible for my death. 'You Englishmen,' he added, in an angry tone, 'are always meddling in matters which do not concern you, and interfering in the affairs of other countries. You attempted to do it in Afghanistan, but all your countrymen there have been put to death; not one of them has escaped.' He then described the ignominious manner in which the corpse of Sir William MacNaghten had been treated at Caubul, and the insults heaped upon the bodies of other English officers.[1]

After greeting me in this fashion he directed a ghulâm to conduct me to the house occupied by Suleiman Khan, the Armenian general, whom I had seen at Fellahiyah. He requested me not to leave Shuster without his permission, as he could not answer for my safety outside the walls. I might go about the town as much as I pleased.

Suleiman Khan himself was living in the camp with his troops on the opposite bank of the Karun. But his son, who was in charge of his establishment, received me very politely. He was a youth of about seventeen years of age. His appearance was more that of a handsome girl than of a boy. He was tall, slender, gentle, and almost feminine in

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[1] On my return to Baghdad, when writing to Colonel Hennell, who was still with the British troops at Karak, I mentioned what the Matamet had told me concerning the massacre of the English in Afghanistan. In his reply, dated September 9, he said: 'You will, before this, have heard from Colonel Taylor that the reports of the English having been put to death throughout Caubul are equally veracious with those of the unsuccessful attempt (by the English) to bombard Bushire alluded to by you. I need not say that both are equally false. Whatever may be the real inclinations of the Shah and his worthy Wuzir, they certainly want the means to equip an expedition against Afghanistan.' The murder of Burns, which preceded that of the other English in that country, took place at the beginning of November 1841. It would consequently seem that the Matamet, who was in the secrets of his Government, had some information which led him to know that the extermination of the English was contemplated, and to induce him to believe that it had already been effected.

voice and manner. His dress was that of a Persian dandy of rank and fashion—flowing robes of silk, bright red shalwars of the same material, and a precious Cashmere shawl wound round his waist, in which he carried a jewel-handled dagger. On either side of his face was the usual 'zulf,' or long ringlet of hair, dyed with henna, as were his finger and toe nails.

He assigned me a room in the large but half-ruined house which he occupied. It had been the residence of one of the principal families of Shuster, which had, at one time, been powerful and wealthy, but had been reduced to poverty by the Persian governors of the city. It was substantially built of dressed stone and contained a lofty 'iwan,' entirely open on one side to the air, with a court-yard in front containing flower-beds and a fountain. On either side of this hall and opening into it were a number of small rooms, in two stories, and lighted from it. The walls and ceilings of all these rooms had been profusely ornamented with carved wood-work and with elegant designs in colour and in gold, but these decorations had greatly suffered from time and neglect. Apartments for the servants and attendants, stables, and various outhouses formed a kind of quadrangle enclosing the main building. A wall separated this outer from an inner court, in which were the women's apartments. The roofs of these buildings were flat, and upon them the inmates passed the night during the hot weather. Such appears to have been the general plan of Persian houses from very early times—certainly from those of the Sassanian dynasty, as it is to be traced in the ruins of the magnificent palace of Chosroes, at Ctesiphon, and in other remains of the period.

I lived in one of the small rooms leading out of the 'iwan' on the ground floor, in a corner of which I spread my carpet, which served me to sit upon during the day and to sleep upon at night. I remained for nearly a month with my host. Suleiman Khan rarely came into Shuster, being occupied with military matters in the camp. The house was frequented by officers of the regular troops and by persons employed in the service of the Matamet. They

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were a dissolute and debauched set of fellows, and feasted, drank arak, and spent most of their time, half-drunk, in listening to music and watching dancing boys and girls.

The scenes that were constantly occurring in Suleiman Khan's house disgusted me so greatly that I passed as much of my time as possible with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, and in visiting with him the principal inhabitants of Shuster, who were also for the most part seyyids. From them I received great kindness, and learnt much concerning the history of Shuster and the province, and its resources, and other matters which were of interest to me.

The Matamet was chiefly engaged in screwing money out of the unfortunate inhabitants of Shuster and Dizful, and of the surrounding districts, and out of the Arab tribes which had remained in the province. With this object the leading inhabitants of the towns, the 'ket-khudâs' of the villages, and the Arab sheikhs who had fallen into his hands, had been imprisoned in the castle and underwent almost daily tortures. The sticks were constantly in use, and men of the highest character and the greatest repute in Khuzistan were ignominiously subjected to the bastinado.

Having made up my mind to return to Baghdad, I thought the opportunity a good one of visiting Hawizah and the surrounding country under the protection of Seyyid Mulla Feraju-Allah, the Wali or hereditary chief of that place, who was descended from a noble and ancient Arab family. I should thus be able to explore a district then unknown, and to trace the course of the Kerkhah, conjectured to be the Choaspes of the Greek geographers. The region to the west of this river, then a blank on our maps, was believed to contain ruins of a very early period. But its inhabitants, the Beni Lam Arabs, who neither recognised the authority of the Porte nor that of the Persian Government, were reputed to be the most treacherous and lawless of all the tribes in Turkish Arabia. The Wali, however, promised me such recommendations to their sheikhs as would insure my safety whilst passing through their territories. I determined, therefore, to take this route, which, although the

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most direct and shortest to Baghdad, was never followed by caravans or travellers on account of its danger.

Three horsemen belonging to Mulla Feraju-Allah being about to return to Hawizah, he suggested that I should accompany them. I accordingly made my arrangements as secretly as possible to go with them. I was in no need of money, as the inhabitants of the country through which I had to pass would not expect payment for that hospitality which even the most degraded Arabs consider it a religious duty to extend to a traveller. It was, indeed, better to be without money, so as not to excite the cupidity of the Beni Lam.

As I wished to leave Shuster without being observed, it was arranged that I should join Mulla Feraju-Allah's horsemen outside the southern gate of the city—in the 'Miyandâb,'[2] as the district between the Karun and Ab Gargar is called. Late one afternoon I left the house without informing any one of my intention of quitting the city. I found my companions waiting for me at the place appointed for our meeting. They were two Arabs and a black slave belonging to the Wali, well mounted and armed with long spears tufted with ostrich feathers.

It was the month of August—the hottest time of the year—and the heat in the plains, now scorched and without a blade of grass, was very great. When I had crossed the Miyandâb in the spring it was a vast green meadow, gorgeous with flowers of every hue. We rested for a short time at an Arab encampment. My companions gave out that I was a Georgian, in the service of the Matamet, going on his business to Hawizah. I did not think it necessary to contradict them, and I assumed this character until I reached that place. As they wished to get over as much ground as possible during the night, we left the tents after having eaten. We reached Bendi-Kir, the site of an ancient city at the junction of the Karun and the river of Dizful, early in the morning, and remained there until after midday, when, although the sun was still high and the glare

[2] A corruption of Miyan-doo-Ab—between the two waters or rivers.

and heat most oppressive, my guides thought it necessary to continue our journey, as the nearest Arab tents that we could hope to reach were many hours distant. We crossed the two rivers by fords, and entered upon the desert plains between them and the Kerkhah, which were without water, and consequently uninhabited. In the dry season the deep sand in parts of them, and in the rainy season the mud, render the passage across them difficult for horsemen.

This arid waste during the summer months is much dreaded by the Arabs, in consequence of the simoom which frequently blows across it. This pernicious wind has been known to overwhelm and destroy a whole caravan of travellers with their beasts. We were now in the season of the year when it prevails, and my companions having heard that only three days before some inhabitants of Shuster, overtaken by it, had perished, professed to be much alarmed at the prospect before us. However, we filled our water-skins, and entered upon this desert, apparently without a single elevation or landmark to guide us.

The Arabs who were with me were not familiar with the track, and when night came on they admitted that they had lost their way. Dismounting from their horses, they tasted the earth and examined the stunted bushes which we occasionally found on our path, hoping thus to ascertain where we were. We had only the stars to guide us. We soon found ourselves among low hills, or rather mounds, of drifted sand, in which our horses frequently sank up to the saddle-girths, and were constantly falling. We thus wandered about for two or three hours in the darkness.

Our horses, having had neither rest, food, nor water for many hours, could scarcely drag themselves along. I proposed that we should wait until daylight to continue our journey; but my companions were afraid of lions, which they maintained abounded in this desolate country, although it was scarcely likely that such could be the case, as there was nothing for them either to eat or to drink. They were persuaded that the Kerkhah could not be far distant. We therefore struggled on foot through the deep sand, leading our horses. When nearly exhausted from

fatigue, we suddenly heard the distant noise of running water. No sound could have been more welcome. The night had been unusually oppressive on account of a hot wind—happily not the simoom. Our water-skins had been long emptied, and our animals, as well as ourselves, were suffering from intense thirst.

We soon reached the river-bank, and, stretching ourselves at full length on the ground, drank copiously of the delicious stream. The water of the Kerkhah—presuming this river to be rightly identified with the Choaspes—appeared to me well deserving of its ancient renown. Herodotus states that the Persian monarchs would drink of no other, and golden vessels filled with it were sent to them by special couriers to the furthest parts of their empire. This custom of sending water known for its purity to great distances, for the use of kings and great personages, has lasted to our times. Burckhardt relates how the celebrated Mehemet Ali Pasha of Egypt, when engaged in war with the Wahabees in Central Arabia, had the water of the Nile brought to him daily for his use. That of the Kerkhah is still so highly esteemed by the Persians that it is thus forwarded to persons of high rank, such as the Matamet.

Our horses rejoiced no less than ourselves when we reached the banks of the river. After we had refreshed ourselves we resumed our journey, as we were still at some distance from any human habitations. The night was nearly spent when, after toiling and struggling through jungle and brushwood, the barking of dogs led us to an Arab encampment. As its inmates were still asleep, we lay down outside the tents to take a little rest.

When, soon after daybreak, I was awoke by the Arabs preparing for their day's work, I found that the tents and reed-built huts belonged to some poor families of buffalo keepers, who were unable to furnish us with either corn or grass for our horses. They told us that the nearest encampment where we could obtain what we so much needed was at least two farsaks, or six miles, distant.

Although our horses were by this time completely exhausted, we could not remain where we were. Dragging

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them along as we best could, we at length reached, about two hours after sunrise, a large Arab village. The river divided itself at this place into a number of small streams, upon the banks of which were clusters of huts built of mats and reeds. We rode at once to the 'musif' of the sheikh. We were hospitably received, our horses were plentifully supplied with cut grass, and we were served with a breakfast consisting of fish, curds, and buffalo cream.

We were still at some distance from the encampment of Sheikh Faras, the chief of the principal tribe in the district of Hawizah, to whom I had been specially recommended by the Wali, and who was directed to send me, with proper guarantees for my safety, to the sheikh of the Beni Lam Arabs. After a short rest, and our horses being somewhat refreshed, we remounted, and rode for three hours through a thickly peopled and well-cultivated country, offering a strong contrast in the bright green of its vegetation to the yellow, parched, and sandy tract which we had crossed since leaving Bendi-Kir. Numerous watercourses derived from the river irrigated a large tract of country. There was an almost continuous line of huts on their banks. Half-naked men and women, and entirely naked children, were hurrying to and fro, wading through the marshes and rice-fields deep in water, and tending herds of buffaloes and camels, and flocks of sheep. They were a wild people, almost as black as negroes from constant exposure to the sun. From all sides came the discordant yells with which the Arabs are accustomed to address their cattle, and sometimes the distant sound of an Arab war-song. It was a lively and busy scene. As I had exchanged my Lur cap and felt outer coat for a 'keffiyeh' and an 'abba,' or Arab cloak, I passed with my three companions unnoticed by those whom we met on our way.

The palm trees surrounding the town of Hawizah were visible in the extreme distance, but we turned from them and rode to the encampment of Sheikh Faras, occupying both sides of a branch of the Kerkhah, which, although broad, was fordable. It consisted of a large number of the usual black goat-hair tents, and of reed and mat huts

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When we reached the 'musif' of the sheikh we found that he was sleeping. I was so much fatigued by my long journey that I was not sorry to follow his example. It was nearly sunset before I awoke. In the meanwhile the black slave, having delivered the letter from the Wali to Sheikh Faras, had left the encampment with the two Arab horsemen for Hawizah. I was thus alone again among strangers.

The 'musif' of the sheikh was the most remarkable of similar temporary constructions which I had seen for its excessive neatness and cleanliness, and its size. It was built entirely of rushes, reeds and mats, and was about forty feet long, twenty broad, and fourteen high. The entrances were formed by clusters of long canes fixed in the ground, and united at the top so as to form pointed arches. These fluted columns, as it were, were about six feet apart, and between them, serving as a kind of screen, were trellises made of reeds, joined by a twisted worsted of bright colours worked into fanciful designs. Suspended mats, beautifully made and of the finest texture, could be raised or lowered at pleasure so as to admit the air or to exclude the sun. At the side of each column was placed the trunk of a tree shaped into a kind of pedestal, upon which stood a jar of porous clay, such as are used in Arabia for cooling water. These jars, of very elegant form, were constantly replenished from the river, and nothing could be more refreshing than a draught from them. Above them were shelves, upon which were earthen cups for the use of those who desired to drink. The floor was covered with fine carpets and matting. Comfortable cushions and bolsters were ranged along the sides of the 'musif' for the guests to recline against. In order to cool the temperature of the air within the 'musif,' black slaves were constantly throwing water over the mats which were hung up around it and formed its walls. A more delightful place in which to pass, idly, the mid-hours of a summer's day in that intolerable climate could not be well imagined. The remarkable elegance of its construction did infinite credit to the taste and skill of its Arab builders, who were true architects in the best sense of the word.

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From the strong letter of recommendation in my favour which Sheikh Faras had received from the Wali, he was convinced that I must not only be in the Matamet's service, but related to him. I did not think it desirable in my position, without money and requiring all the protection possible to enable me to traverse in safety the dangerous country into which I had entered, to endeavour to remove this impression. The old sheikh was profuse in his civilities and in his offers of service, and ordered the best dinner his tent could afford to be prepared for me.

In the 'musif' was a man in the Arab dress, who spoke a little Persian, and who occasionally joined in the conversation between the sheikh and myself, interpreting for me when I was unable to make myself understood. When we were alone he began to cross-question me as to my religion. I then discovered that he was a Sabæan, or 'Christian of St. John,' the name by which this very interesting and ancient religious sect is generally known.[3] He had heard of my having been at Shuster, where I had become acquainted with several Sabæan families, and had been able to be of some service to them in remonstrating with the Matamet against the ill-treatment and persecution to which they were constantly exposed, on account of their faith, by the Mohammedans. He expressed much gratitude for what I had done for his brethren, and offered to be of use to me. He told me that he had suspected that I was the Englishman he had been told of as soon as I entered the 'musif,' but he urged me to retain my character of a Georgian connected with the Matamet as long as I remained with the Hawizah Arabs, otherwise, were I known to be a European, my life would not be safe amongst a horde of ignorant and savage fanatics. He endeavoured to dissuade me from attempting to pass through the Beni Lam country, which he described as being in the most complete disorder, and in which the protection of the Wali would be of no avail to me.

My Sabæan friend was a travelling silversmith, who went

[3] The Sabæans call themselves 'Mendaï,' or sometimes 'Mendaï Yaghia.' The Persians term them 'Sabi.'

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from encampment to encampment making or repairing the gold and silver ornaments worn by the women. The Sabæans mostly followed this trade, and, as they were very useful to the Arabs, were well treated by them and hospitably received in their tents. But they were shamefully oppressed by the Turkish and Persian authorities, both to compel them to embrace Mohammedanism and to extort money from them. The sect had consequently been reduced to about three or four hundred families, which, notwithstanding all efforts to convert them, had retained their ancient faith, bearing with resignation the cruelest persecution. They were found in Shuster and Basra, and among the Arabs in the country watered by the Shat-el-Arab and the Karun, and their confluents. Wearing the dress and speaking the language of the Arabs, they could scarcely be distinguished from them. But they would not eat with them, nor partake of the flesh of any animal which had not been killed by one of themselves. The Sabæans have their sacred books, for which they claim a very great antiquity, speak a Semitic dialect, and have a written character of their own.

My horse had suffered so much that I could not attempt to cross the Beni Lam country without giving it a few days' rest. I consequently made up my mind to go to Hawizah and to remain there until it had sufficiently recovered to enable me to continue my journey. When I informed the old sheikh, my host, of my intention, he opposed it vehemently, declaring that the orders he had received from the Wali were to forward me direct to the principal sheikh of the Beni Lam tribe, and that he had already made preparations for doing so, having selected some trustworthy horsemen to accompany me. The Wali, he said, had left his wife, the 'Bibi,' in charge of the Government, and when she came to know of the change in my plans she would believe him to be in fault, and would accuse him of having disobeyed the commands of her husband.

It was only after I had affixed my seal to a written declaration, that it was upon my own responsibility and at my own request that I went to Hawizah, that he consented



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to furnish me with a guide to that place. Before I left him, however, he warned me that to pass through the Beni Lam tribes at that time would be a very perilous undertaking, as two rival chiefs, Sheikh Mathkur and the Mutsellim, were at war, and had both, moreover, declared their independence of the Pasha of Baghdad. With one of these chiefs the Wali was at enmity, and, consequently, he could not guarantee my safety if I fell into his hands or those of his followers. He earnestly advised me, therefore, to renounce my intention of proceeding to Baghdad by that route, adding, that if, nevertheless, I persisted in it, he was still ready to assist me, and, God being great, Inshallah, I should surmount all difficulties and dangers.

Having provided me with a guide, he accompanied me himself to some distance from his tents, entreating me on the way not to compromise him with the Bibi, of whom he seemed to stand in great awe, but to make her fully understand, if questioned on the subject, that I had gone to Hawizah of my own free will, and that I had no cause to complain of his want of readiness to forward me on my journey through the Beni Lam country.

It took me five hours on my wearied horse to reach the town. During the greater part of the way we had to wade through morasses and to cross streams with the water up to my saddle-girths. Hawizah stands in a deserted plain, traversed in every direction by the dry beds of canals and watercourses. The Kerkhah in the year 1837 suddenly changed its course, in consequence of the breaking down of a dam which had been built across it for purposes of irrigation, about five farsaks, or fifteen miles, above the town. One morning the inhabitants discovered that the river which had hitherto flowed through their midst had left them. The lands around, which had been very rich and fertile, having been thus deprived of water, soon fell out of cultivation, and the town itself was a heap of ruins.

On reaching Hawizah I went at once to the 'musif' of the Wali, where I was hospitably received, the Bibi sending to inquire after my health. There were several strangers, besides some of the notables of the town, assembled in it.

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When they learnt that I was on my way to Baghdad through the Beni Lam country, they all declared that the state of it was such that I could not go without the greatest risk. The Beni Lam, they said, were not Arabs, but 'Kafirs' (infidels), who neither respected the laws of hospitality nor behaved in any sort as good Musulmans. They were as treacherous as they were savage and cruel, and would cut the throat of a guest for a trifle. The information and advice thus given me was, I had reason to believe, trustworthy and disinterested. I was revolving in my mind what course I should take when a man from Shuster came into the guest-room, and, entering into conversation with me, informed me that he was on his way to Basra with a party of traders, who would leave Hawizah the following day. My best plan, I considered, would be to accompany them. Once at Basra, I should have little difficulty in reaching Baghdad.

My horse not being in a condition to perform a journey, I sold it for a couple of tomans.

The Shusteri, when I joined the caravan outside the walls of the town, offered me a mule, for the use of which I agreed to make him a small present at the end of our journey.

The chief of the 'kâfila'[4] which I had joined was a member of an ancient and highly respectable family of Shuster, which had been reduced to poverty by the extortions of Persian officials. His name was Aga, or Au, Suleiman, and he was the brother of Aziz-Ullah Khan, a notable of the city with whom I had become acquainted. He had commenced trading, in order to obtain a livelihood, and was taking for sale to Basra reeds for pens from Dizful, rice, a little cotton, and some woollen 'abbas,' or cloaks, manufactured at Shuster and much prized by the town Arabs. His return loads were to consist principally of dates, which always find a ready market in Khuzistan.

The loads were placed on horses and mules. A number of donkeys carried skins filled with water, as there was none to be found, except at one spot, on our road. The distance

[4] The Arab term for the Persian 'karwan'—our 'caravan.'

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between Hawizah and Nashwar, a village upon the Shat-el-Arab, for which the caravan was bound, was about fifty miles. A few pilgrims going to Kerbela accompanied us on foot. There were altogether nearly three hundred beasts of burden, so that our caravan was a large one.

It was three in the afternoon before we left the town. The heat was intense, and I have rarely suffered more from it than on this journey. We were travelling over a vast alluvial plain which extended without a single natural eminence to the Shat-el-Arab. The Arabs had nothing to guide them across it except the position of the sun during the day and the stars at night, and the taste of the earth, which, they pretend, tells them in what part of the desert they may be. For some distance it was intersected by the dry beds of canals and watercourses, which showed that at one time it had been highly cultivated. In winter and spring, during the rains, it is one great swamp, which gradually dries up in the hot season, leaving the surface of the soil broken into innumerable crevices and holes. The horses and other animals were constantly getting their feet into them and falling with their loads. Riding was consequently excessively fatiguing, and I was not sorry when, after three hours' forced march, we came to a halt and rested.

We resumed our march after dark and at daybreak reached a morass full of high reeds. This was the water which I had been told we should meet with on our way. To my great disappointment, I found it so salt that I could scarcely swallow it. The only protection I could find from the burning rays of the sun was under the scanty shade of a bale of goods. There I remained, panting and perspiring, until I was suddenly aroused by the firing of guns and by loud cries. I jumped up, thinking that we had been attacked by marauders ; but I soon perceived a large lion trotting slowly away. He had been disturbed in his lair by the people of the caravan searching for better water and gathering reeds for firewood, and had leapt out over some men who were sleeping at the edge of the swamp. The shots fired at him fortunately did not take effect, for had he been wounded he might have turned upon us and done

no little mischief. As it was, he disappeared and we saw no more of him.

Au Suleiman generously shared his provisions with me, but we had nothing but brackish water to drink. As we were at no great distance from Nashwar, it was not until nearly midnight that he ordered the animals to be loaded. It was with feelings of inexpressible delight that at dawn I saw before me the long dark line formed by the groves of palm trees which stretch for many a mile along the banks of the Euphrates.

The loads were taken off our tired beasts in a garden on the banks of a small creek, where they were to be stowed in boats to be forwarded to Basra, which was still distant. As Au Suleiman required at least two or three days to embark his goods, I determined to push on alone by land to a spot where I could cross the river to the town. I could, I was informed, accomplish this before nightfall. But as I needed a horse and a guide, I sought the sheikh of the village. I found, to my surprise, an exceedingly handsome and stately Arab, with refined manners and polite address. His garments were of the best materials, and he had the appearance of an Arab gentleman, very different from that of the dirty, ill-clad, and ferocious-looking inhabitants of the marshes of Hawizah. His 'musif' was clean and well carpeted and cushioned, and in his mud-built hut I could perceive a mosquito-curtain of fine muslin suspended over a bed.

As soon as he learnt that I was an Englishman, and that I wished to proceed at once to Basra, he proposed, in the civilest way, that I should take his mare, adding that he had the greatest respect for Englishmen, with whom he had become acquainted in their ships on the river, and especially for Mr. Barsac, an Armenian gentleman, then the agent of the East India Company at Basra, who was, he said, his particular friend. I accepted his mare and offered to pay for her hire, but he refused to receive any money, suggesting that I might give a small present to the man whom he would send with me as a guide, and who would bring back the animal.

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I mounted his mare, and accompanied by an Arab on foot left the village. We issued from the palm groves, and kept in the open country in a direct line for Basra. The distance was greater than I had expected. The heat was again intense, and water nowhere to be found, except in the gardens into which canals had been led for purposes of irrigation. We had to deviate a good deal from our course to reach them. The banks of the Euphrates, or Shat-el-Arab, in this part of its course are lined with villages, which are almost hidden among palm trees. Their inhabitants appeared to be prosperous. The women were well dressed, and wore ornaments of gold and silver coins. They were without veils, and, not recognising me as a European, made no attempt to conceal their faces. Many girls I met were remarkable specimens of Arab beauty.

The sheikh's mare was a fine powerful animal, and walked at so brisk a pace that my guide had to run to keep up with her. At last, sorefooted and overcome by the great heat, he declared that he could go no further unless he rode behind me. As we were still some way from Basra, and I wished to arrive there before nightfall, I allowed him to do so. At sunset we entered a palm grove, and reaching the river-bank I perceived, to my great joy, a merchant-ship flying the English flag anchored in the middle of the stream. I hastened to discharge my guide, with a message of thanks to his master, and with the present which he had so well earned, and hiring a small boat had myself rowed to the vessel.

The sailor on guard at the gangway, seeing what he believed to be a poor ill clad Arab approach—for my garments were by this time almost in tatters—warned me off. He was not a little surprised when I addressed him in English. The captain of the ship, which proved to be the 'Lord Elphinstone,' was away, but the first mate, Mr. Beaumont, received me most kindly. He invited me to remain on board for the night, as Basra was still distant, being about two miles from the river on an inland creek. I gratefully accepted his invitation. After my long wanderings, no ordinary hardships, and constant perils, I found myself

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once more amongst English comforts and in English society. I sat up to a late hour in the night, talking with my host and learning from him the many important political events which had occurred since I had received a letter or seen a newspaper. For the first time for many months I could undress, and enjoy the pleasant sensation of sleeping between clean sheets. My bed had hitherto been my carpet or the bare ground.

Mr. Beaumont offered next morning to send me in one of the ship's boats to Basra. Rather more than an hour's row across the river, here very broad with a sluggish stream, and up the creek in the midst of palm groves, brought me to the town. I proceeded at once to the residence of Mr. Barsac, who received me very courteously, and begged me to accept a room in his house.

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## CHAPTER XIV

*Basra—Accompany Agayl postman to Baghdad—The Agayls—The mirage—Chased by Bedouins—A sick companion—Kût-el-Agayl—Semawa—The Lemloom Arabs—Hillah—The road to Baghdad—Robbed by Shammar Bedouins—Narrow escape—Arab thieves—Destitute condition—Reach Baghdad—Dr. Ross—Descend Tigris in the 'Assyria'—The tomb of Ezra—The Hafar—The Bahmeh-Shir—Return to Baghdad—Sheikh Mathkur—Ruins of Ctesiphon.*

I HAD hoped to find at Basra one of the steamers then employed by the East India Company in the navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris, which would have conveyed me to Baghdad. But I learnt that the 'Assyria' had recently left, and was not expected to return for some time. I had no wish to remain in the filthy, half-ruined, and fever-stricken town of Basra, with every chance of falling ill. Hearing, therefore, that an Arab employed by the Indian Government to carry the post between that town and Baghdad was about to leave, I asked Mr. Barsac's permission to accompany him. Whilst acceding to my request he warned me that the journey was a dangerous one, that the postmen were not unfrequently robbed and even maltreated by the wild Bedouin tribes, recognising no authority, through which they had to pass, and that the fatigue that I should have to undergo would be very great, as we were still in summer. I should have to ride day and night, without much rest, and on the road I should find little water, and should have to depend for provisions chiefly upon the bread and dates that I could carry with me. As I was by this time inured to heat and hardships, I trusted to my usual good fortune to get through the threatened difficulties and dangers.

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I had to spend three days in Basra before the postman received his letter-bags. The town was at that time apparently in the last stage of decay. The recent outbreak of the plague in Southern Turkey—one of the most fatal and devastating that had occurred in the memory of man—had destroyed a great part of its population. The place had been almost deserted, as to escape this fearful disease most of the remaining inhabitants had encamped in the desert or in the palm groves on the banks of the river, where many of them still remained.

It was scarcely surprising that Basra had suffered so greatly from the plague. Its filth and its stenches were indescribable. It stands at the end of a narrow creek, pent up on all sides by palm trees. The air is damp and unwholesome, and the heat in summer very great—the thermometer even reaching 115 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade during the day, and the nights being exceedingly sultry and oppressive.

Basra, or Balsora, as every reader of the 'Arabian Nights' knows, was in ancient days an emporium for the commerce between Europe, Western Asia, and the Far East, and was frequented by merchants of every clime. There are no remains to record its ancient prosperity and splendour. Low mounds marking the site of buildings, the usual potsherds and bricks scattered over the plain, and the foundations of walls, cover a considerable area once occupied by the city.

I left Basra soon after midday with the postman, who was accompanied by another Arab. They both belonged to the Agayl, a kind of mongrel tribe composed of Arab families from various parts of the desert. The men of this tribe were chiefly employed in conveying letters across Mesopotamia, and as guards and guides for caravans, as they were generally on friendly terms with the Bedouins, who recognised them as coming from the same stock, and consequently rarely molested them when passing through their territories. They were believed to be trustworthy and faithful, and were frequently charged with considerable sums of money, at a time when merchants in Baghdad and Syria had no other means of remitting it.

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We were mounted upon strong, sturdy horses, accustomed to the long stages, with little water and little provender, which the postman was compelled to make to avoid the Arabs who encamp near the river and in the marshes, and whose hand is against every one. I rode, like my companions, on a pack-saddle. Our saddle-bags were filled with barley for our horses, and with bread and dried fruit for ourselves. Each of us carried a water-skin. Under the barley I concealed my compass and watch, and a few silver coins, all the property that was left to me. My note-books I gave to Mr. Barsac, to be forwarded to me at Baghdad by the first safe opportunity. I wore the Arab dress, with the 'keffiyeh' kept in its place on my shaven head by the rope of twisted worsted. With this kerchief the Arabs protect the lower part of their faces from the sun, and conceal their features when necessary. The rest of my costume consisted of the 'zibboun,' or long chintz robe, and the 'abba,' or goat-hair cloak—white, with broad black bands—such as are worn by the Arabs of Mesopotamia. I was thus completely disguised, and could pass without notice as long as I held my tongue.

We had to wade through a marsh about three miles in breadth before we reached the site occupied by the remains of ancient Basra, called Zebir. We stopped for a short time at a small hut used as a coffee-house, and then, leaving the river and the morass, entered upon the desert. We rode through a dreary arid waste, constantly on the watch for Arabs. All whom we were likely to meet or see were to be considered robbers or enemies until they proved not to be so, and consequently to be avoided as much as possible. But we saw no human being. About midnight the Agayl thought we might safely approach the marshes, which extend to a great distance from the main stream of the Euphrates, to water and feed our horses and to replenish our water-skins. We slept for a couple of hours, and our animals having eaten their barley and being refreshed, we continued our journey again, striking into the desert.

During the night my companions were in constant alarm. Every bush appeared to them to be a lion, and at every moment they declared that they could detect the sounds of

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distant horsemen. The continual watchfulness upon which they insisted kept me from falling asleep on my horse. The sun rose through the haze which precedes in the desert a burning wind and suffocating heat. The small shrubs of camel-thorn were transformed by the mirage into stately buildings, or into great companies of horsemen, or we seemed to be nearing a transparent lake, reflecting groves of trees and magnificent palaces. They appeared to recede before us, and as the day advanced faded away.

As we suffered much from thirst, and had emptied our water-skins, we turned again at midday to the marshes, to fill them and to water our horses. But when I put my metal cup to my parched lips, I found the water to be so warm and brackish that I could scarcely bring myself to drink it. My companions, however, declared that it was wholesome, and especially good for horses, as they grew fat upon it.

We were returning to the desert when we came upon a great herd of camels, tended by fierce-looking men carrying heavy clubs, and wearing no clothing except a short linen shirt scarcely reaching to the knee. My 'keffiyeh' was drawn, Arab fashion, across my face, leaving only my eyes exposed. My features were, consequently, concealed, and I hoped to remain undetected. We received and returned the salutations of the herdsmen, and had almost passed through the herd, when we were surrounded by a number of Arabs on foot. Suddenly they seized the man who had accompanied us from Basra by the leg, and jerked him from his saddle. He fell to the ground, and was quickly despoiled of the scanty garments which he wore. They intended to play me the same trick, but I was on my guard. In the meanwhile the postman had commenced a parley with a man who appeared to be a sheikh and to exercise some authority over the rest. When it was explained to him that we were Agayls conveying despatches belonging to the English Government we were subjected to no further molestation, but he demanded blackmail for permission to pass through the territories of his tribe. Our saddle-bags were opened, but as they appeared to contain nothing but barley and our provisions, we were allowed to retain them. One Arab, however, put his hand into the

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pocket of my 'zibboun,' whilst my attention was occupied with what was passing, and stole one or two pieces of silver from it. With these and a few small coins which they had found on the Agayl whom they had stripped, they expressed themselves satisfied, and restored his shirt and 'abba.'

We were then informed that we might proceed. The Arabs who had collected together were still pressing round us, when the sheikh and another man, who had taken a prominent part in the attack upon us, beat them off with their clubs, and walked away from the crowd, desiring us to follow. After leading us some distance they gave us the usual Arab salutation, and said that we might go our way in peace and without fear, as we were now under their protection. They told us their names and supplied us with a password, which would, they said, secure us from molestation from any of their tribe whom we might meet.

About an hour after they had left us we found ourselves among sandhills. On the top of one of them we saw two Arabs riding dromedaries, who were evidently watching our movements. When we perceived them we stopped, and they descended the hill towards us. As soon as they were out of sight, hidden by the inequalities of the ground, the Agayl endeavoured to outmanœuvre them by dodging among the narrow valleys formed by the sand-heaps. When we stopped to allow our horses to take breath, we found that we had left our pursuers a good way behind. However, they had seen us again, and were following us as fast as their dromedaries could carry them. We had put our horses to a gallop, when we suddenly perceived two other Arabs, also mounted on dromedaries, in front of us, who joined in the pursuit.

Then commenced a most exciting chase. Our horses were weary, having been nearly twenty-four hours without rest. But they were sturdy beasts, and my companions evaded our pursuers with so much skill among the sandhills that after some time we had distanced them, and, although we could see them occasionally, they finally disappeared.

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We continued until about two hours after sunset without any further adventure, when we came upon a party of six men out on a 'gazou,' or marauding expedition. They were lying asleep on the ground between their three kneeling dromedaries, which were so placed as to form a kind of rampart round them for defence. They awoke as we approached them, but on hearing the names of the two Arabs who had furnished us with the password, they allowed us to proceed and composed themselves to sleep again.

We stopped for a short time to rest, and to feed our tired horses, but mounted again at dawn. The man who had accompanied the postman now complained of being ill. He attributed his indisposition to the bad water he had been obliged to drink, and to the heat of the previous day, which, as the misty sunrise had portended, had been intense, with a burning simoom, sufficient to suffocate man and beast. He could scarcely cling to his pack-saddle, and had great difficulty in keeping up with us. About three in the afternoon we saw in the distance an Arab encampment, and endeavoured to avoid it. But we had been perceived and several men ran towards us. Our horses were so much knocked up that we could not put them to a gallop. The postman, therefore, handed me his letter-bag and went to meet the Arabs coming from the tents. Fortunately, they respected the password with which we had been furnished, and invited us to eat bread with them. We dismounted and refreshed ourselves with camel's milk in huge wooden bowls, and with unleavened bread baked upon the ashes.

The postman agreed to pay a small sum for a guide to accompany us to Kût-el-Agayl, or the fort of the Agayls, a small village surrounded by a mud wall, on the Euphrates, belonging to his tribe. As I continued to conceal my features with the 'keffiyeh,' and avoided entering into conversation with the Arabs—being very ingeniously seconded by the Agayl—I attracted no particular attention, and was not recognised as a European.

Our guide was a strong and active youth. His mother, who feared his going so far from his tents alone, lest he

should fall into the hands of enemies, followed us for some time, sobbing and endeavouring to persuade him to return. However, he remained faithful to his engagement, and the poor woman, having received a little tobacco to console her, became reconciled to her son's departure.

After we had ridden about two hours our sick companion fell, utterly exhausted, from his horse, and was quite unable to go any further. We carried him to the edge of a marsh, where he could obtain water, and as there was an encampment of Montefik Arabs[1] visible in the distance, his companion believed that after a few hours' rest he would be able to reach it. I felt much concerned at deserting him thus, alone and perhaps dying. I endeavoured to prevail upon the postman to wait until we could move him to the tents. But he absolutely refused, declaring that if he ventured amongst the Montefik he would be without protection, and would be robbed of his letter-bag, which would bring him and his tribe into disgrace. It was useless for me to persist, and the sick Arab himself assuring us that when the heat of the day had passed, and the night came on, he would be able to walk to the tents, we left him, the postman leading away his horse, which belonged to the contractor for the postal service between Basra and Baghdad.

At midnight we reached the main stream of the Euphrates, and I enjoyed the priceless luxury of a draught of sweet water. We soon afterwards came to an Arab encampment. Notwithstanding the barking of the dogs at the approach of strangers, the inmates did not seem disposed to be disturbed. We therefore dismounted at the first tent, and tying our horses to its pegs, lay down and slept soundly for the rest of the night.

At dawn we were awoke by the owner, who showed no surprise at seeing his uninvited guests. His wife lighted a fire of camel's dung and brushwood, and baked unleavened bread for us, which she placed before us with

[1] The Montefik is a large Arab tribe occupying the banks of the Euphrates above and below the junction of that river with the Tigris at Korna.

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butter and curds. Our host was a Montefik, but neither he nor any one of his tribe asked us any questions, to the great surprise and satisfaction of the Agayl.

We were at a short distance from Kût-el-Agayl, which we reached about ten o'clock. Mohammed Ibn Daûd, one of the principal sheikhs of the Agayls, resided there. He was a tall, majestic Arab, with a prepossessing countenance. He recognised me at once as an Englishman, for he had been in very friendly relations with my countrymen at Baghdad. He consequently treated me in the most hospitable fashion, and gave me such delicacies as his harem could afford. These were principally a kind of pancake fried in butter, fresh dates, curds, and buffalo cream. However, we could only afford to take two hours' rest, as we had to hurry onwards.

We arrived in the evening at Semawa, a large walled village inhabited by sedentary Arabs. Although we had seen several bodies of horsemen in the distance, whom my companion declared to be Bedouins, we managed to avoid them, and were not molested on our way. The greater part of the male population of Semawa was seated on the ground outside the gate, enjoying the cool breeze of the evening after the intense heat of the day. The men wore long black cloaks, descending to their ankles and completely enveloping their persons. Their 'keffiyehs' were of the brightest colours, red and yellow predominating, with long plaited fringes. They had altogether a very singular appearance when moving about with their slow and stately step. We entered the town and rode to the house of an Agayl. We avoided the inhabitants as much as possible, as the sheikh, I was told, was not to be trusted, and would probably endeavour to extort money from a stranger, and especially from a European.

At Semawa we changed our horses. It was full time to do so, as they were so completely knocked up by the heat, the want of water, and insufficient food and rest, that they could not have proceeded much farther. It was wonderful that they had been able to carry us so far.

In order to avoid some Arabs who lived in the marshes



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in the immediate neighbourhood of Semawa, and were notorious thieves, my Agayl hired a boat, which was tracked up the river for about five miles. I lay at the bottom of it, covered by an 'abba,' and almost suffocated, to escape observation. Had I been discovered we should in all probability have been detained with a view to extort money. The fresh horses were waiting for us at a ford by which they had crossed the river.

We mounted, and soon came to vast flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, chiefly buffaloes. They belonged to the Arab tribes which inhabit the Lemloom marshes, and whose low, mat-built huts were to be seen on all sides. We avoided them until we reached a broad and deep stream, which seemed to bar our further progress. We were seeking for a ford when we were surrounded by a crowd of half-naked Arabs with their highly greased hair plaited in several long tails—in appearance scarcely more human than the buffaloes which they tended. They seemed disposed to seize our horses and little property; but after an animated discussion, carried on with guttural yells, in which I took care not to take part—keeping during the time my features as much as possible concealed by my 'keffiyeh'—the Agayl succeeded in coming to an arrangement with them. On the payment of four 'shamees' (about six shillings) we were allowed to go on our way, and a man was sent to point out a ford and to accompany us until we had passed through the tribe.

Our guide, after a short time, requested to be dismissed to return to his tents. We allowed him to go, but before he left us he cut certain notches on the club of the Agayl which would serve as a sign to any Lemloom Arabs whom we might meet that we were under the protection of the tribe and had paid black-mail. It is the custom of the Arabs of this part of Mesopotamia to give passports of this kind. Each subdivision of a tribe has its particular mark, which is recognised and respected by all its other branches. However, we met no more Lemloom Arabs, and after making our way with much toil through the marshes and across watercourses, we at length found ourselves again in the open desert, in which, however, were innumerable remains of

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ancient civilisation—dry beds of canals between lofty embankments of earth, countless mounds covering the ruins of buildings, fragments of pottery and bricks scattered over the soil, and all the other signs and relics of a great and flourishing population. We were in the plain of Babylon, and were approaching the site of that mighty city.

We spent the night in the house of a seyyid, who with his family and servants were then the sole inhabitants of the large village, or rather collection of villages, of Lemloom, which gives its name to the marshes formed by the Euphrates. That river having overflowed its banks, and no attempt having been made by the Turkish Government to retain it in its original bed, a vast tract of country once populous and highly cultivated had been covered with water. The great marsh thus formed extended from above Hillah, an Arab town built on the site of Babylon, to below the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris, at Korna. The seyyid killed a sheep for us, believing me to be an officer in the service of the Pasha of Baghdad, and the Agayl not considering it desirable to undeceive him, as we were still in danger of being stopped and robbed. He would not allow us to continue our journey before daylight, as several lions, he declared, had been seen and heard skulking round the place during the previous night. I wished to brave the danger, which, I was convinced, was much exaggerated, if it existed at all, and to avoid what I considered a more serious peril, the burning rays of the midday sun ; but my companion refused to stir, and it was not until dawn that we resumed our journey.

We stopped in the afternoon in a small village at a short distance from Hillah, on learning that a large party of Shammar Arabs were plundering the country in all directions and that horsemen had been seen during the day on the road to that place. This great Bedouin tribe was then at war with the Pasha of Baghdad, and was committing depredations in this part of the province. In the night we were alarmed by an attack upon the village. There was a great deal of firing ; the men chanted their war-song, and the women made that piercing, quavering noise called the



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'tahlel,' or 'kel,' by striking their open mouths with the palm of their hands, yelling at the same moment. After some time the enemy—whether Bedouins, or more probably thieves seeking to rob the date trees—retired, and I returned to my carpet, which I had spread on the roof of a house.

Before daylight some travellers, who had walked from Hillah, arrived and told us that they had found the road clear of Bedouins. We consequently started at once for that place, which was only four miles distant. On arriving there, I stopped at a coffee-house, to obtain some refreshment, whilst the postman went to find a brother Agayl, in order to inform himself of the state of the country between the town and Baghdad. He was advised to proceed at once, as a considerable force had been sent out by the Pasha of Baghdad against a Shammar sheikh who two days before had attacked and plundered a rich caravan on this road. The Bedouins had probably, therefore, withdrawn to the desert, for the time, with their booty. As we should find on our way the Pasha's horsemen sent out against the marauders, there was no reason to fear any molestation from the Arabs.

My Agayl, acting upon the advice of his friends, decided upon pushing on at once, and after we had eaten some kibabs and rice in a cook-shop in the bazar we mounted our horses. We soon left behind us the palm groves and the great mounds which cover the palaces of ancient Babylon, and found ourselves on the broad and well-beaten caravan track leading to Baghdad.

Parties of irregular horse were stationed at the caravanserais which have been built at regular distances on the much-frequented road between Hillah and Baghdad. Their officers assured us that the road was safe, as the Bedouins had retired to the desert, pursued by the Pasha's troops. We had passed the third of these great buildings, when we saw in the distance, amidst a cloud of dust, a number of horsemen galloping towards us. We at first took them for 'Hytas'—as the Bashi-Bozuks were called by the Arabs—in the service of the Government, sent out to patrol the road, but as they approached we heard the Bedouin war-cry.

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The postman, who was much alarmed, proposed that we should endeavour, by urging on our horses, to reach the nearest caravanserai before the Arabs could overtake us. But as they were rapidly gaining upon us, and it was evident that we had no chance in a race against their high-bred mares, I thought the most prudent course would be to remain where we were, and to trust to my character as a European.

The horsemen, who proved to be of the Shammar tribe, were soon upon us. One or two galloping at full speed towards me, brought their mares up on their haunches when their long quivering spears were almost within a few inches of my body. In an instant, and before I had time to make myself known, the Agayl and I were thrown from our horses. When I fell my 'keffiyeh' dropped off, and exposed a red 'tarbush,' or fez, which I had put on under it to protect my head from the sun. One of the Arabs cried out that I was a 'Toork,' and a man who had dismounted, seizing hold of me as I lay upon the ground, drew a knife and endeavoured to kneel upon my chest. I struggled, thinking that he intended to cut my throat, and called out to one of the party who, mounted upon a fine mare, appeared to be a sheikh, that I was not a 'Toork,' but an Englishman. He ordered the man to release me, and then told me to get up. He was a handsome young man, with a pleasing expression, the most brilliant and restless eyes, the whitest teeth, which he constantly displayed, and long tresses of braided hair falling from under his 'keffiyeh.' Looking at me for a moment he exclaimed, 'Billah! he tells the truth. He is the English "hakim" (doctor) of Baghdad, and he is my friend, and the English are the friends of our tribe.' Then, addressing himself to me, he asked me why I was there alone and without the protection of Sofuk, the great sheikh of the Shammar, who was known to be at war with that 'dog, the son of a dog,' the Pasha of Baghdad, and to have defeated his troops and occupied his country.

It was evident that he either took me for Dr. Ross, of Baghdad, who had more than once visited the celebrated chief of the Shammar, and was well known to the tribe, or

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that he desired to protect me, and had invented an excuse for doing so. I endeavoured to explain to him that I was travelling to Baghdad, and that I was accompanying the Agayl, who was employed by the English 'balios,'[2] in conveying letters, and had consequently never been molested by the Bedouins, and that, as an Englishman, I had no fear of the Shammar, who, I knew, were the friends of the English, and that I placed myself under his protection.

He replied that it was fortunate that I had met with him, as he was a kinsman of Sofuk. Had I been a 'Toork,' my life would have been forfeited, as there was blood between the Shammar and the Osmanli. He then bade me continue my journey. But in the meanwhile his followers had torn open the letter-bags, and had scattered their contents upon the ground. They had also robbed the Agayl of the greater part of his clothing, and had emptied my saddle-bags, taking my watch and compass and a few silver pieces which I possessed. They appeared to be but little under the control of the young sheikh. I appealed to him to restore my property. He ordered the men who had plundered me to do so, but after high words had passed between them they not only refused, but compelled me to give them my 'zibboun,' or long Arab gown, my 'keffiyeh,' and my shoes and stockings, leaving me only my 'tarbush,' Arab shirt, and 'abba.' They then, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Agayl, and his protests against the violation of the compact which, he maintained, existed between the Shammar and his tribe, took possession of our horses, the young chief being unable or unwilling to interfere further in our behalf.

We were left standing alone, almost stripped to the skin. I, however, considered myself fortunate in having escaped with my life. Had it not been for the interposition of the sheikh and for my having been taken for Dr. Ross, I should unquestionably have been put to death for a Turk. The Agayl, who had not recovered from his fright, declared that he had only feared for me, as these dogs of Shammar,

[2] A corruption of 'Bailo,' the title formerly given to the Ambassador of the Venetian Republic at the Porte. Consuls were generally known by the Arabs as 'Balios.'

although they had robbed him, would not have dared to murder him, and have thus caused a blood-feud between the two tribes. But as for me, he said, they would have cut my throat as they would have cut the throat of a sheep.

We then began to collect the letters as fast as we were able. The day was rapidly drawing to a close, and in my utterly destitute condition I was anxious to lose no time in reaching Baghdad. We were still some hours distant from the city. Not being accustomed to walk with bare feet, I suffered the greatest pain and inconvenience from the want of shoes and stockings. The ground was so heated by the sun that it burnt the soles of my feet, which soon began to swell, blister, and bleed. My companion, who had gone barefooted from his birth, did not suffer as I did, and took compassion upon me.

Notwithstanding the great suffering I experienced, I hurried on as fast as I could, fearing lest I should not arrive at Baghdad before the sun rose. It was the beginning of September, and the summer heat had not yet diminished. I felt that I should die of thirst and fatigue if I had to cross the plain before us during the day, and I hoped that we might reach the city before morning. But the night was not to pass without a further adventure. We were suddenly stopped by two Arabs on foot, armed with short, heavy clubs. They demanded our clothes, and as we had no means of resistance, I was compelled to surrender my 'tarbush' and my 'abba,' for which one of the thieves generously gave me his own ragged cloak in exchange. My head was now bare, and as it had been shaved in order to complete my disguise, I had an additional motive for wishing to avoid the scorching rays of a Mesopotamian sun.

My thirst during the night was almost more than I could bear. Only once I was able to quench it. Under the walls of the last caravanserai we found a small caravan preparing to depart for Hillah. With it were one or two Agayls who were known to my companion. They offered me a skin filled with 'leben,' or sour milk, and I drank until I could drink no longer. Thus refreshed, notwithstanding the

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tortures that I had suffered from my feet, I felt fresh courage to continue our journey.

As the dawn drew near I could distinguish, with a joy and thankfulness that I cannot describe, the long line of palm groves which cover the banks of the Tigris above and below Baghdad. We soon reached the river, and as it was necessary to cross it, the Agayl went in search of a boatman whom he knew. He shortly returned with a 'kufa,' a circular boat made of reeds overlaid with bitumen, the owner of which quickly ferried us to the opposite bank. We landed in a garden outside the city walls, and near one of the gates. It was still closed and would not be opened until sunrise. I sank down on the ground, overcome with fatigue and pain.

A crowd of men and women bringing the produce of their gardens, laden on donkeys, to the bazars, were waiting for the moment when they were to be admitted. At length the sun rose and the gate was thrown open. Two cawasses of the British Residency, in their gold-embroidered uniforms, came out, driving before them with their courbashes the Arabs who were outside, to make way for a party of mounted European ladies and gentlemen. It was the same party that, on my previous visit to Baghdad, I had almost daily accompanied on their morning rides. They passed close to me, but did not recognise me in the dirty Arab in rags crouched near the entrance, nor, clothed as I was, could I venture to make myself known to them. But at a little distance behind them came Dr. Ross. I called to him, and he turned towards me in the utmost surprise, scarcely believing his senses when he saw me without cover to my bare head, with naked feet, and in my tattered 'abba.'

Very few words sufficed to explain my position. He ordered a 'syce,' or groom, who was following him, to give me his horse, and helping me to mount, which I had much difficulty in doing, took me to his house.

My first thought was to go to the bath, and to rid myself of my filthy clothing. I found Saleh the Lur, whom I had met at Kermanshah, in the service of Dr. Ross. I sent him to the bazar to buy me fresh garments. As I had determined to continue to wear the Persian dress, there was no difficulty

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in finding what I required ready made. After spending two hours in the bath and feeling, as it were, new life in me, I returned to my kind host, clean, decently clothed, and thoroughly refreshed. A long sleep in an English bed, three or four days' complete rest, and the medical skill of Dr. Ross, aided by a vigorous constitution which had been by this time inured to privation and fatigue, soon restored me to my usual strength and health. It was, however, some time before I could walk without pain and discomfort ; but my wounded feet were at last completely healed.

On the very day of my arrival, Dr. Ross sent a messenger to Sofuk, the sheikh of the Shammar, to whom, as to most of the Bedouin chiefs, he was well known, on account of the medical aid he had frequently given them, and the tact and generous kindness which he showed in dealing with the Arabs. In a letter he remonstrated against the treatment I had received, and requested the sheikh to restore the property taken from me and from the Agayl. The tents of the renowned Bedouin chief, who was at war with the Pasha, and whose horsemen where ravaging the country almost to the gates of Baghdad, were not far distant from the city. The messenger returned in a few days with my watch and compass, and all that had been taken from me except the few silver coins. The Agayl, too, recovered his horses. Sofuk wrote at the same time to Dr. Ross, expressing his regret that I should have been robbed and ill-treated by his people, and protesting his friendship for the English. If I wished to pass through the desert again, he said, I had only to ask for his protection. I had been mistaken for a Turk, and, there being blood between his tribe and the Osmanli, the Shammar had a right to take the life of a Turk wherever he might be found. But if I would visit him in his tents he would send his own son for me, and with him I might journey from one end of Mesopotamia to the other 'with a tray of gold upon my head.' Some years after, when among the Shammar, I met the sheikh whose followers had robbed me, and who had saved me from a worse fate. He had not forgotten me. 'Ya Bej !' he exclaimed, embracing me. 'You are now my brother, but had I not remembered

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the English hakim of Baghdad when you fell into our hands, by Allah ! you would have been put to death as an accursed Turk.'

There were still some questions connected with the course and navigation of the Karun that I was desirous of settling, and some important ruins in Susiana which I wished to explore. I had been prevented doing so when in Khuzistan in consequence of the disturbed state of the country. Lieutenant Selby, of the Indian Navy, who commanded the 'Assyria,'[3] offered to take me to Basra. I gladly availed myself of the opportunity to descend the Tigris from Baghdad to its junction with the Euphrates. I hoped further to prevail upon him to allow me to examine in his vessel the mouths of the Kerkhah and of the Karun, as well as that of the Shat-el-Arab, or united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris. We left Baghdad early in October.

We stopped on our way, for some hours, at the so-called tomb of the Prophet Ezra, about twenty-five miles from the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates at Korna. It is a place of pilgrimage for the Jews, who flock there in large numbers at certain times of the year. The Musulmans also hold the place in great reverence ; but the Jews claim the right to maintain and keep in repair the building, which is of comparatively modern date. It consisted of two chambers—an outer one which was empty, and an inner one containing the tomb believed to be that of the Prophet, built of bricks covered with white stucco, and enclosed in a wooden case, over which was thrown a large blue cloth fringed with yellow tassels, with the name of the donor embroidered on it in Hebrew characters. The building was crowned by a white oval cupola seen from afar, and surrounded by a wall. At the time of our visit it was falling to ruin, and the Jews of Baghdad were collecting money to restore it. There was no one there to take care of it, and we were told that it was so much respected by the Arabs that it did not require a guardian. There was,

[3] One of the two small armed steamers—the other was the 'Nitocris' —belonging to the East India Company's Navy, employed in the navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers.

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indeed, nothing in it for them to rob, and as good Musulmans they would not wantonly desecrate the grave of a prophet equally honoured by Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians. The tradition that Ezra was buried on this spot is of very ancient date. Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the place in the twelfth century, mentions the tomb as existing in his time, and describes it as being held in great veneration both by Jews and Mohammedans.

After entering at Korna the united streams of the Tigris and Euphrates, forming the fine estuary known as the Shat-el-Arab, the banks of which are clothed for many miles with dense groves of palm trees, we endeavoured to pass into the Kerkhah. We were only able to ascend this river for a short distance, as, after having deserted its ancient bed, as I have described, it was no longer navigable.

We then descended the Shat-el-Arab to Muhammera. We found its population in a state of great excitement and agitation in consequence of the rumoured approach of the Matamet, who, it was said, had determined to punish Sheikh Thamer for the protection he had afforded to Mehemet Taki Khan. The sheikh himself was preparing to leave his country, and to take refuge in Turkish territory, as he did not believe that he could prevent the advance upon Fellahiyah of the Persian army supported by several powerful Arab tribes which had submitted to the Shah's government.

We passed through the Hafar, which, as I have already mentioned, connects the Shat-el-Arab with the Karun, and ascended the latter river for a short distance. The examination that I was able to make of these streams convinced me that the Hafar was an artificial canal, constructed at some former period for the purpose of leading the waters of the Karun into the Euphrates. I further ascertained that of the several mouths of the Karun which still appeared in our maps, only one then existed—that known to the Arabs as the Bahmeh-Shir, through which we passed into the Persian Gulf.

As the Karun was at this season of the year at its lowest level, and the country through which it flows was in a very

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disturbed state, we considered it prudent not to attempt its ascent further than was necessary to ascertain where the Hafar commenced. Having settled this point, we returned to the Shat-el-Arab, reserving for another opportunity the further exploration of the river. I had, however, obtained information as to the original course of the two streams, upon which the respective frontier claims of Turkey and Persia mainly depended.

On our way back to Baghdad we stopped for a night at the encampment of Sheikh Mathkur, the chief of the Beni Lam Arabs. It was on the left, or eastern bank, of the Tigris, and extended for about two miles in an almost continuous line of black tents. The plains beyond were covered with flocks of sheep and goats, and herds of camels and buffaloes. These Arabs, fearing an attack from the Matamet, had left their usual pastures at the foot of the mountains of Luristan, and had congregated on the borders of the river in Turkish territory, where, they believed, the Persians would not venture to follow them.

I landed with Lieutenant Selby at the tent of the sheikh. He returned our visit on board the 'Assyria.' As I was desirous, if time would permit me, to visit his territories, which were said to contain important ruins, and as the Beni Lam had the reputation of being lawless robbers, we did our best to establish friendly relations with him. He was well pleased with a few trifling presents that were made to him, and was especially interested in the machinery of the vessel, which was made to work for his amusement. I spoke to him of my desire to see his country and the ancient remains of which I had heard. He promised me his protection, and invited me to be his guest. As, before undertaking the journey, I had to make some preparations, I parted with him, promising to return.

We stopped for some hours to allow me to visit the magnificent ruins of the palace of Chosroes, at Ctesiphon, which on a previous occasion I had not been able to examine thoroughly, on account of a severe attack of fever from which I was then suffering. I had now a most favourable opportunity, with the assistance of Lieutenant

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Selby and the crew of the 'Assyria,' to explore every part of this stupendous edifice.[4]

[4] I had, on my previous visit, been deserted by the Arab from whom I had hired a horse. Seeing from the ruin one of the English steamers in the distance ascending the Tigris, I determined to seek a passage on board of her to Baghdad. But a deep marsh separated me from the river-banks, and I could not reach them without wading through it. I succeeded in crossing it, and, signalling to Captain Felix Jones, who commanded the vessel, was taken on board. He used to relate how, seeing something white waving in the marsh, he looked through his telescope and perceived the head of a European just above the level of the water, which excited his curiosity, and how he had landed and had fished me out of the morass, drenched to the skin and shivering with ague.

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## CHAPTER XV

*Leave Baghdad for Khuzistan—Sheikh Mathkur—Saleh the Lur—Tŷb—Robbed—Ruins of Kerkh—Kala Haji Ali—Reach Shuster—Hatem Khan—Kala Dokhter—Bakhtiyari Ilyats—The Diz of Jaffer Kuli Khan—The plain of Shimbor—The Puli-Neghin—Anecdotes of bears—The Tangi-Butun—Ancient sculptures—Return to the Diz—Leave for Shuster—The Musjedi-Suleiman—Flight of Sheikh Thamer—Mehemet Taki Khan in chains—Khatun-jan—Her sufferings and adventures—Ali Naghi Khan—Hussein Kuli—Take leave of Khatun-jan Khanum.*

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THERE were still sites of great interest in the Bakhtiyari Mountains and in Khuzistan which I had been unable to visit, owing to the disturbed state of the country, and some important geographical questions to be determined. I was also desirous of learning the fate of Mehemet Taki Khan and his family, and of my other friends of Kala Tûl. As the principal sheikh of the Beni Lam Arabs had promised me his help and protection in passing through his tribe, which inhabits the plains to the east of the Tigris, I determined to avail myself of the opportunity to reach Dizful and Shuster through a district then quite unknown, and which was said to contain the ruins of several ancient cities. I thought that I could not better employ my time whilst waiting for letters from England than in continuing my researches in Susiana, and especially in examining its rivers and ascertaining its commercial capabilities.

As Lieutenant Selby was returning to Basra, I availed myself of his offer to land me at the encampment of Sheikh Mathkur on his way. We left Baghdad on the last day of October in the 'Assyria.' As the river was very low, we could not proceed after dark, and as we constantly

grounded on sandbanks, it was November 7 before we reached the sheikh's tents. They had been much reduced in number since we had seen them a month before, many of the Arabs having returned to their pastures inland, as their fears of an attack from the Persian troops had ceased.

Sheikh Mathkur received us civilly and renewed his offer to assist me in my journey. Although he had the reputation of being treacherous and untrustworthy, and his tribe, the Beni Lam, of being one of the most lawless of those which encamp on the banks of the Tigris, I had no reason to doubt, after the assurances he had given me, and after I had eaten of his bread, that he would fulfil his promises and see me safely through his country. Lieutenant Selby left me at the sheikh's tent, and, returning to his vessel, continued his voyage to Basra.

The 'Assyria' was scarcely out of sight when it became evident that Sheikh Mathkur, probably suspicious of the object of my journey, was determined to throw every obstacle in my way. He had promised to help me in buying two horses, but instead of doing so he contrived that those which were brought to me for sale were either quite unfit to perform a long journey, or that a larger price was asked for them than I was willing or able to give. I then endeavoured, but in vain, to hire mules to take me to Dizful. However, on the following morning I was able to buy two horses which appeared to be strong, hardy animals, capable of performing the journey, and well worth the small sum I paid for them.

I had taken with me, as a servant and companion, Saleh the Lur. I knew him to be brave, faithful, and trustworthy, and as he had already travelled among the Arabs and had acquired some knowledge of their language, and as he belonged to the mountain tribes amongst which I should probably find myself, I had every reason to expect that he would prove very useful to me.

I was soon ready to start, and asked Sheikh Mathkur to send a horseman with me as a guide and for my protection as far as Dizful. He consented to do so, but only on condition of being paid a sum of money. When I expressed

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my surprise at this demand, after the promises he had made to me and the presents and civilities he had received from Lieutenant Selby and myself, he declared that he could not compel any one to accompany me, and that nobody would do so in the then dangerous state of the country without an adequate reward.

After a long and angry discussion I came to the conclusion that I would have either to give up my journey or to submit to the sheikh's demand. I therefore, in the end, agreed to pay him twenty-two 'kirâns,'[1] as he affirmed that that sum was required to induce an Arab to go with me. One Abud, who was related to Sheikh Mathkur—the two no doubt sharing the money—then professed himself ready to accompany me. This negotiation had occupied the whole morning, and it was past midday before we left the encampment.

The plains to the west of Dizful had been deserted by the Arabs, owing to their recent invasion by Persian troops. Owing to this state of things the country through which I had to pass was considered to be in a very dangerous state. If we met Arab horsemen on our road the presence of Abud would be a protection to me; but Sheikh Mathkur warned me that he could not insure my safety if I fell into the hands of the Faili Lurs, who, taking advantage of the general disorder, occasionally descended into the plains from their mountain fastnesses for the purpose of plundering the Beni Lam.

We stopped for the night at an Arab encampment. The sheikh received me very hospitably, killed a sheep, and placed before me a substantial 'tabak'—a mess of boiled meat and rice served in great wooden bowls—of which he and his people did not scruple to partake with me, dipping their fingers into the same dish, although they were Shi'as, and knew me to be a Christian and consequently unclean.

Abud left his mare at the tents, and followed me next day on foot, but did not explain his reason for doing so.

[1] The Persian 'kirân' was then worth about a shilling.

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We kept for some time along the banks of the Hud, a broad, deep stream which issues from the Tigris and is lost in marshes. Upon it were numerous encampments of the Beni Lam Arabs. We found no means of crossing it, as it was not fordable, until we met with a poor seyyid who was tracking a boat containing his wife and children and little property. He very obligingly ferried us over. We then struck across a flat country, which, when flooded by the Tigris in the spring, is converted into a vast swamp.

In the afternoon, after we had stopped to eat at some tents belonging to a branch of the Beni Lam tribe called the Sa'ad, an Arab on foot joined us. Abud pretended that this man had been sent to accompany me, and that I must pay him. I refused, and he threatened to leave me; but seeing that I was determined to proceed alone, he remained. As he walked, our progress was very slow, and he soon declared that he was so footsore that he could not proceed any further unless he rode. I was consequently under the necessity of making Saleh cede his horse to him. We fell in with a small 'kâfila,' or caravan, of donkeys laden with rice, on its way to Patak, a district of Luristan. It stopped for the night at a spot where there was no water, and as Abud would not travel after dark for fear of robbers and lions, I had to remain with it.

Although pressed to be his guest at Patak by a young Lur who accompanied the caravan, and by whose frank and manly bearing, contrasting so strongly with that of the Beni Lam Arabs, I was much struck, we separated from our fellow-travellers of the previous day, and leaving our resting-place two hours before dawn, reached at daybreak an Arab encampment and stopped a short time to breakfast. I was desirous of exploring some ruins which were said to exist in the neighbourhood, and were supposed to mark the site of the very ancient city of Tîb, which, according to the Arab geographers, belonged to the Nabatheans, or Sabæans, and was founded by Seth, the son of Adam. It was renowned in the early history of Eastern Christianity and of the Arab conquest. These ruins had not been visited by any European traveller.

We crossed a small stream of brackish water still bearing



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the name of Tîb. The ruins, which are at some distance from it, are called Shahr Tîb, or sometimes Shahritch, and consist of a number of mounds, the largest being between thirty and forty feet above the present level of the plain. They are enclosed by the remains of a quadrangular wall about three miles square. The space within and the country around were strewed with fragments of pottery, brick, and glass—the usual indications of the site of an ancient city—and I could trace the foundations of many buildings. But I could find no inscriptions nor sculptures. I was much disappointed after the wonderful accounts that had reached me of the ruins, and I received a fresh warning not to trust to the exaggerated descriptions of ignorant Arabs and Lurs. Excavations would have been necessary to ascertain whether the mounds of earth covered the remains of buildings, and I had only time for a hasty survey. It was evident, however, that a city of considerable extent once occupied the site, which is now without water, except such as is gathered in an artificial reservoir. The Arabs have a tradition that the river Tîb once flowed through it, and traces of its former bed may yet be seen.

During the remainder of that day and the following we made but little progress over a barren country, and across low stony hills and sand-drifts. Saleh, in his turn, became sorefooted, but Abud refused to give up the horse which I had lent him, and caused me much annoyance by constantly asking for money, and by throwing difficulties in my way when I wanted to examine ruins. He and the Beni Lam Arabs at whose tents we stopped did not conceal their suspicions as to the object of my visiting their country. It was to spy it out, and to find by inscriptions where its ancient owners, who were Europeans, had concealed their treasures, which they were coming with an army to recover.

Then he pretended to be in fear of the Arabs, who, having been robbed of everything by the Matamet, plundered, in return, every one they met, and would have no respect for the protection that Sheikh Mathkur had accorded to me. He was continually pressing me to engage horsemen as guards, which I refused to do. However, three men,

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mounted on Arab mares and armed with spears, joined us at his request. One of them was a youth, who, after a time, declared that he must leave us to join his tribe, whose tents, he said, were near. Abud, for whom I had succeeded in hiring a horse, wished me to detain him by force, fearing, he pretended, that, knowing the road we intended to take, he might return with others to rob us. Saleh was about to seize him, but I peremptorily forbade him to do so, convinced that the whole was a trick to extort money. I was confirmed in my suspicions when, after communicating apart with Abud, he remained with us.

We came in the middle of the day to some springs of sweet water, the source of a small stream called Bogrib. Here we dismounted to prepare some food, and the Arabs lighted a fire with the dry dung of the cattle of an encampment which had recently been on the spot. Abud renewed his demands for more money. Suddenly two of the men who had joined us threw themselves upon Saleh, who was off his guard, pulled him to the ground, and deprived him of his pistol and dagger. Indignant at having been thus surprised and disarmed, he was about to throw himself upon his assailants, who had drawn their swords. I prepared to defend myself with my gun, which I had not allowed to leave my hand. However, resistance under the circumstances would have been useless, and had blood been shed by either Saleh or myself we should inevitably have been murdered. I thought it best, therefore, to parley and to endeavour to come to terms. But Abud's demands were so exorbitant that it was altogether out of my power to comply with them.

After some discussion, the Arabs directed me to mount my horse, and led me with Saleh to another spring not far off. Here they again menaced to kill us unless I gave them all the money I had with me. I only had on my person sixty 'kirâns.' I had confided the remainder of the small sum I had brought from Baghdad to the care of Saleh, whom, fortunately, they did not search, not suspecting from his appearance and the state of his clothes that he was likely to possess money. There was nothing to be done but to yield, and I gave them what I had, threatening to lodge a com-



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plaint with the Pasha of Baghdad against Sheikh Mathkur and his relative, Abud.

After two hours' detention we resumed our journey over a broad plain, which in spring is covered with herbage and flowers. It was then uninhabited, the Arabs and Faili Lurs who usually encamp upon it having fled to escape from the Persian troops. Towards evening a thunderstorm, with incessant lightning and peals of thunder, broke over us, and, as we could find no tents in which to take refuge, I was soon drenched to the skin. At nightfall we crossed some low hills, which are considered the boundaries of the Beni Lam territory, and consequently the frontier between Turkey and Persia. About five miles from them we passed through the ruins of the ancient Sassanian city of Kerkh, or Kerkha-Ladan, the seat of an early Christian bishopric. They still retain the name of Iwan-Kerkhah. It was too dark for me to examine them, but I could see the lofty mounds and the remains of a vast building looming against the sky.

As the Kerkhah was divided into four channels near these ruins, we had no difficulty in fording it. Abud and his Arabs now left me, as they were no longer on Beni Lam territory, and could not, they said, venture beyond the river for fear of falling into the hands of the Persians. I rode on alone with Saleh until about midnight, when we heard the distant barking of dogs, which directed us to a small mud fort. The only entrance to it was closed. We knocked at it violently, but it was long before we roused a man who unbarred the gate, and then returned to his sleep in the vaulted porch, leaving us to shift for ourselves. As large loose stones had been placed in the gateway, we had some difficulty in getting our horses into the castle yard. Having at length reached it, we picketed them in an open space and closed the gate again. The place was filled with sheep and cattle, and as there was no one stirring we had to lie down supperless among them. We had been fourteen hours on horseback, and, although wet to the skin, I was soon asleep.

The little castle in which we passed the night was called Kala Haji Ali. Its inhabitants rose at daybreak to send

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their flocks and herds to pasture. They were surprised to find two strangers in their midst, sleeping on the ground. They awoke us, and offered us such provisions as they had, consisting chiefly of newly-baked cakes of unleavened bread, dates, and various preparations of milk. Dizful was visible in the distance, about eight miles across the plain. The temperature of the morning, after the thunderstorm of the previous evening, was truly delightful. The outlines of the lofty mountains of Luristan, their summits covered with snow, were sharply defined against the cloudless sky. On all sides were seen villages surrounded by gardens and graceful palm trees. Sheep and cattle were scattered over the plain. The scene appeared to me all the more beautiful after my long and toilsome journey through the desolate and inhospitable country of the Beni Lam. I have never forgotten that morning ride, for, in addition to the exquisite enjoyment I experienced from the balmy air and the landscape, there was a feeling of thankfulness at having escaped with my life from the hands of Abud and his Arabs.

I forded the river of Dizful, the water reaching to my saddle, and rode to a fine house in a garden which I saw near. It belonged to a chief of Dizful, whose father had been murdered in the previous year. He received me very kindly, and I passed the day under his hospitable roof. I found with him a connection of the Bakhtiyari chief, his namesake, from whom I obtained some news of my friends of Kala Tul.

I was anxious to penetrate into a part of the mountains of Luristan which I had not yet explored, and especially to visit Jaffer Kuli Khan, the principal chief of the great Bakhtiyari tribe of Haft Lang, in his renowned 'diz,' or hill fort, which had the reputation of being impregnable. I thought it best to do so before my presence in Khuzistan was known to the Matamet and the Persian authorities, who would, no doubt, prevent me from carrying out my intention. I therefore resolved to endeavour to make my way without loss of time to the residence of this chieftain. Accordingly, I left my courteous host about midday, and, avoiding the town of Dizful, rode across the country in the direction of

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Shuster. I reached in the evening a small village almost deserted by its inhabitants, where I could obtain but little food for myself or my horses. Nearly all the other villages on my road had been abandoned on account of the exactions of the Persian authorities.

I reached Shuster in the evening, and went at once to the house of Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, upon whose friendship and discretion I could rely. He received me with his usual kindness, and immediately set about making arrangements for my visit to the 'diz' of Jaffer Kuli Khan, procuring for me a letter to the 'ket-khudâ' of the district of Jalakun, who was requested to send me there in safety.

I left Shuster at daybreak next morning, and after a few hours' ride reached the principal village in Jalakun. I was received by Mulla Habib, the chief for whom I had the letter, very cordially. There was staying in his 'musif' one Hâtem Khan, a chief of the Bakhtiyari tribe of Mal-Ahmedi. As he happened to be going on some business to Jaffer Kuli Khan, he proposed that I should accompany him, an offer which I readily accepted, and we rode together to the village of Gotwand.

Hâtem Khan proved a very lively companion. He entertained me during our ride with stories about the Bakhtiyari, and especially about his own tribe and his ancestors, who had been taken by Nadir Shah to Herat, Kandahar, and the Seistan, whence, after that monarch's death, they had succeeded in returning to their native mountains. At night he drew the whole population of the village round him, and what with his tales, and with Saleh's loud, discordant singing, which appeared to be greatly relished, I could get but little sleep.

On the following day we entered a gorge in the mountains through which the Karun bursts into the low country. On either side of it were the ruins of two ancient castles, which had been constructed for the defence of the passage, probably in the days of the Sassanian kings. The Lurs called them the Kala Dokhter, or the Maiden's Castles, and ascribed them, as they do most other great works, to Rustem, the popular hero of Persian romance. Near them were numerous

rock-cut chambers, similar to those in other parts of the mountains, in which the fire-worshippers of old are said to have exposed their dead. We crossed a steep ridge into a deep valley, well watered and with rich pasturage, where we found a number of Iliyat families who had just arrived from their summer pastures, and were preparing to pitch their tents. They immediately got one ready for us, and the women set to work to prepare our repast. To reward them for their hospitality Hâtem Khan recited, in a sing-song way, verses from the odes of Hafiz and the Shah-Nameh, and Saleh entertained them with stories to a late hour of the night.

The next morning we passed many Iliyats with their flocks and cattle descending from the mountains to their winter quarters. It was a very animated scene. We stopped for some of our party to say their prayers at a small Imaum-Zadeh much venerated by the Lurs, as marking the spot where the Imaum Riza is said to have rested when flying from his infidel enemies. It was situated in a deep warm valley, and watered by a copious stream upon whose banks grew palm, fig, and pomegranate trees and vines. Whilst my friends were praying, a party of Bakhtiyari arrived with a corpse which they were about to bury in the sacred ground. The last ceremonies having been performed over the deceased, and the body washed and enveloped in its shroud and placed in the grave, we smoked a kaleôn with the mourners and then continued our journey.

The mountain stronghold of Jaffer Kuli Khan soon appeared in the distance—a huge mass of rock rising perpendicularly out of the valley. After a very difficult and dangerous descent, we found ourselves at the mouth of a cave at the foot of it. In this cave were seated several chiefs from a neighbouring tribe, who were waiting to see the Khan. He shortly afterwards appeared, and after giving me a friendly welcome, begged me to allow him to settle some business with them. When he had done so, and they had mounted their horses and had departed, he invited me to ascend to the top of the 'diz' with him. Taking hold of the shawl round my waist with a firm grasp, he almost dragged me up its perpendicular sides, evidently much

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delighted with the impression which this extraordinary hill-fort could not fail to make upon me.

I had been very desirous of making the acquaintance of Jaffer Kuli Khan, but very doubtful as to the reception that awaited me, as he was known to be exceedingly suspicious of strangers and especially jealous of his stronghold, which he would allow only those in whom he had the most complete trust and confidence to ascend. I was consequently not a little surprised at the way in which he had received me, and his readiness to take me to the top of the 'diz.' From all I had heard of this chief I had formed the worst opinion of his character. He was said to be treacherous and bloodthirsty, to have no respect for an oath, nor for the laws of hospitality, nor for the sacred ties of family. He was reported, I believe truly, to have murdered no less than fourteen of his relations, including one of his own brothers, who stood in his way in obtaining the chieftainship of his tribe. As a freebooter he was notorious, and his name was feared far beyond his mountains even up to the gates of Isfahan. The 'chapous,' or marauding expeditions, which he led with dauntless courage, were the dread of caravans and of the peaceful villagers of the plains. His followers were the most daring, turbulent, and savage of all the Bakhtiyari clans. It need scarcely be said that he was constantly in hot water with the Persian Government, which had frequently sent troops against him. But he had always managed to escape by shutting himself up in his impregnable 'diz,' or by taking refuge among the Arabs.

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At the time of my visit to him he was the chief, as I have mentioned, of one of the two great branches of the Bakhtiyari tribe. Since the fall of Mehemet Taki Khan, of whom he had long been the rival, and with whom he had been constantly at war, the Matamet had recognised him as the head of the Haft-Lang, and had placed several important districts of Khuzistan under his authority, on the understanding that he would renounce his evil habits, abandon 'chapous,' furnish a contingent of horsemen in the expedition against the Cha'b, and remit his tribute punctually to the royal treasury.

I found on the top of the 'diz' an old friend from Kala Tul, Haji Hassan, the tutor of Mehemet Taki Khan's children. He was rejoiced to see me, and gave me a touching account of the misfortunes that had befallen him since we had parted.

Jaffer Kuli Khan was one of the few Bakhtiyari chiefs who were not particular in the observance of the commands of the Prophet as to intoxicating liquors. We had scarcely seated ourselves in the 'diwan-khana' when a large tray of sweetmeats and dried fruits was brought in, with a huge bottle filled with Shiraz wine. The wine was sour, but I could not refuse to drink with my host, who soon got affectionately intimate, poured out his griefs, and cursed the Persians, the Shah, the Matamet, and the Government. Hearing that Saleh was acquainted with Lur ditties, he sent for him and made him sing, to the accompaniment of the measured beating of fingers on small drums. When he had drunk more than enough, an excellent supper was served, and I retired to rest not a little astonished at my reception by the man of whom I had heard so evil a report, and in whose hands, I was warned, I could not trust myself with safety. I was almost disposed to suspect that he had inveigled me into his stronghold with the intention of not letting me out of it again.

Early on the following morning the chief directed the guardian of the 'diz,' an old man named Sheikh Fereydun, to show me over it. 'Diz' is the name given by the Lurs to a hill-fort not requiring artificial defences, and considered impregnable. There are several of these natural strongholds in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, belonging to different chiefs, the most celebrated being that of Mungasht, in the occupation of Mehemet Taki Khan, and the one which I was visiting, usually known as the Diz Assad Khan, from the father of its present owner. Its ancient name was Diz Melekân, or the Diz of the Angels, from a Lur legend that it was delivered into the hands of the Bakhtiyari by angels, as its summit could not possibly have been reached by mortals without their aid. It had been for eight generations in the possession of the family of Jaffer Kuli Khan. It

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consists of a mass of fossiliferous limestone rock,[2] about three miles in circumference, which rises in the centre of a valley or basin surrounded by lofty mountains. Its almost perpendicular sides have the appearance, from a distance, of having been artificially scarped. At its foot the rocky ground slopes rapidly, and could be easily defended by a few resolute men. A track leads to the spacious cavern in which I was first received, and which served for the 'diwan-khana,' and for a stable for the chief's horses. His guests were entertained here, never being allowed to ascend to the upper part of the 'diz.'

Some steps, rudely cut in the face of the cliff, and a long wooden ladder, led to a narrow ledge, whence by the aid of ropes and of holes big enough to hold the foot, the lower 'diz' could be reached. This was a platform, upon which were the ruins of some houses built of roughly-hewn stones. Here Jaffer Kuli Khan and his wives and children resided, at the time of my visit, in black goat-hair tents. On it there was a small perennial spring, and several large reservoirs for collecting rain-water, apparently of ancient date, cut in the rock.

The upper 'diz' was also only accessible from the lower by the aid of ladders and ropes. It consisted of a spacious table-land, covered for the most part with arable soil, capable of producing wheat, and of supporting a small flock of sheep and goats, amongst which were a few wild sheep and chamois, which had been brought to the rock and had remained there, whilst the ibex, as Jaffer Kuli Khan told me, always contrived to make its escape. As it does not possess a spring like the lower 'diz,' only rain-water collected in artificial reservoirs is found on it. There were a few remains of buildings, possibly of the Sassanian period. The Lurs say that a machine for grinding corn, worked by the wind, once existed there, but that the secret of it had been lost. I endeavoured in vain to explain to the chief the construction of a windmill. It is very probable that this

[2] In consequence of the number of small fossils, like grains of rice, which it contains, it is called the 'sangi-perinj,' or the rice-stone, and is much valued in Persia for making the heads of kaleôns.

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natural stronghold may have been a place of defence and refuge from time immemorial. No one but his wives and children with their female attendants, and six or seven trustworthy retainers, were allowed by Jaffer Kuli Khan to reside on its summit. These men were considered sufficient for the defence of the 'diz' during his absence, and were commanded in case of danger to remove the ladders and to cut off all communication with the valley beneath. The chief would not permit even his own brothers to ascend to it. Having himself been guilty of murdering his relations, he probably feared to meet with the same fate.

This remarkable natural fortress might be impregnable to the mountain tribes and to the ill-disciplined troops of the Shah, but not to a European force. The platforms on the summit could, no doubt, be shelled ; but there are caves and places of refuge upon it in which its defenders and their families would be perfectly secure. As long as their provisions—of which an ample supply was constantly kept—and their water lasted, they could hold out.

After I had visited all parts of the 'diz' with Sheikh Fereydun, I returned to the 'diwan-khana.' Jaffer Kuli Khan was waiting for me, to have another drinking bout with his sour Shiraz wine before breakfasting. He was in high good-humour, and talked of the Matamet's expedition and its results upon the Bakhtiyari tribes. If, he said, Mehemet Taki Khan and his brothers had taken refuge with him, although they were his enemies, he would not have delivered them up to the Matamet, and would have resisted any attempt on the part of the Persians to possess themselves of them by force, even at the risk of his own life and the lives of his children.

When I expressed some astonishment at what he had said, as I had heard that there was a blood-feud between his family and that of Mehemet Taki Khan, he replied with much warmth : 'I will tell you the truth, Sahib Khan. We Bakhtiyari are all fools. So long as we are powerful and strong, and do not fear the Persians, we must needs be at enmity amongst ourselves and seek each other's lives. As soon, however, as one of us has fallen before the common

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enemy, the others become his protector. We cannot endure that those dogs of Turks[3] should interfere between us. Were we but united, these mountains would never be trodden by them, for they are women not men. You were the friend of Mehemet Taki Khan, and when he fled to the Cha'b you buckled on your "kesh-kemer"[4] and followed him, whilst we Bakhtiyari went against him and aided his enemies. Those who ought to have helped him deserted him. I wish to be the friend of one who has thus shown himself a better man than us Musulmans. You are welcome to my "diz," and you will always be so. This is a proof of my confidence in you; for my own brothers are not permitted to ascend to it —and as for those Turks, they shall never come within sight of it.'

On the third day of my residence on the 'diz' Jaffer Kuli Khan received a summons from the Matamet to join him immediately with five hundred horsemen of his tribe. He made arrangements accordingly, and left his stronghold in charge of Sheikh Fereydun. He begged me to remain as long as it might be agreeable to me, and ordered some matchlock-men to be ready to accompany me to any place that I might wish to visit in his mountains.

Six matchlock-men only were left on the top of the 'diz' for its defence. When about to depart the chief said to me, 'I have not a friend in the world whom I can trust, not even my own brother. If any one comes to the "diz" let him have bread at its foot and then bid him continue his journey. This is not a place for guests. If the Matamet should treacherously make me a prisoner, as he did Mehemet Taki Khan, and you are weary of staying here, I entreat of you to shoot my wives and my children rather than allow them to fall into the hands of the Matamet to be dishonoured by the ser-bâz.'

I had no wish to remain in charge of Jaffer Kuli Khan's stronghold, nor to find myself under the necessity of

[3] As is well known, the Shah and the governing class in Persia are of Turkish origin, and are looked down upon consequently by those of pure Persian stock like the Bakhtiyari.

[4] Belt to which the powder-flasks, &c., are attached.

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carrying out his instructions with respect to his wives and children. I, therefore, begged him to allow me to make an excursion at once to a place in the mountains, where I had been informed there were sculptures and inscriptions carved in the rocks, promising to return in a few days to the 'diz.' He consented, and when he rode off to collect his retainers, I mounted my horse and went in a different direction, followed by the men whom he had directed to accompany me.

The principal object of my journey was to reach the plain of Shimbor, where, I had been told, ancient monuments existed. I learnt from the Iliyats whom I met on my way, and who were migrating to their winter pastures, that there were still tents there, although it was usually deserted by the Bakhtiyari at this season of the year. I also heard that I should meet everywhere on my road with Iliyats, who were descending in large numbers from their summer camping-grounds to the low country. There was consequently no danger to be apprehended, and I left my guard of matchlock-men at the tents of one Baraud, where I passed the night—his brother, Aidi, volunteering to accompany me as a guide and protector. As he seemed to be a trustworthy fellow, I gave him my second horse to ride, leaving Saleh behind. He proved an intelligent and amusing companion, well versed in the lore and legends of the tribes.

We passed the burial-place of a holy 'pir,' or Lur saint, called Ahmed Bedal, and crossing some hills descended into the small plain of Andakou. Beyond this plain, in the hills, we fell in with some Iliyats of the Duraki tribe, who, taking advantage of the disorder and confusion which reigned in the mountains, had refused to acknowledge the authority of either Jaffer Kuli Khan or his rival, Kelb Ali Khan. Aidi, fearing that they might stop us, invented a story, in which I had to acquiesce, that I was an officer of the regular troops sent on business by the Matamet to Kelb Ali Khan. In order to sustain my character and to make myself look as much like a 'ser-bâz' as possible I concealed my felt cap and put on the lambskin 'kulâ' which I carried in my saddle-bag. I was not recognised as I rode through the encampment, but was taken for a Persian.

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We then entered a very narrow defile, formed by lofty precipitous cliffs, and blocked up with huge rocks, over which we experienced the greatest difficulty in dragging our horses. It was called Tangi-Shilor. In the defile was an encampment of the Gandali, a Bakhtiyari tribe, at the foot of a high mountain called Dallan, which we had to cross to get to Shimbor. They invited us to remain for the night in their tents, as we should be unable, they said, to reach before dark even the summit of the pass, which was one of the most difficult in the range, and we should probably have to remain for the night without shelter or food for ourselves or our horses. However, I would not listen to their advice, but commenced the ascent, the men following us for some distance, continuing to urge us to stay until the following morning.

Their warnings proved to be well justified. In all the Bakhtiyari mountains which I had crossed I had not met with a more difficult pass than the one upon which we had entered. We had to crawl up the steep stony slopes, dragging our horses after us, and supporting ourselves on our hands and knees. To add to our troubles, one of the horses lost a shoe, which we were unable to replace, and went lame. The sun was fast declining, and we were approaching the summit, when we came to a smooth rock, over which it was absolutely necessary to climb. We succeeded, after great exertions, in getting one horse over in safety, but the other absolutely refused to trust itself on the slippery surface. After attempting in vain for more than an hour to drag the animal over, and darkness having set in, we made up our minds that we should have to spend the night in a very unpleasant, if not dangerous, position. We fastened the horses as we best could, with their bridles and halters, so as to prevent their moving and rolling down the precipice, and wrapping myself in my cloak, I prepared to pass the night where we were.

The fires of the encampment we had left in the afternoon could be faintly distinguished below us. Aidi, hungry and thirsty, was determined to make an attempt to obtain food and help. He accordingly uttered one of those shrill cries by which the Bakhtiyari are accustomed to communicate

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with each other in the mountains when far apart. It consists of a loud yell, dying away in a series of cadences. I scarcely thought that he would be heard at so great a distance, but after repeating his cry two or three times a faint response to it reached us. He declared that he had been understood and that we should have food and water brought to us in the course of time. However, we waited for an hour and no one came. The moon rose, and it began to be very cold in this high region. I determined to make another effort to get the horse over the rock. But it still refused. I then proposed to pile up loose stones behind it, to prevent it from backing over the precipice, and then to drag it up by main force. We set about collecting the stones and soon made a low wall. Aidi vowed to offer a sheep to Ahmed Bedal if we succeeded. Then both of us seizing the halter, we pulled with all our might, my pious companion shouting, 'Ya Ahmed!' and 'Ya Ali!' The animal, assisted by these powerful personages, scrambled safely up.

We resumed our journey in the moonlight, and soon attained the summit of the pass. The descent was scarcely less precipitous than the ascent. About half-way down it we found some Iliyats, who where migrating to Andakou. They had encamped for the night, and had lighted their fires under some oaks, not having been able to pitch their tents on account of the roughness of the ground. We were ravenously hungry, but all that we could obtain from them were some onions and very black bread. Long before dawn they left their resting-place, and we also had to depart. Early in the morning we reached the small plain of Shimbor, after passing through a forest of oaks. We stopped at an encampment of Monjezi, a very wild Bakhtiyari tribe. I was obliged, in order to avoid molestation, and to satisfy their curiosity and remove their suspicions, to maintain my character as an envoy of the Matamet, by whom, my guide informed them, I had been sent to report upon certain images and ancient buildings which were said to exist in the neighbourhood. The men and women who gathered round me, and of whom I inquired about the site of the sculptures, said that they had frequently heard of

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them, but there was only one greybeard who had ever seen them, and he was away. However, they knew that there was a ravine in the mountains, behind their encampment, known as the Tangi-Bûtûn [5]—the defile of the idols.

After I had eaten a little bread to satisfy my hunger, I set off on foot to discover the Tang, followed by several men from the encampment. We searched in vain for it in the thick jungle of trees and brushwood which filled the gorge. After scrambling over rocks and huge boulders until I was tired, I returned to the tents. A Bakhtiyari, who had arrived during my absence, pretended that he knew where the idols were, and offered to conduct me to them after I had visited some ruins in the neighbourhood, if I would give him a small silver coin. This I agreed to do.

I rode with Aidi across the plain of Shimbor, which is scarcely more than four miles in breadth, and is surrounded on all sides by lofty and precipitous mountains. Its rich alluvial soil shows that it has been the bed of a lake which had at some remote period been drained by a tunnel cut through the rock. This was the ruin which I was taken to see, and of which I had heard so much from the Lurs, who attributed it to one Filomars. It is known as the Puli-Neghin—the bridge of the ring. I could find no sculptures nor inscriptions which might have given me a clue to the authors of this very considerable work. My guides repeated to me a distich in the Bakhtiyari dialect, to the purport that it was made by Filomars 'of the small head,' a general of the infidels, who had one hundred thousand attendants armed with golden-handled daggers.

I explored as far as I was able this subterraneous passage, cut through the solid rock, but it was blocked up with stones and rubbish. It appeared to be about twenty feet high. I could not obtain any satisfactory information as to its outlet, except that I was assured that it was carried through the mountain.

During our ride to Puli-Neghin, when forcing our way through the brushwood, we disturbed numerous wild boars. They abounded in the plain, as did bears, which were said

[5] The Lur plural of Bût, an idol.

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to attain to a great size. We saw their fresh droppings in many places, but not the animals themselves. They were attracted by the fruit-trees and vines which now grow wild, but are said to have been once cultivated in a great garden occupying the whole of the plain of Shimbor. The Lurs have numerous stories about bears, who, they believe, are endowed with intelligence far superior to that of other animals, and have almost human habits and feelings. They consequently hold the animal in great respect.

As we rode along, Aidi and our companions entertained me with some of these stories. The origin of the bear, they said, was the following. Hazret Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, travelling in disguise and weary, approached a tent to rest. Its owner, who was a sordid wretch, seeing a stranger coming and wishing to shirk the duties of hospitality, hid himself under a heap of wool—for it was the time of sheep-shearing—and desired his wife to tell the traveller that her husband had gone to the mountains, and that, being a woman and alone, she could not receive him as her guest. She did as she was bidden, but the Wali of God[6] knew that the man had concealed himself. Addressing him, 'Rise, O bear!' he exclaimed, 'and dwell henceforth in the woods.' The wool adhered to the inhospitable Lur; he lost his speech, fled to the mountains, and became the first bear.

Bears, they related, would sometimes kill a man to possess themselves of his arms, which they would conceal until they could give them to a person who had rendered them some service. A huntsman who was hunting the 'pawzan' (ibex) high up in the mountains, came unexpectedly upon a number of bears, who were seated in a circle and uttering the most dismal moans and lamentations. Greatly frightened, he attempted to run away, but he was pursued and soon captured by an immense bear, who, without seeking to hurt him, led him gently by the arm to the place where the others were assembled. The huntsman found that the cries of mourning which he had heard were for a female bear lying dead in their midst. They made

[6] This is the title usually given by Shi'as to Ali.



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signs to him to dig a grave for her, and when he had done so he was directed to place her in it and to cover her with earth. When he had accomplished his task one of the mourners disappeared, but soon afterwards returned bearing a gun, the work of the renowned Haji Mustafa, a brace of pistols, a sword, and a complete 'keshkemer.' These arms were then presented to the astonished huntsman as his reward, and he was allowed to depart in peace.

When I returned to the tents, the man who had undertaken to find the sculptures of the Tangi-Bûtûn was ready to take me to them. They were high up on the mountain-side, very difficult of access, and hidden by trees and brushwood. On the scarped rock were twelve figures in high relief, much defaced by time and wilful injury—the heads having been purposely destroyed. A few lines of inscription in the Pehlevi character sufficed to show that they were of the Sassanian period, to which, consequently, the tunnel of the Puli-Neghin may also be attributed. The subject represented was apparently a religious procession or ceremony.

I returned to the encampment much fatigued and somewhat disappointed with the sculptures, which were far less important and interesting than I had been led to believe them to be. The Bakhtiyari, in whose tents we had been hospitably received, were so poor that they could only offer us bread made of acorns, which I found very unpalatable, but which seemed to be their usual food. I succeeded, however, in buying a sheep for about a shilling, and made a feast, of which all the men in the encampment partook.

We recrossed the Dallan Pass next day amid rain and snow, which made the rocks still more slippery and added to our difficulties and perils. We and our horses were constantly falling, but we accomplished the passage without any serious accident. There was a glorious view from the summit, when the clouds which had surrounded us suddenly drew up like a curtain, and disclosed the great mountain ranges of Zerda-Kuh and Kaïnou, now covered with snow. At the foot of the pass we found the encampment whence an answer had been returned to Aidi when he had asked

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for bread and water from the mountain-side. It belonged to an old 'rish-sefid' named Sheikh Dervish, who had sent us what we required. His servant had followed us to the top of the pass, but finding that we had continued our journey beyond it, had returned.

On the following day I got back to the 'diz,' having left Aidi at his tents, and having been rejoined by Saleh. Jaffer Kuli Khan had not returned. His wives—they were nine in number—received me very kindly. They all lived under the same tent and apparently in good fellowship. Among them were some very pretty young women. His head wife, Sattara Khanum, was the daughter of his rival, Kelb Ali Khan. She did the honours, sent me an excellent supper, and gave me an ancient Persian seal, upon which was engraved a king contending with two winged horses beneath the emblematic figure of Ormuzd. It had been dug up, she said, in Andakou, and she looked upon it as a 'telesm,' or charm, which might protect me. The Khan's mother and eldest son were at Isfahan, where they were kept by the Matamet as hostages for his good behaviour.

After passing a pleasant day with these ladies, who did me the honour to say that as I was their brother they had no need to veil their faces before me, I started on my return to Shuster. The streams were much swollen in consequence of the rains. In fording the Âb-Shûr, a branch of the Karun, I was carried away with my horse and narrowly escaped being drowned. I had to stop at some tents to dry my clothes. I there found two horsemen who were on their way to join Jaffer Kuli Khan, and I accompanied them to the village of Gotwand, which I did not reach until an hour after dark, very tired and one of my horses lame.

We crossed the Karun next morning upon a small raft to the plain of Akili, and arrived at the village of Istaghi early in the day. I passed the remainder of it in an orange grove, belonging to Mulla Kerim, the 'ket-khudâ.' This fine plain abounds in date and other fruit trees, and is very fertile. It would have been a rich and prosperous district, as its inhabitants are industrious and skilful cultivators, were it not for the exactions of the Persian officials on the



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one hand, and the constant depredations of the Bakhtiyari on the other.

Both my horses were now so lame from the stony mountain tracks, that I could scarcely get to my journey's end.

Before returning to Shuster I was desirous of examining some ruins in the neighbourhood of the city, known by the Bakhtiyari as the Musjedi-Suleiman Bozurg, or the temple of the great Solomon. In order to visit the place, which was at some distance in the hills, I had to hire a mare and to leave Saleh behind. A poor mulla offered to accompany me if I would give him wherewith to buy a pair of shoes. I agreed, and we left the tents together for Baïtawand, a village where we passed the night. The villages on our road thither had been abandoned by their poverty-stricken inhabitants in consequence of the exactions of the Matamet, who had seized their 'ket-khudâs,' and was subjecting them daily to new tortures.

The mulla was well versed in the traditions and legends of the country, and, amongst them, those which related to the Musjedi-Suleiman. There Solomon, he told me, had held his court when he went forth to war with Rustem, Ali, and other heroes of antiquity, who were all jumbled together in the good man's brain. And there this mighty king, the wisest of men, sat upon a throne which had been made for him by seventy-two 'dîvs,'[7] each of whom had a castle of his own, but acknowledged as their chief the 'Dîv Lang,' who, as his name denotes, was lame. They still watched over the treasures which Solomon had concealed in his palace, and of which the mulla was persuaded I was in search. It was, therefore, with no little misgiving and alarm that he accompanied me to this haunted spot. However, as a good Musulman, he believed that Solomon and Hazret Ali would protect him from the evil spirits, whatever my fate might be.

The ruins of which I was in search were on the crest of a low hill overlooking the plain. Again I was disappointed. I only found an artificial platform, reached by a broad

[7] Supernatural beings. Our word 'devil' is probably derived from 'dîv.'

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flight of steps built of large blocks of stone roughly hewn. Upon it could be traced the foundations of a building. But I could find no columns nor other architectural ornaments, nor inscriptions on stone, marble, or brick. A fire temple may once have stood here, but I could find nothing to show that such had been the case.

The mulla had been anxiously watching my movements whilst I was examining the ruins, and was much astonished that I failed to discover the treasure. He was not sorry when I had given up my search and he could leave the place without being molested by the 'dîvs,' 'jins,' and its other supernatural inhabitants. He could scarcely persuade himself, or the villagers, who questioned him closely as to my proceedings on our return, that I had come away with empty hands after journeying all the way from Feringhistan (Europe) to visit the remains of the Temple of Solomon. The only wonder that he could relate to a curious crowd of listeners was, that I had taken a dry stick which served me as a pen, the ink flowing from it by a miracle—for so he described my pencil. The secret was only, he said, possessed by those who could read the 'Taurat ou Ingil'—the Old and New Testaments.

One of the Bakhtiyari, who was seated with us round the fire in the evening, related the following tale. The Musjedi-Suleiman was the 'Pá Takt'[8] of that great and wise monarch. There all the monarchs of the earth came to his 'salam,' or audience, except Rustem, who, jealous of the renown of the prophet-king, resolved to try his strength in single combat with him. Accordingly, he mounted his renowned charger, Raksh, and took the road to Solomon's capital. As he drew near to it, he met a beautiful youth riding on a milk-white steed. This was Hazret Ali, Amir-el-Mûmenîn, the Commander of the Faithful. But he was disguised, and was not recognised by Rustem, who, addressing him, asked the way to the city. 'I am the cup-bearer of King Solomon,' replied Ali, 'and come from the foot of his throne.' 'And I,' exclaimed the hero, 'am Rustem, and defy your master, whom I will this day deprive of his king-

[8] The capital—literally 'foot of the throne.'

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dom.' 'First,' answered the son-in-law of Mahomet, 'contend with me, and if I am vanquished do as you propose!'

Thereupon Rustem seized the youth by his girdle, counting upon an easy victory over such a stripling. But he laboured in vain until evening to throw him, the blood flowing from his eyes, nostrils, and mouth in consequence of the violence of his efforts. As night approached he ceased to wrestle with Ali, who, lifting him from the ground, hurled him so high into the air that he reached the fourth heaven, whence he fell heavily to the earth again. 'If such are the servants of Solomon,' exclaimed Rustem, recovering from the effects of his fall, 'what must the strength of Solomon himself be?' and, returning to his own kingdom, ever afterwards paid tribute to the great king.

There is no spot in Khuzistan to which so many legends attach as to the Musjedi-Suleiman, and it is looked upon by the Lurs as a place of peculiar sanctity. As I had brought away no gold nor silver, my hosts could not explain to themselves my object in visiting the ruins. They could only conjecture that I must belong to the sect of the 'Daoudis,' or worshippers of the Prophet David, who live in the mountains near Zohab, and that I had come from afar on a pilgrimage to the palace of his renowned son.

I was only a short day's ride from Shuster, and arrived there, with my lame horses and Saleh, on December 1. During the time that I remained in the city I was the guest of Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan.

I learnt from him what had occurred since I had quitted Khuzistan in the summer. The Matamet having succeeded in possessing himself of Mehemet Taki Khan's wives and family, through the treachery of a Bakhtiyari chief, had placed Ali Riza Khan at the head of the Chehar Lang, and had received the submission of the greater part of the Bakhtiyari tribes. He had been employed during the summer and part of the autumn in collecting the revenue and raising money from the province. With this object he had imprisoned, bastinadoed, and otherwise tortured many of the principal inhabitants of Shuster who were supposed to

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have property, and had reduced them to penury. The houses and the bazars had been sacked by the Persian soldiers, who were allowed to do so with impunity, as they were clamouring for their pay, of which they were many months in arrear. Officers, with bodies of irregular horsemen, had been sent to collect the taxes from the villages, which they did by cruelly ill-treating the inhabitants and devastating the country. The result had been that the population had for the most part taken refuge with the Arabs, or had fled to the mountains, and a region naturally of great richness and fertility had been almost reduced to a wilderness. It was thus that Persia was governed.

The Matamet had resolved to punish Sheikh Thamer for the protection he had afforded to Mehemet Taki Khan and for the resistance that he had offered to the advance of the Persian troops to Fellahiyah. As soon as the summer heat was over he proclaimed the Cha'b chief a rebel to the Shah, and marched against him. The sheikh, not being able to resist the large force which the Matamet could now bring into the field, had sought refuge with his family in Turkish territory to the west of the Shat-el-Arab.

The Persian army had left Shuster for Muhammera and the Cha'b country, and the city, which had been crowded with soldiers and camp-followers on my previous visit, appeared to be now deserted. The inhabitants had not yet recovered from their dread of the Matamet. The bazars were still partly closed, and the villagers feared to bring the produce of their fields to the market.

Mehemet Taki Khan was confined in a small dark room in the castle, in the custody of Mirza Sultan Mohammed Khan, a seyyid, and one of the notables of the city. Through the help of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan, who enjoyed great influence on account of his sacred character as the head of the seyyids of Shuster, and who had always shown himself very friendly to me, I succeeded in seeing the Bakhtiyari chief immediately after my arrival. He was in chains, and the iron fetters which bound his hands and feet were attached to a heavy iron collar fastened round his neck. I was deeply moved at finding him in this miserable con-

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dition. He was, however, in good health, having recovered from the fever which he had contracted in the marshes of Fellahiyah. He received me with his usual pleasant smile, and in reply to my expressions of compassion and sympathy showed that spirit of patience and resignation which distinguishes the good Musulman. 'Ya sahib!' he said, 'God is great, and we, His creatures, must humbly submit to His decrees. Yesterday I was powerful; to-day I am fallen. It was His will, and I must submit to my fate.'

He then inquired whether I had seen his wife Khatun-jan, and Hussein Kuli his son. I told him that, having only just arrived in Shuster, I had not yet done so. He begged me to find them out, as they were in the city, and gave me some messages for them. He then whispered to me that he knew that on my first arrival at Kala Tul I had placed some money in his wife's hands to be taken care of for me, and that, in consequence of their flight and subsequent events, it had not been returned to me. He had been reduced, he said, to poverty by the Matamet, who had plundered him of all his property and had confiscated his lands; but he had formerly deposited some objects of value with an honest seyyid of Shuster, who had faithfully kept them for him. As Khatun-jan could not, therefore, give me back the money she had taken charge of, he wished me to accept in lieu of it a Cashmere shawl, which the seyyid would let me have on the production of a written order which he handed to me.

I was much touched by his words. I tore up the paper and entreated him to think no more of the matter. He then told me that I would have no difficulty in seeing Hussein Kuli—Au Mohammed Zemaun, to whose care the Matamet had confided him, being a good man, who had treated the boy with kindness, and had even allowed him to visit his father and mother. I promised to find Hussein Kuli at once.

The chief related to me all that had occurred since he had been treacherously made prisoner by the Matamet. When the night attack which I have described was made by the Bakhtiyari and the Cha'b Arabs upon the Persian camp,

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he had nearly been rescued, like his brother, Au Kerim. They had almost penetrated to the tent in which he was confined when he was removed to that of the Matamet, who threatened to put him to death if the attack was likely to prove successful.

What appeared chiefly to distress him was the lamentable condition to which his tribes, and the inhabitants of Khuzistan, had been reduced by the Matamet's invasion and by the oppression to which they were exposed. All his attempts to improve the country, to develop its resources, to settle the tribes, and to introduce good government, had thus, he said, been brought to naught. As for himself, all he feared was that he should be deprived of his sight, a fate worse than death. He did not believe that, after having once been taken to Tehran, he would ever be allowed to return to his native mountains, as the Shah was jealous of the influence which he had acquired among the Bakhtiyari tribes, and would never again permit him to exercise authority over them. But he would reconcile himself to a hopeless captivity if he were permitted to live with his family and his son, Hussein Kuli, and if his eyes were spared. The loss of sight was what he most dreaded, as he knew too well that this cruel and barbarous punishment was then generally inflicted upon those chiefs who, having been declared in rebellion, had fallen into the hands of the Shah.

I had no difficulty in discovering Khatun-jan Khanum and the rest of the chief's family. They were living in a state of the utmost misery, in a corner of a large house which had once belonged to one of the principal families of Shuster, but had been abandoned and was in ruins. They had lost everything and were clothed almost in rags. As far as they were able they wore mourning for Au Kerim, who had been so cruelly murdered, and for Au Khan Baba, his brother, who, I learnt, had succumbed to his fatal disease under the privations to which they had been exposed after their departure from Fellahiyah. They still passed the greater part of the day in wailing over the deaths of the two young chiefs.

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The women and children were huddled up together for warmth—for we were now in mid-winter, and they were without fire—in a large 'iwan,' or hall, entirely open on one side to the air. Several of them were ill of fever and dysentery. They were all so pale and emaciated that I scarcely recognised them. Khatun-jan Khanum was overcome with grief, and could scarcely speak to me for sobbing, but expressed her delight at seeing me again, as she had heard that I had perished in attempting to escape after the capture of Au Kerim. No beauty remained to her sister, Khanumi, whom I had known so beautiful at Kala Tul. Fatimeh Sultan, the lovely Circassian wife of Ali Naghi Khan, had suffered less than her companions. I missed several of the ladies, and amongst them the mother of Khatun-jan, from whom I had received tender care and kindness. When I inquired about them I was answered by the low wail, broken by repeated cries of 'Waï! waï!' which signified that they were no more.

After some composure had been restored in this group of unhappy and suffering women, I was able to deliver Mehemet Taki Khan's message to his wife, and to have some conversation with her. She related to me what had occurred since the day when I had left her to accompany Au Kerim on his mission to the Il-Khani. The fugitives in endeavouring to reach the mountains had been attacked by horsemen of the Kuhghelu tribe, whom they repulsed, but not without loss, Shefi'a Khan, my friend and companion from Isfahan, being among the killed. Ali Naghi Khan then left them, accompanied by some attendants, with the intention of appealing to Khalyl Khan to receive and protect the women. He learnt before reaching this chief's castle the treachery of which he had been guilty in delivering Au Kerim into the hands of his enemy, to be put to death. He then turned back to rejoin the women. They had, in the meanwhile, endeavoured to reach a hill fort belonging to a former dependent of Mehemet Taki Khan, but on their way were attacked by a hostile tribe, who robbed them of their ornaments, and of even the greater part of their clothes, took from them their horses, and

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compelled them to retrace their steps on foot towards the low country.

They were joined soon after by Ali Naghi Khan, who, as they did not arrive at the 'diz' where he expected to find them, feared that some misfortune had befallen them, and had gone in search of them. He discovered them in a state of complete exhaustion, as they had been wandering in the mountains almost without food. He then proceeded to the tents of Abd'ullah Khan, the chief of the Boheramedi, a tribe which had received many benefits from Mehemet Taki Khan, and asked him to receive the family of his former chief. This man consented, but in violation of the laws of hospitality, and with an ingratitude rare even amongst the most barbarous tribes, instead of protecting these helpless women, who placed themselves confidingly in his power, made them prisoners, and informed the Matamet that he was ready to deliver them over to him.

The Matamet sent one Jaffer Ali Khan and a small force of regular troops to bring them to Shuster. After suffering many privations on the road, and having been treated with great indignity, they at length reached the city —the men and most of the women having been compelled to walk the whole way. Several of the latter had died on the road—amongst them Khatun-jan's mother. On their arrival at Shuster they were placed in the house where I found them, and had been for some time under a guard, which had now, however, been withdrawn, and they were left to themselves. For their food they were dependent upon the charity of some Shusteris who had experienced the bounty of Mehemet Taki Khan in the days of his prosperity.

It was reported that Ali Naghi Khan, with a few followers, having escaped from Abd'ullah Khan, had subsequently attacked, by night, this chief who had so treacherously betrayed their wives and children, and had killed him and several of his relations. This just retribution afforded some consolation to Khatun-jan and the other ladies. Revenge is a delight as well as a duty with all semi-barbarous tribes, and blood for blood is a maxim inculcated in the child from its earliest age.

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After I had spent some time with Khatun-jan Khanum and the other Bakhtiyari ladies, I went in search of Hussein Kuli, who, although in strict confinement, was kindly treated by the Shusteri notable in whose custody he had been placed. The brave boy was overjoyed at seeing me, and was eager to learn what had happened to me since we had parted.

I spent some hours daily with Khatun-jan Khanum and her companions in misfortune, who treated me as if I were one of Mehemet Taki Khan's family. I learnt much from them relating to female life and customs among Shi'a Musulmans. Their affectionate gratitude to me in return for my sympathy, which was all I could give them, was most affecting. I found in these poor sufferers qualities and sentiments which would have ennobled Christian women in a civilised country.

The time having come for me to return to Baghdad, I took leave, with a heavy heart, of Mehemet Taki Khan and of Khatun-jan Khanum, for both of whom I entertained real affection. I had received from them during their prosperity a kindness and hospitality which, as a European and a Christian, I could not have expected in a tribe reputed one of the most fanatical, savage, and cruel in Asia. I had shared with them their dangers and their privations. I could not forget that even in moments of the greatest peril and of the greatest suffering, almost their first thought was for the safety of me—a stranger. I believed that we should never meet again. That thought, and the uncertainty of the fate which awaited them from those who delighted in cruelty, and were at that time ingenious beyond most other Easterns in inventing new tortures, weighed upon me. When I left the wretched abode of the women and children, they set up their melancholy wail, beating their breasts and crying, 'Ah Sahib! we shall never see you more. Waï! waï!'

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## CHAPTER XVI

*Arrive at Dizful—The guardian of the tomb of Daniel—The tomb—The black stone—Legends about Daniel—The Ruins of Susa—Return to Dizful—Join Faili horsemen—Cross the Kerkhah—A Lur encampment—A Lur family—A narrow escape—Lur hospitality—Arrival at the Wali's tents—Ahmed Khan—The 'tushmals'—The Wali's suspicions—The chief of the Sagwand—Second interview with the Wali—A messenger in search of me—Detected by an Arab—My life in danger—Saleh's misconduct—Reach Baghdad—Incident on the way.*

As my friend Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was anxious to perform the pilgrimage to Kerbela and to visit the shrines of the Imaums at Kasimain, he proposed to accompany me on my journey to Baghdad. I readily accepted his offer. In the dangerous country through which I had to pass, inhabited by tribes of Arabs and Lurs, equally fanatical and suspicious of a stranger, and especially of a European, the presence of a seyyid as my companion might be of no little advantage to me. The green turban is more regarded amongst these wild people than it is in places where it is more commonly seen, and where it is not unfrequently worn by persons who have no right to it. A descendant of the Prophet is almost invariably treated by them with respect and consideration.

I was desirous to visit on the way the so-called tomb of Daniel, on the site of the ancient city of Susa, still called Shoush, near Dizful, where a celebrated black stone, covered with inscriptions, supposed to be in the cuneiform character, at one time existed. Leaving Shuster with the seyyid early in the morning, and loitering on our way, we did not reach

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Dizful until late at night. We were accompanied by two Arab horsemen, who had joined us on the road. Neither they nor my companion knew their way about the town, which is one of some size, with a population at that time of about fifteen thousand inhabitants. It was dark when we passed through the gate and found ourselves in the deserted streets. Not a human being was to be seen nor heard. As at Shuster, there were constant feuds between the principal families, who occupied different quarters of the town. Blood was constantly shed in street brawls, and few people ventured out after nightfall. Such a thing as a public lamp was unknown. We had to find our way through narrow and tortuous lanes to the 'musif' of Mustafa Kuli Khan, then one of the five principal chiefs of the city, who was known to Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, and had the reputation of being a hospitable man, and one of high character. But how were we to discover it, with no one to guide us in the darkness?

While we were hesitating, one of the Arabs remembered that the mare he was riding had been with him two years before, when he had passed several days in Mustafa Kuli Khan's house. He was convinced that she would find it again, and giving the animal her halter,[1] went before us. She picked her way carefully, stopping every now and then as if to consider the turning she should take, when at length, after traversing more than half the town, she stopped before an archway closed by a massive door. Her rider at once recognised it as that of Mustafa Kuli Khan's house.

We knocked loudly, but it was some time before we could arouse the inmates, who were asleep, and when awakened were not disposed to admit us until they had satisfied themselves that we were neither enemies nor thieves. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan received a warm welcome from the khan, and we were conducted to the spacious iwan which served as the 'musif' for guests. The house, like those of the notables of Shuster, was large, well-built, and had been handsomely decorated, but was in a ruinous condition.

[1] The nomad Arabs do not use bridles, and manage their horses with the halter.

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I spent two or three days in Mustafa Kuli Khan's 'musif,' to see the town and to be introduced to some of its principal inhabitants. As at Shuster, the leading families were seyyids, and the population under their rule were fanatical and very punctual in the observance, outwardly at least, of all the ceremonies and duties of their religion. As in Shuster, too, these families occupied different quarters of the town, and were constantly engaged in party quarrels, besieging each other in their houses and killing each other in the streets. These frequent feuds, added to the plague, cholera, and misgovernment, had greatly reduced the population, and had left a considerable part of the town in ruins; but, unlike Shuster, Dizful appeared to be reviving at the time of my visit, and had become the principal market in Khuzistan and the capital of the province. But it is less advantageously situated for commerce than Shuster. The river upon which it stands, and which is crossed by a fine bridge of twenty arches, is not navigable for some distance below the town, and the lands around it are not so fertile as those in the vicinity of that city.

Shuster and Dizful, though some thirty miles apart, were generally spoken of in Persia as if forming but one city. Although the former is the ancient capital of the province, the latter was then the seat of the Persian governor and the more prosperous of the two, but Shuster possessed handsomer and better built houses. Dizful, however, appears to have been an important city in the time of the Sassanian kings.

I chanced to meet in Mustafa Kuli Khan's musif, the day after my arrival at Dizful, Abd'ul Nebi, the dervish who had the custody of the so-called tomb of Daniel, which I intended to visit. He had left it on account of the Beni Lam Arabs, who were ravaging the country in the neighbourhood, and had even appeared at the tomb itself. With the help of Seyyid Abou'l Hassan I prevailed upon him to return with me and to act as my guide; but he would only do so on condition that I put on an Arab dress to avoid observation, that I went with him alone, and that if anything happened to me he was not to be held responsible. I willingly subscribed to these conditions, and, making up my mind to

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be robbed of the little I took with me, I left Dizful with him. The seyyid and Saleh were to await my return.

The dervish and I slept the first night at Kala Nasr, a small village belonging to the shrine of Daniel, enclosed by a mud wall. Its chief, Kaid Azeez, entertained me hospitably, but endeavoured to dissuade me from visiting the tomb, as for several days past parties of Beni Lam Arabs had been seen on the plain, and I should certainly fall into their hands and be robbed, if something worse did not befall me. As he found that his warnings were of no avail, he offered to accompany me. He and the dervish, he said, were known to and respected by the Arabs as the guardians of the tomb, and under their protection, although I might be stripped to the skin, my life would be safe.

We left Kala Nasr at daybreak. The plain beyond had been abandoned by its inhabitants on account of the depredations of the Beni Lam, and we saw no one during our ride. The vast mound which marks the site of the ancient city of Susa, the capital of Susiana and Elymaïs, was visible in the distance, and as we drew near it appeared to me to be little inferior in size to the Mujelibi, the principal ruin of Babylon. We rode first to the tomb—the principal object of my visit. I found it to be a building of comparatively modern date, resembling the Imaum-Zadehs, or tombs and shrines of Musulman saints, constantly met with in Khuzistan. It is surmounted by a high conical dome of brickwork—somewhat resembling in shape a pine cone. I entered through a gate into a court, in which pilgrims find a resting-place for the night, safe from wild beasts and Arab thieves. A dark inner chamber, opening upon an outer room, contained the so-called tomb—a square case of plaster which might be supposed either to cover a grave or to enclose a coffin. Above it were suspended some ostrich eggs, and lamps which should have been kept constantly burning, but which, in consequence of the absence of Dervish Abd'ul-Nebi, had remained for some time unlighted. It was evident by the offensive odour that jackals had taken up their abode in the chamber whilst he was away. The tomb was surrounded by a wooden trellis, to which were suspended a

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few tablets, also of wood, with invocations to the Deity and texts from the Koran written upon them. In the outer chamber I observed one or two small capitals of columns in marble, and in the courtyard a larger one of the same material, with a kind of lotus-leaf ornament. They were of the early Persian or Persepolitan period. Beneath the chambers containing the tomb was a vault filled with rubbish. The building, surrounded by a few konar trees and palms, stands on the bank of a small sluggish stream, called by the Arabs the Shaour, which rises in the plain not far from the ruins. I found the remains of a flight of steps, built of large dressed stones, leading down to the water's edge. Amongst them was a slab, with a bas-relief, which has been described as representing a man between two lions, and has been converted by a lively imagination into Daniel in the lions' den. It was partly concealed, and I could only distinguish the legs of a man. I was unable to move the stone in order to examine the sculptures, but the dervish assured me that they consisted not of one but of two human figures, as well as of two lions. On the fragment of a marble slab I detected a few cuneiform characters, almost obliterated, and near these remains I found part of the shaft of a marble column and two capitals similar to those in the court.

There had formerly been preserved within the tomb a black stone, or slab, said to have been covered with mystical signs and human figures. It had been described by Macdonald Kinneir and Sir Gore Ouseley, but at the time of Sir Henry Rawlinson's visit to Shush it had disappeared. It was reported that it had been destroyed with gunpowder by a European disguised as a seyyid. But the dervish informed me that it had been broken into pieces by two Arabs, who used naphtha for the purpose—he could not explain how—as they believed that it contained gold. He himself had buried the fragments, he said, within the precincts of the tomb.

This black stone was believed by the Arabs to be a telesm, or talisman, upon which the prosperity of Khuzistan and its inhabitants depended. They attributed to its destruction all the misfortunes which had since befallen

them—the plague, the cholera, bad harvests, the bursting of dams, the breaking down of bridges, war, and other calamities. They were convinced that the men who destroyed the black stone were Europeans in disguise, and that their object in doing so was to bring those evils upon the Musulmans. The bitterest feeling consequently existed against the Feringhi in general. It was on this account that at this time there was so much danger in a visit to the tomb of Daniel, and that I was unwilling to cause suspicion by inquiring too minutely after the 'black stone,' or by showing too much curiosity with respect to other remains on the spot.

The dervish told me that some years before, when the rains had washed away the soil near the tomb, some coffins had been uncovered containing human bodies, which on being exposed to the air had crumbled to dust, and vases, arms, and armour.

It is needless to say that there is absolutely nothing to connect the building on the banks of the Shaour with the tomb of Daniel, except that it is on the site of the ancient city of Susa, and that a Musulman tradition points to the spot as the grave of the prophet. It is not improbable that the tomb is that of some Mohammedan saint, who, in the course of time, has been confounded with 'Nebbi Daniel.' There cannot be any doubt, however, that the great mound and the remains which surround it, and which still retain the name of Shush or Sus, and even Sûsan, occupy the site of the ancient capital of Susiana ; and, consequently, it may be presumed, of Shushan the palace, of the Book of Daniel.

The dervish, of course, entertained no doubt as to the tomb being that of the prophet, who is held in as much veneration by Musulmans as by Jews and Christians. He related to me various legends and stories current amongst the Arabs which, according to him, explained the reason why Daniel was buried here. The prophet, he said, originally dwelt in Egypt, where he had acquired great renown for his sanctity and for the miracles he performed —his reputation extending throughout the whole world.

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Khuzistan having been visited by a terrible pestilence, its king sent a messenger to invite Daniel to come and deliver his people from it. Pharaoh declined to allow him to leave Egypt unless hostages were given for his return. Twenty of the great nobles of Khuzistan were accordingly sent to that country, and the prophet was then permitted to depart. His presence alone was sufficient to stay the plague, and it conferred so many benefits and so much prosperity upon the kingdom, that the king resolved to retain him and to sacrifice the hostages. Daniel, therefore, lived and died in Susa, and was buried where his tomb was now venerated; but before dying he himself traced the mystic characters on the black stone, which, as long as it was preserved, was to protect the inhabitants of Khuzistan against all misfortunes. It was only after its destruction that the plague and the cholera had appeared in the province.

The dervish further related to me how the Egyptians after Daniel's death wished to obtain his body, and how the inhabitants of Susa, the more effectually to conceal it, diverted for a time the course of the Shaour, in order to bury the coffin in its bed. When the Egyptians afterwards sought for the remains of the prophet and could not find them, they attributed their disappearance to a miracle.[2]

The dervish further assured me that his own family originally came from Egypt with the prophet, and that the right to the custody of the tomb had been enjoyed by his forefathers for innumerable generations. He even declared that, not many years before, he possessed the proof of what he asserted in the annals of his ancestors, which extended over a vast period of time; but that they had been destroyed by the Beni Lam Arabs when they sacked his dwelling.

[2] Arabian writers give a different version of this story, whence the tradition related by the dervish was probably derived. According to them, when Abu Musa Ashari took possession of Susa in the twenty-seventh year of the Hegira, he dug a canal from the Shaour and buried the prophet's coffin in its bed before admitting the stream. According to Benjamin of Tudela, 'the great emperor, Sanjar, King of Persia,' finding that the Jews, who lived on either side of the river on which Shuster was situated, were constantly quarrelling and fighting for the possession of Daniel's remains, ordered them to be placed in a glass case and to be suspended from the arch of a bridge exactly in the centre of the stream, and there, he says, they remained to his day.



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After I had visited the tomb, I proceeded to examine the great mound at the foot of which it stands. I discovered on one of its sides a marble slab nine feet in length and two feet six inches in breadth, with an inscription in the cuneiform character carved upon it. I proceeded at once to make a copy of it. The dervish and Kaid Azeez were very anxious that I should not delay my departure, and kept eager watch lest Arabs of the Beni Lam tribe should surprise us. They incessantly urged me to mount my horse and to leave the dangerous spot. I had just finished copying the last line of the inscription when they jumped into their saddles, and, exclaiming that they saw horsemen in the distance, galloped off as fast as their horses could carry them. I was obliged to follow them, and we did not slacken our pace until we reached Kala Nâsr. There were no Arabs, I believe, to be seen; but both my companions were in a prodigious fright, as, a few days before, a Beni Lam, in an attack upon one of the Matamet's officers, had been killed, and consequently there was blood between the tribe and the Persians. I was sorry to be obliged to make this hasty retreat, as I had not had time to examine the ruins, which are very extensive and cover a large area, as carefully as I had intended. In addition to the slab with the cuneiform inscription, I found, about half-way up another of the sides of the great mound, a second slab, but, as far as I could judge, not being able to lift it, without any writing upon it. The mound itself, which is of enormous size, and the ground to a considerable distance around it, were strewed with bricks, fragments of pottery, glazed tiles, and the various remains which mark the site of ancient cities in Babylonia.[3]

In order to avoid the Beni Lam Arabs, and to see a country I had not yet visited, I had resolved to take the route to Baghdad through the hilly districts inhabited by the Faïli Lurs, a turbulent and lawless tribe living in the

[3] It was reserved for the French explorer, M. Dieulafoy, to uncover in 1886 the remains of a magnificent palace built by the great Persian king, Artaxerxes Memnon, and to remove to the Louvre a collection of highly interesting objects found in them, including capitals of columns and life-sized Persian guards enamelled on bricks.

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border mountains between Turkey and Persia. The only English travellers who had attempted to visit them—Captain Grant and Lieutenant Fotheringham—had been barbarously murdered, and no European had since ventured among them.

As I was about to leave Dizful, a party of horsemen belonging to Ali Khan, one of the principal Faïli khans, arrived there on their way to his tents. I made acquaintance with their chief, one Ghulâm Ali Beg, who willingly consented to my accompanying him. Accordingly, I rode one afternoon with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and Saleh to the village of Bonewar Nazir, about six miles from the town, where Ghulâm Ali Beg promised to join us with his companions early on the following morning.

In the evening some of Ghulâm Ali Beg's followers made their appearance, and took up their quarters for the night in the room which I occupied. As this gave me a good opportunity to become friends with them, I ordered a lamb to be killed and a large pillau prepared for supper, an attention which pleased them much. Early on the following morning the Beg himself, faithful to his promise, arrived with the remainder of his party. They were in all twenty-three well-armed horsemen, so that we had no cause to fear any Arabs that we might meet on our way.

We were soon in our saddles, and rode to the Kerkhah, over a rich and fertile but now deserted plain. Like other parts of the province, it had been reduced to this condition by the depredations of the Arabs and the oppression of the Matamet. The remains of great canals and innumerable watercourses now dry, and bricks and pottery everywhere scattered about showed that at one time it had been thickly inhabited and highly cultivated. We came to the ruins of a stone bridge which had once spanned the river, where it issues from a range of low hills. Its massive buttresses had resisted the effects of time and the wear of the torrent. The ruins are called Payi-Pul—the foot of the bridge. We crossed the stream close to it by a deep ford, not practicable after rain. One of the horsemen was carried away by the current, but succeeded in saving himself and his horse.

We were now entering the country of the Faïli Lurs.

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Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who was of a timid disposition and had heard much of the dangers of the journey before us, repeated a 'du'a,' or invocation to the Deity, turning to the four quarters of the horizon to build, as it were, a wall around himself against jins, and other 'du'as,' against carnal enemies and to save himself from falling from his horse. Although by no means a fanatic or bigot, he thought it necessary, as a good Musulman, to take these precautions. The Faïli horsemen held a consultation as to the best and safest road, and decided that we should at once strike into the hills, where we should be better concealed from any marauding parties of Arabs. We accordingly entered upon very broken and difficult ground, and rode about four farsaks through a barren and uncultivated region. In it the Faïli tribe of Sagwand usually encamp, but this year, fearing an attack from the Matamet, they had moved to the northwards. As the darkness began to set in, we saw fires in the distance, and soon reached an encampment belonging to a few families of the Mokhtabaz, a small tribe which supplies Dizful with 'mast' (curds) and butter. Ghulâm Ali Beg gave himself airs because the men did not come out to meet and welcome us. After reproaching them, in rather violent language, for their want of hospitality, he vowed that he would pass the night in the open air rather than under the tents of people who had such bad manners and who so ill performed their duties as Musulmans. He then rode to a small grass plot near a stream, and directed his followers to unsaddle their horses.

The men of the encampment, ashamed of themselves, came out in a body to implore Ghulâm Ali Beg to forgive their rudeness and to return to their tents. As he was inexorable, or pretended to be so, the women and children were next sent to entreat him with tears not to give a bad name to the tribe by refusing to become their guest. At length he yielded, but not without first extolling his own tribe and roundly abusing the Sagwands and Mokhtabaz, who, he said, were notorious for their want of hospitality, and their covetousness, and who shunned a guest instead of running five farsaks to meet one.

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I was not sorry when this scene, which it appeared to me the Beg had got up to show his importance, came to an end, as I was tired and hungry. Our party was divided amongst the tents. The seyyid and I became the guests of four brothers who, being unmarried, lived together with a sister, a girl about seventeen years old, very handsome and well-shaped, with the blackest hair and eyes. She had none of the assumed bashfulness and reserve of the women of the towns, but sat and ate with us, taking part in the conversation without restraint. Her name was Eshrafi—a gold coin then current in Persia was so called. These poor families had been recently plundered by the governor of Luristan and were in extreme poverty. It was on this account that they had not welcomed, with the warmth which Ghulâm Ali Beg considered proper, the large party of travellers about to be quartered upon them. Eshrafi boiled some rice and made cakes of bread—all that their tent could afford for our supper. Neither she nor her brothers discovered that I was a European.

The following day we had a very long and tedious ride, ascending and descending the hills by precipitous and stony paths. Neither Ghulâm Ali Beg, nor any of his followers, were acquainted with the right track, and were constantly disputing as to the one we should take. After high words they came to blows, drawing their swords and pointing their pistols at each other. Their quarrels led to one or two broken heads, and I feared that they might end more seriously, and that I might be involved in them.

After riding about four farsaks we came to a small plain in which was an encampment of Sorkhah Arabs, under a sheikh named Yunos. In the distance I could distinguish a lofty artificial mound. This was Patak, to which I was invited by a Lur whom I had met in my journey through the Beni Lam country. There is a local tradition that it was the site of a great and ancient city.

The Faïli horsemen dismounted at the tent of the sheikh. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and I went to that of another Arab, where a sheep was killed for our entertainment. We had finished our breakfast and my companion was busily

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employed in writing charms for our host and his wives and children—the way in which he usually repaid the hospitality he received. The horsemen had mounted and were leaving the encampment. I was preparing to follow them, and my foot was in the stirrup, when the sheikh, having parted with his guests, came towards me. He had no sooner set his eyes upon me than he exclaimed, 'This is the Feringhi, seize him!'

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan called to me to make off as fast as I could. I lost no time in following his advice, and vaulting into my saddle galloped after the horsemen and soon joined them. Abou'l-Hassan, at the same time, folding his arms and confronting the sheikh, said to him, 'Seize me! That man is my guest, he has eaten my bread. No one can harm him whilst under my protection, and I am a seyyid.' 'By your forefathers,' exclaimed the sheikh, 'had he not been your guest he never would have gone out of my hands. Alas! that I did not know before that he was in my tents!'

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan said that I had had a very narrow escape, and cursed these 'Kaffirs,' as he called them. My Faïli companions declared that if Sheikh Yunos had ventured to lay a finger upon me, they would have exterminated the whole encampment—men, women, and children. I was not, however, sorry that they had not been put to the proof, and congratulated myself on having got clear of these fanatical Arabs. It was fortunate that I had not been earlier recognised. As there were no tents to be seen at nightfall, we slept in the open air in a green valley, where our horses found abundant grass.

The next day (it was Christmas Day) we fell in with the Hiyieh Arabs, a division of the Beni Lam tribe, whose flocks and herds were grazing in the fine pasturage found, at this time of the year, in the plains and valleys at the foot of the great range of the Luristan Mountains. Some of them were changing their encampment, and we passed long strings of laden camels and asses. We perceived the sheikh, at some distance, mounted upon a fine mare and followed by a number of horsemen with their tufted spears. My Faïli companions wished to ride up to him, but Seyyid Abou'l-

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Hassan dissuaded them from doing so, lest I should be recognised as a European, and be exposed to fresh danger. Although I should have been glad to see Sheikh Daûd, of whom I had heard so much, and who was at that time renowned amongst the Arabs of Khuzistan for his prowess as a warrior and freebooter, I agreed with the seyyid in thinking that the most prudent course was to avoid him, which we accordingly did, and passed on unobserved.

We stopped in the middle of the day at some tents belonging to the same tribe. I was not recognised as a European, but was nearly involved in a quarrel which might have led to the discovery that I was a Feringhi. The Arab at whose tent I had alighted with Sheikh Abou'l-Hassan gave us only bread and onions to eat. One of our Faïli companions, who had rested elsewhere and had been better treated, seeing the niggardly quality of our fare, was very indignant with our host, reproached him for his meanness in thus receiving his guests, and urged us to remove to the 'musif' in which he had been entertained. As we refused to do so he brought us from it a bowl of clotted curds.

Our host resented what he considered a reflection upon his hospitality, and consequently the greatest insult that can be offered to a true Arab and a Musulman. With the heavy club which the Beni Lam always carry he was about to belabour the Lur, who would probably have defended himself with his pistol or his dagger, and blood would have been shed. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan threw himself between them, and succeeded, at last, in restoring peace.

Towards evening we came in sight of Deh Lûron,[4] a village surrounded by palm trees, and belonging to Ali Khan, the chief of the tribe of the Faïli horsemen who accompanied me. They testified their joy at returning to their homes, after a long absence, by galloping their horses over a small plain, firing off their guns and pistols, and shouting their war-cries. The village was, however, almost deserted, the inhabitants having moved to the plain to find pasture for their flocks. As we could not procure barley for

[4] *I.e.* the village of the Lurs.

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our horses, we rode to a neighbouring encampment of Beni Lam Arabs. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and I were very hospitably received in an unusually large tent. My Faïli companions called me Daûd Beg, and told its owner that I was a Persian officer sent on a mission by the Matamet to Ali Khan. A sheep was slain for my entertainment. When I suggested that a fowl would be sufficient for our dinner, our host indignantly replied that an Arab would be unworthy of the name who did not kill a sheep for his guest, whatever his rank. After those within the tent had eaten abundantly, he stood in front of it, and in a loud voice invited the poor and hungry to come and partake of what remained. A small crowd of dirty Arabs soon appeared and threw themselves upon the fragments of meat and the boiled rice. This exhibition of hospitality is common amongst the Arabs, and their chiefs endeavour to outdo each other in such boastful displays.

A lofty mountain, called the Kebir Kuh,[5] had been visible during the previous two days—a magnificent snow-covered peak, one of the highest in the whole range of Zagros. We made for its foot, and crossing some very barren and precipitous sand-hills, reached a small plateau in the midst of them. Here, near some abundant springs called 'Sheker Ab,' or sugar water, was the encampment, or 'amâla,' of the great Faïli chief, Ali Khan, more generally known as the 'Wali of Luristan.' It was so well concealed in the hills that it could only have been discovered by persons who were intimately acquainted with the country. The Wali had pitched his tents there in order to avoid the Matamet, who was reported to be about to advance at the head of a considerable force into Luristan.

In this secluded spot there were about three hundred black tents belonging to Ali Khan and some of his principal 'tushmals,' or dependent chiefs, of the Faïli tribe of Kurd. We dismounted at the 'musif' of the Wali, who was seated in the sun on one of those carpets of beautiful texture and brilliant colours for which the looms of these mountains are

[5] *i.e.* the Great Mountain.

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celebrated. He was surrounded by a number of armed men, who stood respectfully in his presence. He gave directions that I should be conducted with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan to the tent of Ahmed Khan, one of the 'tushmals,' who received us with the greatest civility. The floor was at once carefully swept and sprinkled with water, carpets and 'nemuds' (felt rugs) were spread for us, and a huge fire of logs of wood was kindled, which was very welcome, as the air was frosty and cold.

The tent was a very large one, and was divided into several compartments by the usual screens of reeds, joined together by twisted worsted of various bright colours. Soft cushions and coverlets were provided for us, and we found ourselves in very comfortable quarters. Our host, who appeared to be an amiable, intelligent, and, for a Lur, well-informed man, did everything he could to please and satisfy me. Soon after our arrival one Mohammed Reshid Khan, a 'tushmal' of the tribe, whom I had known at Kala Tul, came to see me, and in the evening most of the other 'tushmals' assembled in the tent. I had heard so much of the savage character and want of hospitality of the Faïli Lurs, that I was agreeably surprised at my reception, and by the appearance and manners of these petty chiefs. They willingly answered my questions, gave me the information I asked for, and entertained me with stories and legends relating to their tribes. I consequently spent a very agreeable evening in their company.

I did not visit the Wali until the following morning, as it was not the etiquette to wait upon him except when he held his 'salam,' or public reception. He affected a kind of royal dignity, and held a petty court. I was somewhat anxious as to the result of my interview with him, as I knew him to be exceedingly suspicious of strangers, and especially of Europeans; nor could I forget that it was his uncle who had seized and barbarously put to death my two countrymen, Grant and Fotheringham.

The 'diwan-khana,' where the Wali held audience, was a vast black tent, supported by innumerable poles. It was closed on three sides by screens made of reeds, the fourth

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side being left entirely open. He sat at the upper end on a beautiful carpet. No one except a seyyid or mulla of reputed sanctity was permitted to take a place near him. Within the tent, and outside it, were spread long strips of embroidered nemud, or felt, on which visitors, guests, and persons specially invited by the chief were allowed to sit. The 'tushmals' and other petty chiefs, with their attendants, formed a wide circle beyond. Behind the Wali stood a number of savage-looking men, dressed in the Lur costume, armed to the teeth, and resting on their guns. In front of the tent were his ferrashes, who were ready, in obedience to his commands, to seize, and administer the bastinado to, those who had incurred his displeasure, and even to put them to death. Those who approached the Wali were held by the arms by two of these men as a precaution against assassination—a form then usually observed in Persia when strangers were allowed to draw near to great personages. Standing about were several dirty fellows in ragged garments, and bearing high-sounding titles, such as are used at the Persian Court, the ceremonies of which the Wali considered it necessary to ape.

When I entered his tent, with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, Ali Khan did not treat me with actual rudeness, but his reception of me was cold and distant, as if my presence was not altogether agreeable to him. He motioned to me to be seated on one of the 'nemuds,' at a short distance from him. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was invited to a higher place.

His first question to me was, 'Why have the English placed ships on the Tigris and Euphrates, and built a 'kút' (fort) at Basra?' I denied its existence, and as to the ships I explained that they had been sent to those rivers principally with the object of establishing a trade between his territories and the rest of the world, which it was to his interest and to that of all the other chiefs of this part of Persia to promote, as it would tend to the prosperity of their country and thus increase their wealth and influence.

This explanation did not satisfy him. Turning round to those sitting near him, he observed angrily, 'You see, the

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English are about to take possession of our country, and they send this person' (pointing to me) 'to spy it out and to prepare for their arrival.' Then, addressing Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, 'Why,' said he, 'did you bring this man here, to see me sitting thus on a carpet, when he should know that my forefathers were kings of this country, and that they sat before the Shah on a throne and were his equals? He will believe that we were always what we now are, and so he will proclaim to his countrymen.' Near the Wali sat Malek Ahmed Khan, the chief of the barbarous Faïli tribe of Sagwand, and one of the most notorious robbers and evil characters in the Luristan Mountains. He had just arrived to conclude the contract for a marriage between one of his daughters and a son of the Wali. He began to question me, in a somewhat insolent manner, as to my reasons for having resided with Mehemet Taki Khan, asserting that the presence of a 'Kâfir' (infidel) had brought ill-luck upon that chief. I had to be on my guard in answering these and many other questions of the same nature that were put to me, in order to avoid saying anything which might add to the suspicions of the Wali. At length he rose from his carpet, which was the sign for the breaking up of the assembly.

I returned to the tent of Ahmed Khan, who apologised for the want of cordiality with which I had been received by the Wali. He then explained the character of his chief, describing his good qualities and his vices—which were numerous enough—and telling me how I should behave and answer his questions when I next saw him. Ali Khan, he said, was very proud of his descent, and desired to be treated as if he were a royal personage. It was necessary to humour him, and to pretend to show him the consideration and respect to which he thought himself entitled. The best way to conciliate him was consequently to minister to his vanity. I determined to follow the advice which my host gave me.

Next morning Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan went before me to the usual reception of the Wali. He availed himself of my absence to explain the object of my presence in Luristan

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in an ingenious fashion, and to satisfy the chief. I had come, he assured him, all the way from Feringhistan (Europe) to see a prince whose name and reputation had even reached that remote region, and who was the descendant of the mighty kings who had once ruled over Luristan. This explanation was so gratifying to his vanity that he resolved to treat me with the greatest civility, so that I might be properly impressed with his greatness and dignity. He accordingly sent for me, made me sit by his side, and treated me with special attention.

The seyyid had informed me, before going to the 'mejlis,' of the explanation he intended to give to the Wali of my visit to his country. Acting, therefore, upon the hint and upon the advice given to me by my host, I addressed an harangue to Ali Khan, in which I extolled the ancient lineage of his family and their former greatness and power, and referred to his reputation for generosity and hospitality, which, I declared, had reached me long before I had any thought of visiting Luristan. He was much pleased by these compliments, bade me welcome to his country, and promised me his protection as long as I remained in it. At the same time, he advised me to avoid observation as much as possible, and to preserve my disguise, as the Lurs were very suspicious of strangers, especially of Europeans, and some evil-disposed person might do me injury.

The Wali was now as civil and loquacious as he had before been uncourteous and reserved. He asked me a number of questions about European institutions, and discoursed upon religion, philosophy, geography, and various other subjects, showing a good deal of shrewdness and intelligence. In the course of the day he gave me a proof of his desire to serve and protect me. As I was sitting at the lower end of the tent talking with some of the 'tushmals' a stranger entered. Shortly after, addressing the chief, he asked him whether a Feringhi had not been seen in the country. He replied in the negative. I pretended that I had not heard what had passed, and went on with my conversation. The man, having evidently perceived me, went

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up to the Wali and whispered something in his ear, and, after exchanging a few words with him, returned to his seat. Nothing further passed, and he soon afterwards left the encampment. The chief told me in the evening that the stranger had pointed me out as the European in question, but that he had assured him that he was mistaken, as I was a Georgian and related to the Matamet, who had sent me to the Faïli tribe on a mission. This explanation satisfied him, and he made no further inquiries.

I learnt afterwards that this man, who was a Lur from Khorumabad, had been sent in search of me. My friends in England, not having received any tidings of me for many months, and fearing that some accident had occurred to me, or that I might be detained as a prisoner in the Luristan Mountains, had requested the Foreign Office to make inquiries about me through the British Mission, which had recently returned to Tehran. The Persian Government, on the application of the British Minister, had accordingly directed the governor of the province of Kermanshah to obtain the required information. He had sent this Lur to find me, and, if necessary, to assist me in leaving the country. The Wali, not knowing the object of his visit, or suspecting that he might have evil intentions with regard to me, had thought it prudent to mislead him.

I remained another day with the Wali, with whom I was now on the most friendly terms. When I left him to continue my journey he ordered one of his retainers to accompany me, who would see me safe through his territories, between which and the Pashalic of Baghdad, where I should find the Turkish authorities, he warned me he could afford me no protection. He advised Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and myself to keep as much as possible in the mountains, to avoid the Beni Lam Arabs, and then took an affectionate leave of us.

The horsemen whom I had accompanied from Dizful, and who had shown me so much attention and kindness on the road, had now left us. We had still to pass through a very dangerous region, in which we should be exposed to perils both from Lurs and Arabs. It behoved us, therefore, to be

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on our guard and continually on the watch. We struck into the mountains, and arrived at nightfall at an encampment of Faïli Lurs under the Wali.

We continued next morning in the hilly country, occasionally descending into small valleys—rich pasture-grounds for the flocks and herds of the Lurs—carpeted with the narcissus and other sweet-smelling flowers. Black tents belonging to the Wali's tribe were scattered on all sides. In the burial-places of the Faïli which we passed, I observed, fastened to the headstones, the curved horns of the ibex, to which were hung women's tresses. They were the graves of chiefs, and the hair was that of their wives, which had been cut off on their death, in token of grief. I obtained occasionally beautiful and extensive views of the mountains, and the plains between them and the Tigris, from the high ground which I was crossing. We spent the night in the tent of a seyyid.

The following day was the first of the new year 1842. As I descended by the steep and rugged track which led to the plains below, I could not but reflect upon the events of the past twelvemonth—the perils that I had gone through and had happily escaped. There were still dangers before me, but I was approaching the end of my journey, and I hoped in a few days to find myself again among Englishmen and friends. I had been constantly suffering from intermittent fever, and required rest and medical care. Both I knew I should have as soon as I reached Baghdad. I was consequently in high spirits, to which the great beauty of the scenery and the fine mountain air greatly contributed.

At the foot of the hills we found the last encampment of Faïli which we were to meet with on our road. We stopped for a short time at the tents to refresh ourselves and our horses. At a short distance from them we came to the Changolar, the small stream which divides the Faïli country from that of the Beni Lam Arabs. Before we crossed it, the Wali's horsemen, having conducted us safely through his master's territories, bade us God-speed and left us.

We had ridden five or six miles when we came to some

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Arab tents. Being thirsty I stopped at one of them, and without dismounting asked for 'leben' (sour milk). The owner of the tent brought me some in a wooden bowl. I had scarcely put it to my lips when he cried out in a loud and excited voice, 'Here is the Feringhi! Here is the Feringhi!' I dropped the bowl, and, urging my horse to its full speed, rejoined the seyyid and Saleh, who were at some distance. We then all three galloped as fast as we could until we were far from the encampment. Fortunately all the horsemen were away from it, and we were not pursued.

We stopped for the night at another Arab encampment, after a very long and fatiguing day's journey, as we had ridden about forty miles, being anxious to get through the Beni Lam country as soon as possible. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, on account of his descent from the Prophet—marked by his green turban—was always a welcome guest in tent or cottage. As soon as he entered, he was surrounded by men and women begging for charms or 'du'as,' and his time was chiefly occupied in writing verses from the Koran on bits of paper or parchment, to be enclosed in little bags and tied round the necks of women who wished for offspring, and of children suffering from sore eyes. Sometimes these texts were written on the inside of a coffee-cup, and then washed off with water, which was drunk as an infallible remedy for every disease. The seyyid himself had little belief in these nostrums, but he found it to his advantage, especially in travelling in a dangerous country, not to discourage the confidence felt in them by good Musulmans.

He was employed in manufacturing them in the tent in which we had stopped for the night, until we were both so weary that we lay down to sleep where we had been sitting I had scarcely closed my eyes when my companion gave me a nudge, as if to call my attention to something. Our host and one or two Arabs were crouching round the fire and talking together. The subject of their conversation, which was carried on in a low voice, but which I could distinctly hear, was a European who was supposed to be among the Beni Lam tribes, spying out the country. They expressed their intention of cutting his throat, as they would that of a



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dog, should he fall into their hands. They appeared, as far as I could judge from what they said, to have some suspicions as to my real character, and to doubt the truth of the new story which Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan had invented, that I was a Georgian Musulman on my way to Kerbela and Mecca. However, after discussing the matter for some time, one of them insisting that I was the Feringhi in question, they all left the tent, and shortly after there was profound silence in the encampment.

As soon as they were gone Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who had been trembling with fear, whispered to me that the danger of my being discovered appeared to him to be so great, that he thought that the only chance of my getting away in safety would be by leaving the tent in the middle of the night, and before the Arabs were stirring. He could not, he said, protect me ; on the contrary, he might himself be exposed to very great peril among these ignorant and fanatical Arabs, for having been found in the company of a European, whom they looked upon as a 'Kâfir,' and for having eaten with him. They would no longer believe in his sacred character, but would denounce him for an impostor, which would add to the risk he ran. Being entirely of his opinion, I called Saleh about two o'clock in the morning, and directed him to get the horses ready as quickly and quietly as possible.

The owner of the tent was awoke by the preparations for our departure. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan explained to him that we were anxious to reach Badraï, a town within the Turkish frontier, early in the day, and taking him aside had some private conversation with him, the effect of which was that he helped us to saddle our horses, and to leave the encampment without disturbing any of its inmates.

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan told me as we rode along that, judging from what he had overheard on the previous night, when our host, on being pressed to seize me, had refused to violate the laws of hospitality, he believed him to be a good Musulman and an honest man. He had, therefore, informed the Arab that he had heard what had passed between him and his friends when they were sitting round the fire, and

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warned him against the terrible sin that he would commit, and which God would inevitably visit upon himself, his wives and his children, and all his kith and kin, if he were in any way responsible for the death or ill-treatment of a guest who had eaten his bread, and especially of a descendant of the Prophet. He was greatly alarmed by this solemn warning, and entreated the seyyid to leave his tent with me as soon as possible, so that he might run no risk of having our blood to answer for.

We urged on our horses as fast as they could go, and as we were now on level ground they were able to keep up a brisk pace, although much fatigued by their recent hard work. The night was very dark, and there fell a drizzling rain. Saleh, delighted at the prospect of speedily reaching a Turkish town, where he could repose in safety from his fatigues, and find 'raki,' gave vent to his joy in a loud Lur song. As it was of the utmost importance that we should proceed quietly as well as quickly, I ordered him more than once to desist. He nevertheless continued his wild melody until, losing all patience, I applied to him some strong epithets which I knew that a Bakhtiyari would resent, but which I could not believe that Saleh, who had been so long resident among Persians in the towns, would consider an insult of a very grave character. To my surprise, he jumped from his horse and pointed his long pistol at me. Fortunately it missed fire, and as I immediately drew mine he thought better of the matter, and remounted.

He was afterwards very penitent for his misconduct, and implored my forgiveness, so, taking into consideration his hot Lur blood, and the fact that his fellow-tribesmen considered it a solemn duty to revenge an insult such as I had put upon him, I forgave him.[6]

[6] Saleh was of a very impetuous and passionate disposition, but a brave, devoted, and faithful servant. On one occasion I recommended him as an attendant to an officer in the Indian army, who wished to visit the ruins of Babylon from Baghdad. On their way Saleh did something which offended his employer, who, in Indian fashion, addressed him in insulting language and raised his whip to strike him. Saleh jumped off his horse and, drawing his dagger, thus addressed the officer: 'If you had not been the friend of the sahib, who is my master and protector, and who recommended you to my care, your life should have answered for the insults you have addressed to me. I will not injure you, but I can no longer remain in your service.

We crossed the Turkish frontier and reached Badraï without further incident. Badraï is a small town surrounded by extensive groves of palm trees, producing the dates which bear its name, and are the most renowned in Turkish Arabia. The Turkish governor received me with much civility, and expressed great surprise that I had been able to pass safely through the Beni Lam country. He informed me that a caravan would leave on the following day for Baghdad, escorted by a considerable body of 'hytas,' or irregular cavalry, as the roads were infested by Arab marauders, who had been committing depredations in the villages, and robbing travellers. He advised me, therefore, to accompany it, although, in consequence of the unsettled state of the country, it would not take the direct road, but would have to pass through Mendali, a town to the north of Badraï, which would lengthen the journey by two or three days. I thought it prudent to take his advice.

We reached Baghdad without any adventure. The only incident I have to relate is the following. Having entered upon the great highway between that city and the Persian frontier, which I had followed in my first journey, we joined, long after dark, having been travelling for many hours, a 'kâfila' or caravan resting for the night. Overcome with sleep, I lay down on one of the loads which had been taken from a mule. It was only at daybreak, when I was roused by the preparations of the muleteers for their departure, that I discovered that we had fallen in with one of those numerous caravans which at that season of the year carried the dead bodies of pious Shi'as to be interred in the holy soil of Kerbela. I had slept soundly on one of the coffins, which was wrapped in soft felt, and had not perceived the nauseous stench which accompanies these convoys of putrefying human remains.

May God be with you!' He then left the astonished traveller in the middle of a desert with three baggage horses to look after, and, returning to Baghdad, came to inform me of what had occurred. Some years after Saleh walked all the way from Baghdad to Constantinople to see me, and I had to keep him for some time, to my great inconvenience, in the small lodging that I occupied.

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## CHAPTER XVII

*Renounce journey to India—Ascent of the Karun in the 'Assyria'—The bend of Ahwaz—Get aground—Notables of Shuster visit the 'Assyria'—Awkward position of the vessel—Floated again—Ascend the Ab-Gargar—A lion—Fate of Mehemet Taki Khan—Ascend river of Dizful—An unjust attack—Lieutenant Selby wounded—Travel Tatar to Constantinople—The ruins of Nineveh—Monsieur Botta—Embark at Samsoun.*

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On arriving at Baghdad I found letters from home awaiting me. They led me to give up my idea of going to India through Afghanistan, and to determine upon returning to England. But I was desirous before leaving Baghdad of establishing the fact, of which I had convinced myself by personal observation, that the river Karun was navigable, as far as Shuster, to the steamers which the East India Company then maintained upon the Tigris and Euphrates, and might hereafter become an important channel for the development of British trade.

The practicability of the navigation of the Karun as far as Ahwaz by steamers had been proved by Lieutenant Selby in the 'Nitocris,' and before him (in 1836), in a steamboat of the same size, by Major Estcourt, an officer employed in Colonel Chesney's Euphrates expedition. But at that place four ledges of rock appeared to forbid the further ascent of the river. They had been connected by massive stone masonry, in order to construct a 'bend' damming up the stream for purposes of irrigation. In the course of time the Karun had forced its way through this bend in more than one place. An examination that I had made of it had

led me to believe that a steamer of the size of the 'Nitocris' might be taken through it with safety, although the stream formed rapids in the openings. I had further satisfied myself that Shuster might be reached in such a vessel, both by the Karun and the Ab-Gargar.

Colonel Taylor, the British Resident, warmly approved of my suggestion that an attempt should be made to reach Shuster, and Lieutenant Selby was willing to make the experiment. I was to accompany him, and to take with me Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, whose influence in that city and in other parts of Khuzistan as a seyyid, and whose acquaintance with the country, were likely to prove of great use to us. Dr. Ross's knowledge of the Arabs and of their language, his admirable tact and temper in dealing with them, and his character of a 'hakim,' or doctor, made him a most valuable addition to our party.

We left Baghdad in the 'Assyria,' a vessel the same size as the 'Nitocris,' at the end of February, and entered the Karun in the beginning of March. We found Muhammera in the same desolate condition as when we had visited the place in the previous autumn. Sheikh Thamer was still a fugitive in Turkish territory. The Cha'b tribes, without his influence and authority to control them, were at war with each other. The country was everywhere in disorder, and roving bands of Arabs were plundering and devastating it on all sides. We learnt that the Matamet, having squeezed all that he possibly could out of the province, and having left its inhabitants absolutely naked—as the Arabs expressed it—finding that nothing more was to be got out of them, was on his way back to Isfahan, and had already left Shuster with his troops. We had consequently no reason to apprehend that any difficulties would be placed in our way in ascending the Karun. Had he been still in Khuzistan, his hostility to the English would probably have led him to forbid our entrance into the river. In such case, we could not have persisted in our attempt without running the risk of bringing about political complications between the English and Persian Governments.

Another circumstance favourable to our enterprise was an

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unusual rise which had taken place in the Karun, owing to the rains that had fallen in the Luristan mountains. Notwithstanding the consequent increase in the strength of the stream, we experienced no difficulty in reaching Ahwaz. The jungle on the banks furnished us with ample fuel. At Ahwaz the swollen river was breaking over and through the bend and ledges of rock, forming boiling whirlpools and eddies below. It seemed as if all further advance were out of the question.

Lieutenant Selby, after carefully examining one of the openings in the bend, about forty yards wide, was of opinion that, notwithstanding the formidable appearance of the race, the 'Assyria' could overcome it. He determined, therefore, to attempt to force the vessel through it, under steam. Twice he succeeded in taking her up to it, but each time she was arrested in her course, and turned completely round by the force of the stream. He then resolved to try the united power of steam and of a hawser passed from the ship to the shore.

All his preparations being complete, the order was given for the engines to be worked at full speed, and for the crew to haul upon the hawser. When the 'Assyria' reached the opening and felt the power of the rushing waters, she appeared to be paralysed, and trembled from stem to stern. By the help of the hawser her head was kept steadily to the stream. It was a moment of intense anxiety and excitement, for, had any accident occurred, such as the parting of the rope, she would have been in imminent danger of being driven against the rocks below the bend, and of being shattered to pieces. I was standing on one of the paddle-boxes, watching her with bated breath. For some moments she was motionless, as if struggling for the mastery. Then she moved forward a little as if getting the better in the contest. The men gave a hearty cheer and redoubled their efforts. The 'Assyria' now seemed to have overcome her difficulties, and went slowly onwards until she had passed into the tranquil waters above the dam. The other ridges of rocks offered no serious obstacle, and we passed through them without trouble under steam.

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Above Ahwaz the Karun had overflowed its banks, and the country to some distance from them was under water. The current in mid-stream was strong, and our progress was consequently slow. Moreover, the 'Assyria' was constantly grounding, as we had no pilot on board to guide us through the intricacies of the channel, but she was soon floated again. On the second day after passing Ahwaz we reached Bendi-Kir, where the Karun, the Ab-Gargar, and the river of Dizful unite. After their junction they flowed for a considerable distance in three distinct parallel streams or bands, each of a different colour, according to the soil through which it had flowed—producing a very curious effect. The water of the Karun, which formed the centre band, was of a dull reddish hue; that of the Ab-Gargar, milk-white; and that of the Dizful river, almost black, from the rich alluvial mould which it brought down.

It would be difficult to describe the beauty, in the spring, of the fertile plains watered by these rivers. When we passed through them they were clothed with the most luxuriant vegetation, and enamelled with flowers of the most brilliant hues, amongst which the scarlet anemone and the sweet-smelling narcissus were conspicuous. The grass was so high that it reached to the belly of a horse. In all directions we could see flocks of sheep, and herds of cows, buffaloes, and camels, and the black tents of their Arab owners. This delightful scene was soon to change. The grass and flowers, which appear to grow up in a night when the spring rains begin to fall, disappear in a day under the scorching rays of the sun, and the plains become an arid waste.

Lieutenant Selby resolved to attempt, in the first instance, the ascent of the main branch of the Karun. To avoid as much as possible the strength of the current in the centre of the stream, he kept the 'Assyria' in the slack water outside the bed of the river where it had overflowed its natural banks. This was a hazardous proceeding. She grounded several times in consequence, but was got off by the help of anchors and other appliances. At length, towards evening, when we were within about seven miles of Shuster, we found

ourselves aground at some distance from the true bed of the river. The first attempt to haul the vessel into deeper water not having been successful, and the crew being much fatigued by the labours of the day, as they had been constantly employed on board and on shore in similar operations, under a hot sun, Lieutenant Selby gave orders to cease work for the night, proposing to renew it at daylight on the following morning.

Knowing how quickly the rivers of Khuzistan rise and fall, I remonstrated earnestly against this decision, and was supported by Dr. Ross. But Lieutenant Selby was an officer of a somewhat violent and impetuous disposition. He replied angrily that he would do as he chose with his own vessel, a right which I did not dispute. What I had anticipated occurred. The waters of the Karun decreased so rapidly during the night that when morning broke we found ourselves high and dry at a considerable distance from the river.

The position was not a pleasant one. The Persian authorities and the people of Shuster had not been made aware of our coming. We could not be certain that they would not be hostile to us. Parties of Arab marauders, were, moreover, roving over the country. We found ourselves altogether in a very helpless condition. It appeared to me that our best plan would be to communicate at once with the principal chiefs of the city, to inform them of the arrival of the vessel, to lead them to infer that her stranding was rather intentional than the result of an accident, and to endeavour to obtain their friendly assistance in our difficulties. As some Arabs had gathered round the ship, and their tents were near, I managed to hire two horses, and, accompanied by Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, galloped into Shuster.

I rode at once to the diwan-khana of my former host, Mirza Sultan Ali Khan. Although early in the morning, it was already filled with guests. They had not yet heard of the arrival of the steamer. I informed them of it, and invited them in the name of her commander to visit her. I explained to them that our object in ascending the river

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was to cultivate good relations with the population of Khuzistan, with the view of establishing a trade advantageous to it, and that the friendly reception I had already met with in their city, and the desire expressed to me by its seyyids and notables to extend its commerce, and thus to endeavour to restore its ancient prosperity, had encouraged me to believe that they would welcome the arrival of an English vessel. I proposed, therefore, to them to accompany me on my return to the 'Assyria,' assuring them that they would be received with due honour.

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan proved exceedingly useful in the emergency in which we found ourselves. He had been very favourably impressed by the kindness and hospitality which he had experienced from Colonel Taylor and the British residents at Baghdad, and on board the 'Assyria.' He consequently confirmed what I said very warmly. He added that he was even authorised by a British merchant, by way of making an experiment, to send a cargo of wool and other produce of the country to Basra, on this gentleman's account. He ended by describing the wonders of the steamer—its machinery, its crew, and its armament—and urged his fellow-citizens to accept her commander's invitation.

As Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was much respected by the Shusteris, and possessed a good deal of influence in the city on account of his high character, his advice was accepted. Mirza Sultan Ali Khan and his friends ordered their mares to be saddled, and notice was sent to the other notables of the city that we were about to visit the English ship, and they were invited to join us.

They soon assembled at the city gate with their attendants, and we rode together to the stranded vessel. Lieutenant Selby, seeing so large a company of horsemen approaching, and presuming that I had brought, as I had undertaken to do, some of the principal inhabitants of Shuster to visit him and his ship, prepared to receive them with full honours. The marines and the crew were drawn out as on parade, and he and Dr. Ross, both in uniform, advanced to receive their visitors. We explained to them

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that, owing to the vessel being aground, it was not possible to fire a salute, but that we hoped on a future occasion to do so. They were then conducted over the steamer, shown the machinery, and entertained with coffee and sweetmeats. They returned to Shuster highly gratified by their reception, and promising to furnish any assistance that we might require to move the 'Assyria' into the bed of the river.

To float her again was no easy task. Our first consideration was to place her in a condition of defence in case any attempt should be made either by Arab marauders to plunder her, or by the Persian authorities to seize her, which was, however, scarcely to be apprehended, as the Matamet was already far on his way, with his army, to Isfahan, and had left no troops behind him in Khuzistan. With this object, Lieutenant Selby disembarked her guns, and placed them on earthworks, which were hastily thrown up round the ship by the crew, aided by some Arabs whom we hired. These improvised fortifications were amply sufficient, with the marines and the English part of the crew, for defence—at least against Arabs only armed with swords and spears.

The most serious question, however, was how to get the vessel back into the river? Lieutenant Selby hoped that another freshet would take place, and that she would shortly float of herself. All attempts that had been made to move her had failed, although the chiefs of Shuster had furnished us with the trunks of palm-trees to be used as rollers, for which they refused to receive any payment. The marks we had placed in the stream, which we watched with nervous anxiety, showed not only that there was no rise in the river, but that, on the contrary, it continued to fall. We were approaching the end of March, and consequently the end of the rainy season in the mountains, where the rivers of Khuzistan have their sources. Fearing that, unless the 'Assyria' were speedily moved, she might remain where she was for an indefinite period, Lieutenant Selby resolved to dig a deep trench through which she could be floated into the main stream. To lighten her as much as possible, he ordered her machinery to be taken to pieces and to be

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removed from her, with all her stores. This operation was successfully accomplished by the chief engineer, a very intelligent and skilful officer.

The trench had been almost completed when, in the middle of one night, the river began, without any previous notice, to rise so rapidly, that we had reason to fear that the machinery, stores, and provisions, which had been disembarked and were lying around the vessel, would be soon under water, and perhaps be partly destroyed. All hands were at once employed in carrying everything on board in the dark. It was fortunate that we had time to do so. By daylight the Karun had again overflowed its banks, and the 'Assyria' was soon afloat again and was speedily moved into the bed of the river.

This sudden freshet was a most fortunate and unlooked-for occurrence, without which it was very doubtful whether we could have succeeded in floating the vessel, as the river had been falling so rapidly that it would soon have been exceedingly difficult to drag the 'Assyria' down its bank without running the risk of causing her irreparable injury. As it was, she had in no way suffered, having grounded upon soft alluvial soil.

It required two or three days to put the machinery together again. When this was done we returned to Bendi-Kir and entered the Ab-Gargar. We anchored in the afternoon for the night, and Lieutenant Selby and I, as was our wont, left the ship for a walk. He was accompanied by a terrier, which amused itself in tracking porcupines to their holes. Suddenly the dog began to bark violently. We ran forward, thinking that it was in pursuit of one of those animals. We had scarcely advanced many paces, when a huge, black-maned lion,[1] the largest I had seen in Khuzistan, rose before us. He gazed at us as if surprised by the intrusion, and then, turning from us, walked majestically away. We remained motionless; but the terrier followed the beast, still yelping. We feared lest, irritated at being thus assailed, he might attack us, and we were without

[1] I particularly mention its black mane, as the Khuzistan lions are generally supposed to be maneless.

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arms; but he took no heed of us, and we watched him until he disappeared over the bank of the Ab-Gargar.

As soon as he was out of sight we returned as fast as we could to the vessel, which was at no great distance from us. Collecting the marines, and all who could use a gun, we went in search of the lion; but we sought in vain for him, and night coming on we had to go back to the ship. On the following morning, as we ascended the stream, we kept a good look-out, thinking that we might disturb him if he were concealed in the brushwood; but we saw no more of him.

We were rather more than a mile from Shuster when the further ascent of the Ab-Gargar was stopped by a great stone dam. We had thus proved that this canal was navigable to within a short distance of the city, with a depth of water of not less than from twelve to eighteen feet, even when at its lowest in the summer and autumn. The fact that vessels of the size of the 'Assyria' could reach, from the Euphrates, the foot of the mountains over which tracks lead to Isfahan and into the very heart of Persia, was thus satisfactorily established.

The 'Assyria' remained at anchor for several days near the city. The inhabitants came in large numbers to visit us, and were allowed to inspect all parts of the vessel. When ready to depart we invited Mirza Sultan Ali Khan and the seyyid chiefs of Shuster to see her under steam, and took them for some distance down the Ab-Gargar, giving them on their leaving us the salute which we had promised them on the occasion of their first visit. They were delighted with the attention that they had received, and we parted with them, hopeful that the result of our expedition might be the establishment of commercial and political relations between England and the province of Khuzistan which might prove mutually beneficial. I bade adieu to my excellent friend Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who did not return with us to Baghdad.[2]

[2] Many years afterwards, when, at the time of the Mutiny, I was staying with the East India Company's Political Agent at Hyderabad in the Deccan, I was informed that a native gentleman desired to see me.

During our detention at Shuster I spent almost the whole of my time in the house of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan, gathering information as to the produce and commercial capabilities of the province, prices, means of transport, trade routes, &c., as well as gaining further knowledge of the manners and customs of the people. The kindness and hospitality that I experienced from this gentleman and from the other notables of the city could scarcely have been exceeded. They furnished me with all the data that I required, invited me to live in their houses, and gave sumptuous entertainments to Lieutenant Selby, Dr. Ross, and myself. On one occasion we were served, at a feast in Mirza Sultan Ali Khan's 'diwan-khana,' with a monster pillau, in which was a sheep boiled whole, smothered in rice, mixed with raisins, almonds, and pistachio-nuts. It was ornamented with a number of little lamps, each formed of the skin of half an orange filled with melted butter, in which floated lighted wicks. This singular dish was brought in upon an enormous tray which several men could with difficulty lift.

The English sailors and marines freely visited the city. Fortunately they conducted themselves with propriety, and got into no trouble, which was, perhaps, partly to be attributed to the fact that there were no Christians, and consequently no grog-shops, in the place, nor any means of obtaining wine or spirits. I asked the old quartermaster of the 'Assyria,' a certain Mr. Lucas, what he thought of Shuster. 'Well, sir,' he replied, 'it ain't a bad place, but there bain't a public in it!'[3]

Mehemet Taki Khan was still in chains in the castle. I often saw him, and took Lieutenant Selby and Dr. Ross

To my great surprise my visitor proved to be Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who had by some means learnt that a person answering to the description of his former English friend was in the country. We were both delighted to meet again. He was residing with the Nawab's celebrated minister, Salar Jung, with whom, I believe, he was distantly connected.

[3] This same quartermaster was celebrated among the English in Mesopotamia for an entry in the log-book. The 'Assyria' had been left under his care near Basra, when there arose one of those violent tornadoes which occasionally sweep over this part of Arabia. The vessel was in great danger. After the storm was over Mr. Lucas thus recorded the event: 'The windy and watery elements raged. Tears and prayers was had recourse to, but was of no manner of use. So we hauled up the anchor and got round the point.'

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to visit him. They were both struck by the nobleness of his character, his enlightened views for the improvement of his people, and the resignation with which he bore his misfortunes. He told me that his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, had succeeded in reaching Tehran, and had laid his case before the Shah. He was not without hope that he would shortly be released and restored to his former authority in the Bakhtiyari Mountains.

Khatun-jan Khanum and her children, and the ladies of the family, were in the ruined house in which I had seen them when at Shuster in the winter, and in the same state of misery and wretchedness, without sufficient food, and almost without necessary clothing. Several had died, and her once beautiful sister, Khanumi, was apparently in a dying state. I took Dr. Ross to see her, and under his care she was rapidly mending, when orders were received from the Matamet for the removal of the ladies to Dizful. I endeavoured to prevail upon the Persian officer in whose custody they were to permit Khanumi to remain until she was sufficiently recovered to bear the journey. He brutally refused, and the poor girl died on the way.

Shortly after my visit to Shuster, Mehemet Taki Khan and his family and adherents were sent by the Matamet to Tehran. It had been the intention of the Shah to put the Bakhtiyari chief to death ; but his life was spared, and he remained in prison and in chains until his death in 1851.

Hussein Kuli, his son, who had been detained as a hostage, died four years after his father. Khatun-jan Khanum and some other members of the chief's family were subsequently allowed to reside in Feridun, a village not far from Isfahan, which once belonged to Mehemet Taki Khan.

We returned to Bendi-Kir with the intention of attempting the ascent of the river of Dizful, which here unites with the Karun. But by our long detention at Shuster we had lost the favourable opportunity afforded by the floods, which had occurred a month before. The waters had now fallen, and this river has at all times less depth than the Karun and the Ab-Gargar. Its course through the alluvial plain

is singularly tortuous. At one place, after winding for several miles, we found ourselves within only a few yards from a part of the river in which we had been fully an hour before. The bank which separated us from it might almost have been cut through in a day. After passing through an opening in a reef of rocks, we ascended to within about thirteen miles of Dizful. The force of the current and the shallowness of the stream then compelled us to desist from any further attempt to reach the town, and we returned to Bendi-Kir. Not far from that place, three lions which we had disturbed swam together across the river close to the 'Assyria.' A volley of balls from the vessel apparently had no effect, as they quickly reached the opposite bank and disappeared in the jungle. In descending and ascending the rivers of Khuzistan and Mesopotamia lions were constantly seen on their banks.

We had no difficulty in passing through the dam at Ahwaz. The 'Assyria' shot through the opening like an arrow. The only danger to be apprehended was that she might not be brought up in time to avoid the rocks in the bed of the river beyond. But she obeyed her helm, and we cleared them without accident. The Karun had now resumed its usual level, and was no longer the impetuous stream that we had found it six weeks before.

We reached Baghdad in the middle of May. Whilst I was preparing to return to England by crossing the Mesopotamian desert to Damascus, news came from Constantinople that, principally in consequence of the proceedings of the Matamet in Khuzistan, and of his invasion and occupation of territory claimed by Turkey, the Sultan was about to declare war against Persia. Colonel Taylor was desirous that Sir Stratford Canning (afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe), then the English Ambassador at the Porte, should be fully informed as to the merits of the matters in dispute between the two Powers, and that through his mediation hostilities between them, which might be very injurious to British interests in Turkish Arabia, might be prevented. He asked me whether, instead of proceeding to England by Beyrout, I would be the bearer of despatches

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to Sir Stratford, and furnish him, at the same time, personally, with any information that he might require, should he think fit to offer his mediation. I at once consented to do so.

A Tatar, or Government messenger, despatched by the pasha was leaving Baghdad for Constantinople. He agreed to allow me to accompany him and to provide me with one horse during the journey. We were now in June, and the heat in the Assyrian plains was very great. But I was accustomed to it, as well as to fatigue and to every manner of privation. We trotted and galloped night and day, until we reached Mosul in little more than fifty hours, a distance of about 250 miles. The Tatar was detained there for three days by the governor, who had to prepare his despatches for the Porte. I spent them very pleasantly and very profitably with Monsieur Botta, who had recently been appointed French Consul there, and was meditating those excavations which ended in the discovery of the Assyrian ruins at Khorsabad, and have rendered his name famous. We visited together the great mounds opposite Mosul, which were believed to occupy the site of ancient Nineveh, and on one of which stands the small mosque containing the apocryphal tomb of Jonah. He had opened one or two trenches in the largest of these mounds, known as Kouyunjik, but had only discovered a few kiln-burnt bricks and fragments of alabaster inscribed with cuneiform characters.

I had long wished to examine these great ruins, and had proposed to Mr. Stirling, an English merchant, to advance the funds required for making excavations in them, persuaded that the objects of antiquity to be discovered would amply repay the expense. I had left Baghdad, however, before receiving any answer to my proposal. The conviction that remains of great interest and importance were concealed within these shapeless accumulations of earth and rubbish, induced me to encourage M. Botta in his experiments. As it is now well known, the mound of Kouyunjik covered the great palace of Sennacherib which I discovered four years afterwards. M. Botta, having heard of the existence of sculptured slabs at Khorsabad, abandoned the site

opposite Mosul and transferred his researches to that place, with what result the Assyrian sculptures in the Louvre and his magnificent work, published at the expense of the French Government, have shown.

I reached Samsoun on the Black Sea the day before a steamer bound from Trebizond to the Bosphorus touched at that port. I still wore the Bakhtiyari dress. In order to make a decent appearance on reaching the Turkish capital, and on presenting myself at the British Embassy, I had to borrow of the English Vice-Consul some articles of European clothing, as there were none to be bought in the town. Thus equipped I embarked, and found myself on July 9 again at Constantinople.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

*Arrive at Constantinople—Reception at the British Embassy—Sir Stratford Canning—Mission to European provinces of Turkey—Salonica—Omar Pasha—Ambelakia—Larissa—Chatalja—Namik Pasha—Meteora—A swollen stream—Meszovo—Zagori—Revolution in Servia—The Servian leaders—Return to Constantinople—Travel Tatar—Reach Pera—Sir Stratford's Servian policy—Policy of Russia—Mr. Longworth—Ahmed Vefyk Effendi—Ruh-ed-din Effendi—Turkish life—Reshid Pasha—Turkish politics—Mediation of England in Turco-Persian question—Remain at Constantinople.*

I DISEMBARKED from the steamer in the Golden Horn. Having secured a room, and deposited my scant luggage, I engaged a caïque to take me to Buyukdereh, where Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador, was then residing. On arriving there I presented myself at the Embassy and delivered my letter for the Ambassador to a servant. I was told to wait, which I did for a considerable time. At length a fashionably-dressed young gentleman appeared, asked me roughly for the despatches of which I was the bearer, informed me that the Ambassador was too much occupied to see any one, and turning on his heel left the room without deigning to listen to what I had to say.

I felt very indignant at this uncourteous treatment, which I thought scarcely justified even by my persona appearance. Having endeavoured in vain to obtain an audience of some other member of the Embassy, whom I could ask for a passport to enable me to travel over the Continent, I left the house and returned to Pera, resolved to apply to the British Consul-General for this necessary document, and to leave Constantinople as soon as I had obtained it.



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But before leaving Constantinople I was determined to inform the Ambassador of the manner in which I had been received at the Embassy. I accordingly wrote to Sir Stratford Canning, expressing in somewhat angry terms my indignation at the treatment I had received. I had no right to expect any reply to my letter, which was hastily written under a sense of offended dignity and of resentment for what I considered a personal affront.

I was not a little surprised when I received within a few hours a kind and courteous answer from Sir Stratford, expressing his regret that he had not seen me, and that I had cause to complain of my reception at the Embassy; thanking me for having brought the despatches for him from the British Resident at Baghdad, and begging me to call upon him without delay, as he was desirous of communicating with me. I could not do less than comply with his request, and on the following morning I returned to Buyukdereh.

Sir Stratford received me immediately. I was greatly struck by his appearance. His hair was already white. His tall and spare frame was not altogether erect, as he had the habit of stooping. There was, perhaps, a somewhat too evident assumption of dignity and reserve in his manner, which was intended to impress people with the utmost respect for the Queen's Ambassador, and, if the occasion required it, with awe. His earnest grey eyes seemed to penetrate into one's very thoughts. His thin, compressed lips denoted a violent and passionate temper. His complexion was so transparent that the least emotion, whether of pleasure or anger, was at once shown by its varying tints. A broad and massive overhanging brow gave him an air of profound wisdom and sagacity. He was altogether a very formidable-looking personage, and he made upon me the impression which he, no doubt, intended to produce.

His manner towards me was, however, kind and considerate. He began to question me upon the state of the country from which I had recently arrived, and especially as to the events on the Turco-Persian frontier of which I had been a witness. After a long conversation, and when

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I was about to retire, he remarked that my knowledge of the territory in dispute between Turkey and Persia might be of considerable use to him, as he had reason to believe that the advance of the Persian troops to Muhammera and into territory on the Euphrates claimed by Turkey might lead to war between the two States. It had occurred to him that the mediation of England might be employed to prevent a rupture between them, and he asked my opinion. I did not hesitate to approve of his idea, offering at the same time to furnish him with such information as I had acquired during my residence in Khuzistan.

I returned to Pera, and some days passed without my hearing from Sir Stratford Canning. My means were now nearly exhausted, and as I had scarcely more money than was required for my journey to England, I wrote to inform him that unless he desired to see me again I should leave Constantinople in a few days. Not receiving any reply to my letter I secured a berth on board a steamer bound for Galatz.

I was descending the steep street which led from Pera to the wharf where I was to embark, when I was overtaken by a 'cavass' from the Embassy. He had followed me from the hotel with a note from Sir Stratford Canning, informing me that he thought he saw his way to make use of my proffered services, adding, 'Instead of going away, come and dine here to-morrow, and I will try to arrange a plan with you.' After a moment's reflection I determined to accept Sir Stratford's invitation.

On the following day I went to Buyukdereh. The Ambassador told me that negotiations for the joint mediation of England and Russia between Turkey and Persia were in progress, but that some time would probably elapse before he might be in a position to make use of the information which I possessed. He proposed that, in the interval, I should visit the western part of Turkey in Europe, and especially Bosnia and Servia, as both these provinces were in a very unsatisfactory condition, and there was reason to believe that political events of importance were about to occur in them. He suggested that I should

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travel through them and report to him on the state of affairs, but without my mission having any official character.

I readily accepted Sir Stratford's proposal, and on August 20 I left Constantinople by a small Austrian steamer for Salonica. I was furnished with letters of introduction to the Turkish authorities, and to the British Consuls and Consular Agents in the districts which I was about to visit, and arrangements were made for me to correspond directly with the Ambassador.

Landing at Salonica, I forced my way through a clamorous crowd of porters, Jews, and beggars, and proceeded to the British Consulate. Mr. Blunt, the Consul, procured a room for me in the house of a native Christian family.

Salonica was already a rising town, and gave promise of becoming the principal port for the trade of the European provinces of the Turkish Empire. Brigandage prevailed in the district, and the country in general was insecure in consequence of the political agitation which had already commenced amongst the Christian populations of Roumelia promoted by foreign intrigues.[1]

One of the objects of my mission was to inquire into the movement which was alleged to be in progress among the Bulgarians, and the means by which it was being brought about. Secret societies were known to exist, which had for their object to excite the Christians to rise against the Turkish Government. They were directed and supported by secret committees in Russia, and by Russian agents, and there had already been more than one attempt at insurrection, which had been suppressed.

On August 25 I left Salonica in a small boat bound for the village of St. Teodoro, on the coast of Thessaly. We set sail in the evening, and crossing the gulf with a light wind arrived at our destination soon after sunrise. It was with some difficulty that I was able to obtain a horse to

[1] The 'Bulgarian Question,' which was destined in after years to assume such grave proportions and to lead to a great war, was already appearing on the horizon.

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take me to Platamona. I rode along the sea-coast at the foot of Mount Olympus, and through the vale of Tempe, with the beautiful scenery of which, and the wonderful luxuriance of its vegetation, I was greatly charmed. It reminded me of classic subjects as treated by Claude in his pictures. But we found the country almost deserted. The mountain range of Olympus and Ossa was the refuge of Greek brigands, who, descending into the valleys and plains, infested the roads, robbed travellers and caravans, almost put a stop to trade, and had compelled the inhabitants of the open country to abandon their homes and to seek for security in the towns. The soil consequently remained uncultivated, and one of the richest districts of European Turkey was reduced to the condition of a wilderness.

We crossed the Peneus by a ferry, and followed its winding course through a thickly-wooded valley, in which the pomegranate, the vine, and the fig—the remains of former cultivation—mingled with forest trees. We then entered a narrow and difficult gorge, through which the river forced its way, and arrived at sunset at Baba, a small village almost deserted, with a dirty half-ruined coffee-house, in which we took up our quarters for the night.

Next day we passed through the ruined town of Ambelakia, on Mount Ossa, about an hour's ride above Baba. This had been a place of considerable importance, and the remains of large, well-built houses, and of spacious buildings for the manufacture of cotton fabrics, gave evidence of its former industry and prosperity.

From Ambelakia I descended the southern slope of Mount Ossa to Larissa, a town of some importance, situated in a rich and extensive plain, and at that time the residence of the governor of the province of Thessaly. Namik Pasha, who held that post, had, however, gone to Chatalja or Fersala—the ancient Pharsalia—to be present at an annual fair held there. As I had letters for him I determined to follow him. Namik Pasha received me very cordially, and having quartered me upon the

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Greek bishop, who here, as elsewhere, was expected to entertain European travellers recommended to the Turkish authorities, invited me to spend my time with him as long as I remained in the town.

At the time of my visit to Thessaly, the province was apparently in a state of repose. Outwardly, the Christians, constituting by far the largest portion of the population, seemed satisfied with the Turkish rule, and, with the exception of brigandage, usually originating on the Greek side of the frontier, and outrages occasionally committed by Greek patriots, who crossed into Turkish territory to perpetrate them on Christians as well as Mohammedans, when they could do so with impunity, public tranquillity and order were fairly maintained. But the Pasha was seriously disturbed by the intrigues and conspiracies of foreign agents, who, he was convinced, were seeking to incite the Greek subjects of the Sultan to insurrection.

Leaving Chatalja, I accompanied an old Ottoman Bey, named Abd'ullah, to whom I had been recommended by the Pasha, to Karditza, a village which, with the surrounding lands, he farmed from the Government. I was struck by the fertility of the plain of Pharsalia, and its numerous villages, inhabited almost exclusively by Greeks. At Tricala, a town of some importance which I reached next afternoon, I was again lodged at the house of the Greek bishop.

The following day I visited the celebrated convents of Meteora, built upon lofty, isolated rocks in a valley of Mount Pindus. That upon which stands the monastery of St. Barlaam rises abruptly to the height of above two hundred feet. There were two ways of reaching the summit: either to climb the rock by ladders attached, or rather suspended, to its face, which required a steady head, and was a somewhat perilous proceeding; or to be drawn up in a net attached to a rope, which was lowered and raised by a rude windlass. I chose the latter method. The net having been spread out at the foot of the rock, I seated myself upon it with my Greek servant. When the signal that we were ready was given, the four corners were raised, and we shortly found ourselves, like two fish in a landing-net, suspended in mid-air. My com-

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panion, when he saw that he was leaving the solid earth and was powerless, became greatly alarmed and plunged violently, struggling with his arms and legs, and inflicting blows upon me with both. He continued to do so, roaring out with fear, until we had reached the summit, and found ourselves before an archway, in which were two monks. When the net with its contents was on a level with them, they gave it a violent push outwards, and when it had swung back over the platform on which they stood, suddenly loosened the rope, and sent us rolling on the floor. This primitive mode of ascent was neither pleasant nor safe. I was black and blue from the blows and kicks of my companion, and the windlass and the rope which sustained the net appeared to be old and in a very rotten condition. I spent a night in the convent, and then descended to the valley below in the same fashion that I had ascended from it, except that I took care to be alone in the net.

Whilst crossing, on the following day, the high mountain range of Pindus, which separates Thessaly from the province of Janina, in Albania, we were overtaken by a violent thunder-storm. We had several times forded the Peneus, across which the track constantly led us. The river, which was gradually increasing, in consequence of the heavy fall of rain, became an impetuous mountain torrent so suddenly that we could not recross it, and found ourselves unable to go either backwards or forwards. We had to remain for nearly twenty-four hours thus confined on a narrow ledge, along which the mountain path was carried, without food for ourselves or our horses. By the morning the storm had ceased, and the river having gradually subsided, we were able to ford it, and before nightfall reached the large village of Mezzovo, on the western slope of Pindus, inhabited entirely by Greeks. The place had been recently plundered by a band of brigands, which had crossed the frontiers of Greece, headed by a well-known Greek patriot, for the purpose of inciting the populations to insurrection against the Sultan, or of pillaging and murdering his Majesty's Musulman subjects. Not having succeeded in either undertaking, they considered that they might safely and profitably rob and outrage their fellow-Christians of

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Mezzovo. They had done so effectively. The houses in the village had been sacked, and the women deprived of their ornaments and grossly ill-treated. The unhappy inhabitants had no complaints to make of the Turks, but prayed to be protected from those who came to deliver them from the Turkish yoke.

After visiting the interesting Christian district of Zagori, remarkable for the beauty of its scenery and at that time in a very flourishing condition, I rode leisurely through Albania and Bosnia, passing through the principal towns in both provinces, then but little known, visiting many of the Albanian Beys, by whom I was always most hospitably entertained, hearing much of robbers, but fortunately not meeting with any, admiring the magnificent scenery of this part of Turkey in Europe, with its mountains, forests, and lakes, and collecting political and statistical information which I duly communicated to Sir Stratford Canning.

At that time Musulmans and Christians lived in peace and harmony in these provinces. They could scarcely be distinguished one from the other. They intermarried, and it was not uncommon to meet an Albanian Bey with a Christian wife. The Beys themselves, notwithstanding their lawless habits, arising chiefly from family feuds, which led to constant conflicts and bloodshed, were hospitable and without religious prejudices or intolerance. I was frequently admitted into the apartments of their wives, who did not think it necessary to veil themselves, like most other Mohammedan women, before a stranger.

On reaching the Servian frontier I found it occupied by irregular troops, and the province in a state of war. I had some difficulty and ran some danger in making my way to Belgrade. I was constantly stopped on the road by pickets of armed men, who looked upon a stranger with great suspicion, and to whom I was unable to explain, not knowing their language, that I was an English traveller on my way to the capital. The Servians were then not more civilized than the Albanians and Bosniacs, and not less ready to use their arms. After a long and fatiguing journey over the roughest of tracks, in a rude cart without springs—the only mode of conveyance—I found myself in Belgrade.

Shortly before my arrival a revolution had taken place in Servia, which had led to the expulsion of Milosh, the reigning prince, and the election in his stead of the son of Karageorge, the warrior-chief to whom the Servians owed their independence. The Principality was still in a very disturbed state, and the whole male population under arms.

The principal leaders in the revolutionary movement were Petronievitch, Wuchich, and Zuban, who formed the Provisional Government. I had letters for them, which I presented on arriving at Belgrade. They had all three been prominent chiefs and patriots in the insurrection against Turkish rule which, principally under the direction of the popular hero, Karageorge, had freed Servia from the Ottoman yoke. Petronievitch was a man of some culture, had received his education in Austria, and spoke more than one European language. Wuchich was a brave and rude soldier of the pure Servian type, unacquainted with any tongue save his own. Zuban was a lawyer by profession, and had some pretensions to a knowledge of literature. He had, indeed, although unacquainted with the English language, attempted to translate Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' into Servian. My communications with him were carried on in a kind of dog-Latin. The three statesmen, if they could be so called, enjoyed a high reputation for honesty, capacity, and patriotism amongst their fellow-countrymen. They were considered the chiefs of the popular and Liberal party which resisted interference in their affairs by Russia, under whose influence Prince Milosh was accused of being. Wuchich still wore the old Servian dress, which consisted of a jacket, vest, baggy trousers and leggings of brown coarse cloth, embroidered with black braid, and the Turkish red cap. In the huge belt of leather encircling his waist he carried a pair of enormous pistols, and a heavy sword dangled by his side. Petronievitch and Zuban were in European costume, but, like all their countrymen who still considered themselves subjects of the Sultan, wore the national head-dress, the fez.

The introductions which I possessed for the three Servian leaders, and for the Pasha who commanded the Turkish

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garrison which then occupied the fortress of Belgrade, enabled me to obtain trustworthy information as to the objects of the recent revolution, the intentions of its promoters, and the condition of public opinion in Servia. It appeared to me that if England were called upon to take any part in the affairs of Servia, her true policy was to give her support to those who were struggling to obtain Liberal institutions, to uphold the independence of their country, and to resist the undue interference of Russia in its government.

As Russia, or, upon her demand, the Porte, was threatening to crush the popular party in Servia and to restore Milosh to the throne by a war which could not fail to cause much bloodshed and misery, I determined to proceed at once to Constantinople and to submit my views to Sir Stratford Canning. The quickest mode of doing so was by riding post. The Pasha of Belgrade offered to send a Government Tatar with me as far as Nissa, and to give me a letter to the governor of that place, who would provide me with a fresh Tatar to Constantinople. It was the middle of October, and the weather, especially at night, was already cold in the mountains and in the bleak plains of Servia and Bulgaria when I started from Belgrade. Notwithstanding the darkness of the night, and the state of the tracks which passed for roads, but which were deep in mud and were frequently lost altogether, we galloped day and night as fast as the horses could carry us, over rocky hills and through dense forests.

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In the afternoon of the day after I left Belgrade, we reached the considerable town of Nissa, passing, as we entered it, the pyramid of human skulls—a trophy of a Turkish victory over the Servians—which was then still preserved. We rode through the narrow streets and bazars, still at full galop, scattering thick black mud over the passengers and the shopkeepers in their stalls—the 'sureji,' or post-boy, as was the custom when preceding a Tatar, warning the crowd of his approach by loud discordant yells and by cracking his whip.

The Pasha, to whom I delivered my letter, sent at once for a fresh Tatar to accompany me to Constantinople, and ordered horses to be got ready for me without delay. The

only incident of my journey that I recollect was that, when following the yelling 'sureji' and Tatar at full gallop through a narrow and crowded bazar in one of the towns through which we passed, my horse stumbled on the slippery stone pavement, and, throwing me over its head, deposited me in the midst of a circle of tailors, seated cross-legged at their work in an open shop. They were not a little alarmed at this sudden intrusion, and I was no less surprised at finding myself in such company—fortunately without hurt or injury.

We reached Adrianople early one morning, having galloped day and night without stopping, except to change horses at the post stations. My Tatar, who had been accustomed to travel at a jog-trot pace, which was exceedingly fatiguing to me, declared that he could go no further. He accordingly conducted me to the 'konak,' or residence of the governor, who undertook to provide me at once with a fresh Tatar. Whilst the necessary preparations were being made, I went to a neighbouring Turkish bath. After a short but sound sleep on the soft cushions and white linen of the outer hall, I felt thoroughly refreshed and ready to continue my journey. In a few minutes I was in the saddle again.

I reached Constantinople before dawn on the sixth day after leaving Belgrade. I had performed this journey of above six hundred miles in less time by some hours than Colonel Townley, a Queen's messenger, whose Tatar ride over the same ground had been mentioned by Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons as the fastest on record. I was, consequently, not a little proud of my feat. As some time had yet to elapse before the Adrianople gate, at which I had arrived, would be opened—the gates of Stamboul were then closed between sunset and sunrise—I dismounted, and, lying on the ground, slept until I could enter the city. I was full an hour passing through the narrow and ill-paved streets of the Turkish quarter of Stamboul, and through Galata to Pera.

Having breakfasted, I hired a horse and galloped to Buyukderch, where Sir Stratford Canning was still residing. It was only the date of the letters that I brought to him which convinced him that I had left Belgrade six days before. I found that he had already, from the reports which he had

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received, come to the same conclusion as I had as to the revolution in Servia, and as to the policy which it behoved the English Government to pursue with regard to it. He had condemned the hasty step taken by the British Consul-General in lowering his flag and leaving Belgrade, and had directed him to return to his post without delay.

Russia had determined to crush the popular movement which had taken place in Servia, and had induced Lord Aberdeen to adopt the opposite view to that of the British Ambassador. Sir Stratford Canning was deeply mortified and angered by being thus 'thrown over;' but with his usual independence and energy he held to the policy which he had adopted, upon what he considered just grounds, and continued to give all the support in his power to the popular party in Servia, which was seeking to establish free institutions in the Principality.

It was, of course, soon known to the English Foreign Office that it was partly in consequence of my reports that Sir Stratford Canning had adopted this policy, and that he was employing me unofficially and privately as the medium of communication with the Servian leaders. The prejudice which, in consequence, Lord Aberdeen formed against me was not for a very long time removed, and stood very much in the way of my official employment by Sir Stratford, who was desirous of making use of my services as a member of the Embassy, and had suggested that I should be named one of his attachés.

In the meantime Sir Stratford had been authorised by Lord Aberdeen to propose, in conjunction with the Russian Minister at the Porte, the mediation of England and Russia to prevent a war between Turkey and Persia, and to suggest a scheme for the settlement of the differences which had arisen between these two Powers relating to their frontiers. He was anxious to avail himself of the information which I possessed in preparing it. He requested me, therefore, to remain at Constantinople. I agreed to Sir Stratford Canning's proposal. He had now moved with his family from his summer residence at Buyukdereh to Pera for the winter. I

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was assigned a room in the Embassy, to which I came daily to carry on the work I had undertaken for Sir Stratford.

On my first visit to Constantinople I had formed the acquaintance of Mr. Longworth, who had recently returned from a mission, under the auspices of Mr. Urquhart, to Circassia, of which he published a highly interesting account. He introduced me to a young Turk named Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, with whom he had established an intimate friendship. This very remarkable man was then a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age. His father, Ruh-ed-din Effendi, had been for some time Ottoman *Chargé d'Affaires* at Paris. Ahmed Vefyk had been with him, and had acquired the French language, which he spoke and wrote with singular correctness and fluency. On returning to Constantinople he had continued the studies which he had commenced in France, and had induced his father to form a library of the best English and French classics, which subsequently became the most valuable and extensive in the Turkish capital. His acquaintance with them would have been even notable in one who had received the best European education. He was, moreover, a good Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Greek scholar, and well versed in Oriental literature.

Ahmed Vefyk Effendi was at that time employed in the foreign department at the Porte, where his father held a high official position. They resided together in a large old-fashioned wooden house near the great Byzantine aqueduct which traverses Constantinople, and still supplies the city with water. The Effendi and Mr. Longworth were in the habit of spending two nights a week in each other's houses. No one was permitted to cross the Golden Horn from Galata after sunset, the gates of Stamboul and the bridge of boats being then closed. In those days Europeans could not remain in the Musulman quarters after dark, and the very fact that an Englishman was allowed to pass the night in Ruh-ed-din's 'konak' afforded a proof of the enlightened and liberal character of its owner, as he ran the risk of seriously offending the religious prejudices of his neighbours, and, had he not been a man of rank and authority, would have been exposed to the interference of the 'mukhtars,'

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or chiefs of the quarter, who were charged with its superintendence and its police.[2]

The evenings which the two friends spent together were devoted to reading and study. I was invited to join them, and during the time that I spent at Constantinople I went, as regularly as I was able, twice a week to Ruh-ed-din's 'konak,' or winter mansion, when he was in Stamboul, and to his 'yali,' or country house, on the Bosphorus, during the summer months. We read together the best English classics, and spent many an hour in fierce argument, in which the Effendi joined with great vigour and spirit, lighting up the dry matter in discussion with an infinity of jokes and quaint illustrations. We also made him read the plays of Shakespeare, which he understood and appreciated, and the novels of Dickens, into the spirit and fun of which he thoroughly entered, roaring with laughter over the comic scenes. There was something catching in his merry and boisterous laugh, and even the solemn Turks, who were frequently present when he indulged in it, and did not comprehend the reason of it, could not resist joining in it. He took so much delight in the works of Dickens, and was so well acquainted with them, that he was constantly in the habit of quoting from them in after-days. He had a singularly retentive memory, and rarely forgot what he had once read. He was a perfect store of information on all manner of subjects, Western and Eastern, and had even then acquired a smattering of scientific knowledge. His great capacity, his acquirements, and his upright and honourable character, led his friends to believe and hope that he might rise to the highest offices in the State, and he himself would talk as if he were persuaded that he should one day become Grand Vizir.[3] He was the most cheerful,

[2] The Musulman quarters of Constantinople afforded a striking contrast to those occupied by the Christians and Europeans in their immunity from crime and vice. The Turks had no wish that the civilisation of Galata and Pera should be extended to that part of the capital which was inhabited by themselves and their families.

[3] The prediction was fulfilled many years after, and when I, who had been the companion of his youth, was the Queen's Ambassador at Constantinople.

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the most merry, and the most entertaining of companions. As he was always ready to impart information, and had none of those scruples and prejudices which prevented Turks from speaking to strangers, and especially to Europeans, of their domestic affairs, I learnt from him many interesting details of Turkish life and habits. His father was equally communicative and free from prejudice. He spoke French indifferently, but sufficiently well to make himself understood. He was a perfect Turkish gentleman of the most refined manners, and of very dignified appearance, with his snow-white beard and the turban and robes, which the chief civil functionaries at the Porte still wore—the 'nizam,' or European uniform and dress, not having then been generally adopted by them.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi, although then in civil employ, had been educated as a military engineer, and had belonged in his youth to the corps of bombardiers. He had taken part in many of the important events which had preceded and followed the accession of Sultan Mahmoud to the throne. He used frequently to entertain me with descriptions of tragic incidents which he had himself witnessed, such as the murder of Sultan Selim and the massacre of the Janissaries.

The life led by a Turkish gentleman in Stamboul was, at that time, a very simple one. Ruh-ed-din Effendi's 'konak' was provided with no European luxuries. It was divided, like all houses in the East inhabited by Musulman families, into the apartments in which the owner sat during the day, and in which he received his visitors, and those occupied by the ladies and their female attendants, or the harem. Chairs and tables and other European articles of furniture were not then in general use. The floors of the rooms were covered with a simple but finely made matting, upon which were laid fine Kurdish or Persian carpets. Around and against the walls were placed very low divans, covered with Brousa or Damascus silk, and provided with cushions and bolsters. It was necessary to sit upon these divans in the Oriental fashion, cross-legged. Every one on entering a room, before treading on the carpets, took off his

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boots or shoes. I always adhered to this custom when visiting Turkish gentlemen, wearing, as they did, inside my boots and over my stockings, the thin, black leather 'mests,' a kind of slipper. Everything was kept scrupulously clean, and the interior of the house was a model of neatness.

The Effendi and his son had, as was then the custom, numerous servants. Neither of them could go to the Porte or elsewhere without being followed by at least two attendants, one carrying the long 'chibouk,' or pipe of cherry or jasmine wood, in a bag; the other, papers, books, and things which his master might require during the day. The other servants remained to look after the house in a room provided for them on the ground-floor, where they spent the day in smoking pipes and drinking coffee.

In the harem, to which the male servants had not access, the work was done by female attendants. They cooked the dinner and other meals, being superintended in these occupations by the ladies of the family, who themselves were in the habit of making any special dish, and especially sweetmeats.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi had but one wife. His son, when he married, followed his example, as did most of the leading Turkish statesmen of the Liberal and reforming party, to which both of them belonged, such as Reshid, Ali and Fuad Pashas, Cabouli Effendi, and other enlightened men, although they still maintained very strictly the harem system, their wives, with their female attendants living in a part of the house—generally the largest and best—especially set apart for them, to which no male, except a very near relation, such as a father or brother, was admitted.

At sunset Ruh-ed-din Effendi and his son retired to the harem to say the prayers obligatory upon all Musulmans at that time of the day. An hour after they and their guests —for like all Turkish gentlemen they kept open house and were very hospitable—assembled for dinner, which was served in the old Turkish fashion. A low stool was first put in the centre of the room. A servant then appeared bearing an immense metal tray, which he placed upon it.

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He was followed by a number of others each carrying a metal bowl or dish containing the viands.

At a formal Turkish dinner to which guests were invited, the regular number of dishes served was no less than forty-two. But at Ruh-ed-din Effendi's house on ordinary occasions they rarely exceeded thirty. They came in succession, but each dish was so rapidly removed—the guests only having time given them to dip their fingers once or twice into it—that the repast did not last as long as might have been expected.

When the last dish had been removed, we returned to the divans round the room, and pipes, 'narguilés,' and coffee were served. Only water had been drunk during dinner, and wine was only occasionally offered to a European friend. In many Turkish houses it was the custom to hand small glasses of 'raki,' a strong coarse native brandy, and dried fruits and nuts, to the guests to whet the appetite—and frequently something more—before dinner. But in Ruh-ed-din Effendi's house spirits were not seen.

When our hosts had retired to the harem for the night, the servants took mattresses, pillows, sheets, and coverlets from a cupboard in the room in which we had been sitting, and beds were made on the floor for Mr. Longworth and myself. They were scrupulously clean and exceedingly comfortable. The household was usually astir by sunrise, the Mohammedan hour of prayer. We rose also. The ewer and basin were brought to us to perform our ablutions. The mattresses and bedding were rolled up and replaced in the cupboard. After drinking coffee and smoking our morning pipes, we returned to Pera on foot, generally leaving the house before our host had emerged from the harem.

A struggle for power was at this time taking place at Constantinople between the reform party, of which Reshid Pasha, the author of the celebrated 'Hati Sherif' of Gulhaneh, or the new Constitution for the Turkish Empire, was the head, and those Turkish statesmen who were opposed to the European institutions which Sultan Mahmoud had attempted to introduce into the administration of his Empire.



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The most active and powerful amongst the latter was Riza Pasha, an able, unscrupulous, and corrupt man, who at times exercised great influence over Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid, which he used to thwart the policy of his rival, Reshid.

Sir Stratford Canning supported the reform party with characteristic energy and vigour. He was in constant and intimate communication with Reshid Pasha and his principal followers, such as Ali and Fuad Effendis, men of remarkable abilities, who afterwards rose to the highest offices in the Ottoman Empire. These communications were frequently of a very secret and confidential nature. Sir Stratford, availing himself of my knowledge of the Turkish character, and of my slight acquaintance with the Turkish language, was in the habit of employing me in them. The task he imposed upon me was a very delicate and difficult one, and, even in those days, not unattended with danger. The visits I had to pay to these statesmen on Sir Stratford's behalf, whether they were in office or living in retirement and apparent disgrace, were usually made after dark, and always with the utmost secrecy, as it was of great importance that it should not be known that they were in communication with the English Ambassador, and that they were acting upon his advice and encouragement.

I thus became well acquainted with the enlightened and able statesmen who were then at the head of the reform party, and who were endeavouring to regenerate their country, and to bring its institutions into conformity with those of the most civilised and liberal of the European States. My opinions as to the Ottoman Empire entirely agreed with those of Sir Stratford Canning. I was convinced, as he was, that unless its Government was reformed by a fundamental improvement in the administration, which was deplorably corrupt in all its branches, by the employment of honest and competent men in public offices, and by a better treatment of the Christian populations, its fall would not be far distant. To induce the Sultan and his Ministers to adopt these reforms was the object of Sir Stratford Canning's policy.

Every effort was made by Russia, through her Embassy

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at Constantinople, and through her agents, secret and avowed, to thwart the policy of Sir Stratford. At every turn he had to encounter and baffle her intrigues. The Russian Minister, a crafty, vigilant, and far-seeing diplomatist, was ever active in intrigue, but carefully abstained from interfering too openly in the affairs of the Porte. Between him and the English Ambassador there was an incessant struggle, carried on, however, by each of them in a different way. The one impetuous, fiery, and dictatorial; the other calm, cautious, and restrained: the one seeking to inspire the Turks with awe and to drive them into doing his bidding; the other endeavouring to obtain his ends by cajolery, and by leading his victims by gentle and persuasive means to their destruction.

Whilst the Turks respected Sir Stratford Canning for his honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness, and were persuaded that he was their friend, and that all he said and did was in the true interest of Turkey, they resented his haughty interference in their affairs and the incessant trouble and humiliation to which they were exposed. On the other hand, they knew well enough that the Russian representative was working for their ruin, and that his soft persuasive words were but the means by which he sought to effect it. But they preferred being led to being driven.

Soon after my return to Constantinople from my mission to the Western provinces of European Turkey, the joint mediation offered by the English and Russian Governments to Turkey and Persia to prevent a war, which was then on the point of breaking out between them, was accepted by the two Powers. Sir Stratford Canning was thus able to carry out his intention of availing himself of the knowledge I had acquired during my travels in Mesopotamia and Khuzistan, and to employ me in the correspondence and negotiations which took place. The principal matters in dispute were certain parts of the frontiers between the two States. Persia claimed the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab, or united waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, from about sixty miles of their junction with the Persian Gulf, and certain districts in the mountains of Kurdistan, which had

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been seized by the Turks. Since the Matamet's expedition against the sheikh of the Cha'b Arabs, who had given an asylum to Mehemet Taki Khan, the Persians had occupied Muhammera and some territory to the north of that town. This territory was claimed by the Porte, and, as the Shah refused to withdraw his troops from it, the Porte was about to have recourse to war to enforce its claims. It was already fitting out an expedition for the purpose.

It was necessary for the representatives of the mediating Powers at Constantinople to make a careful investigation into the claims of the contending parties, and to propose to them for their acceptance a fair and equitable arrangement founded upon their respective rights and interests. Sir Stratford Canning entrusted me with this duty on his part.

The knowledge which I had acquired of the territory in dispute, and of the history and traditions of the tribes which inhabited it, enabled me to prepare a project of settlement which appeared to me just to both parties. It was entirely approved by Sir Stratford Canning, and sent by him to Lord Aberdeen, to be communicated to the Russian Government. He fully expected that he would speedily receive authority to submit it to the Porte for its acceptance. But the Russian Government declined to accede to it, and not only upheld the claims of Persia to Muhammera, which unquestionably belonged to Turkey, and the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab from the Hafar to the sea, but insisted upon the cession to her of territory on its east bank, which she had not even claimed, almost to the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris at Korna—thus giving her the control of the navigation of both those rivers, which form the means of communication between the sea and the south-eastern provinces of Asiatic Turkey.

Lord Aberdeen, who was desirous of deferring to Russia, accepted her views, and instructed Sir Stratford Canning to recommend them to the Porte. He sent for me after the arrival of Lord Aberdeen's despatch to this effect. I found him walking up and down his study, his brows knit, his thin lips compressed, and his delicate complexion scarlet with anger. Without saying a word he handed me the despatch.

I read it, and remarked that I was deeply grieved to find that Lord Aberdeen had come to a decision which, in my opinion, was not consistent with justice and right, and was not in the interests of England. He requested me to draw up an answer to Lord Aberdeen's despatch, pointing out the objections to the arrangement proposed by Russia, the injustice that would be done to the Porte, and the discredit that would fall upon England as a mediator if she showed so flagrant a spirit of partiality to Persia.

I wrote the draft of a despatch in this sense, which was adopted by Sir Stratford Canning. But it failed to produce any effect upon Lord Aberdeen, and nothing remained to the ambassador but to carry out the instructions he had received. The Porte protested against the decision of the meditating Powers, and against the sacrifice of territory it was called upon to make by it. But it was in the end compelled to yield, in the face of the threatening insistence of England and Russia.

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## CHAPTER XIX

*Live at Candili—Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid—Safvet Pasha—Frederick Pisani—A Christian apostate beheaded—Sir Stratford Canning's action—Scene at the palace—Insurrection in Albania—Sent there on a mission—Omar Pasha—Negotiations with a Ghega chief—Dervish Czar—An Albanian dance—Ghegas attack Turkish camp—Turkish treachery—Ochrida—Leave for Nineveh—Conclusion.*

I CONTINUED to live at Constantinople for two years, waiting for the official appointment as a member of the Embassy which Sir Stratford Canning led me to hope he would in the end obtain for me, but which Lord Aberdeen seemed determined not to give me. I passed the summer in an Armenian family at Candili, a village which occupies one of the most beautiful sites on the Bosphorus. My life was not an idle one. M. Botta had continued his excavations among the Assyrian ruins, and had made those discoveries at Khorsabad with which his name will ever be connected. With a rare liberality and generosity, he had allowed me to see his reports to his official superiors in France, describing the remains that he had uncovered. I was thus enabled to be amongst the first to announce them to the public, by giving a full account of them in a series of letters to the 'Malta Times,' which were republished in many European newspapers.

The success of M. Botta encouraged me to persevere in the design that I had formed of returning some day to Mosul, and of exploring the mounds of Nimroud and Kouyunjik on the left bank of the Tigris, supposed to occupy the site of Nineveh, which I had only hastily

visited in my journeys to and from Baghdad. I determined, therefore, to prepare myself as well as I was able to undertake the work, and to turn any discoveries that I might make to good account, should the plans I had formed be eventually carried out. I accordingly set myself to the study of the Semitic languages, to which I conjectured the cuneiform inscriptions from the Assyrian ruins belonged. I obtained from England such dictionaries and books as my limited means allowed me to purchase, to enable me to acquire some knowledge of Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac.

These studies and a correspondence with an English newspaper—the 'Morning Chronicle'—with frequent visits to Sir Stratford Canning and his family at Buyukdereh, where I was always received with the utmost kindness, fully occupied my time, which passed swiftly and pleasantly, the only drawback upon my enjoyment being the uncertainty of my position, and the delay which, notwithstanding all Sir Stratford's efforts in my favour, was taking place at the Foreign Office in finding the promised official employment for me. He did the best he could to reconcile me to the disappointment, preaching patience and confidence—virtues which, under the circumstances, it was very needful to possess. To give me a proof of his desire to serve me he offered to present me to the Sultan. I accompanied him to an audience of his Majesty in one of the imperial palaces on the Bosphorus. Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid was then on the throne. He differed in every respect from his bold and resolute father, Mahmoud. He was a kind-hearted, well-intentioned man, but constitutionally weak and feeble. His appearance agreed with his character. He was small in stature, and pale, and sat with downcast eyes; but the expression of his countenance, although melancholy, was amiable and benevolent, and when lighted up with a smile, which it frequently was when the conversation took a turn which pleased him, very attractive. It was then the etiquette for the Sultan, when receiving an ambassador or any other distinguished personage, in public audience, to speak in a very low voice, almost indeed in a whisper, and to address

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himself solely to the chief interpreter of the palace, who in a very humble and deferential manner stood near him, and communicated in French what he had said to the person for whom it was intended. That office, which was one of much importance and dignity, was then held by Safvet Pasha, a rising statesman of promise, known for the honesty and simplicity of his character, and generally respected and esteemed. He was one of those functionaries at the Porte who belonged to the school of Reshid Pasha, and who, understanding the French language, had made himself acquainted with the literature and institutions of Europe.[1]

The head dragoman of the Embassy was also present on these occasions. It was his duty to translate what fell from the ambassador, also speaking in a low and almost inaudible whisper. The post was then held by the aged Frederick Pisani, an old, honest, and faithful servant of the British Government, and a member of a family which had been long connected with the British Embassy at Constantinople. Sir Stratford, under whom he had been during the troublous and dangerous times of the massacre of the Janissaries and of the Greek war, had the highest esteem for him, and the most complete reliance upon his fidelity, and upon his tact and ability in negotiating with the Porte. He was gifted with the most imperturbable patience and long-suffering, and was never moved by the outbursts of anger to which he was frequently exposed, and which broke harmlessly upon him—an additional recommendation to his chief.

Nothing of special importance occurred at this my first appearance at an imperial audience. I was presented to the Sultan as an English traveller who had visited a large part of his Empire, and who desired to express personally to his Majesty the gratitude I felt for the protection and hospitality I had enjoyed whilst residing in his dominions.[2]

[1] He subsequently rose to the rank of Grand Vizir, an office which he very worthily filled at the critical period when I was Ambassador at Constantinople. He was a statesman of gentle manners, of independent character, and of the strictest probity.

[2] On my return to Constantinople, after my first expedition to Nineveh, I was again presented to Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid by Sir Stratford Cannin

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I had, however, an opportunity of again seeing the Sultan on a memorable occasion. The Turkish Government in the autumn of 1843 had been guilty of a cruel and outrageous act of fanaticism, which had excited the indignation and horror of Christendom. An Armenian who had embraced Islamism had returned to his former faith. For his apostasy he was condemned to death according to the Mohammedan law. His execution took place, accompanied by details of studied insult and indignity directed against Christians and Europeans in general. The corpse was exposed in one of the most frequented places in Stamboul, and the head, which had been severed from the body, was placed upon it, covered by a European hat.

Sir Stratford Canning protested against this gross and abominable outrage with all the energy of his passionate nature. He demanded an immediate apology from the Porte for this insult to Christendom, and, at the same time, the repeal of the law which condemned to death apostates from Islam. An angry correspondence took place between him and the Turkish Government, in which he received the warm and powerful support of Lord Aberdeen, whose despatches on the occasion advocated the principles of religious freedom in language worthy of the subject and the high and honourable character of the writer.

The French Ambassador had at first supported Sir Stratford Canning in his demands; but subsequently deserted him, and the British Ambassador had to bear the brunt of the battle almost alone.

Official notes, addressed to the Porte in language rarely used in diplomacy, but fully warranted by the circumstances of the case, having failed to obtain from the Turkish Government the concessions demanded by Sir Stratford Canning, he determined to make a personal appeal to the Sultan himself, and to warn him of the danger which would threaten his throne in the event of a refusal on the part of

who made an eloquent discourse to his Majesty upon the warnings to mighty rulers furnished by my discoveries, which was pithily summed up by old Frederick Pisani, when he simply informed the Sultan that I was 'the man who had dug up the old stones.'

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his Ministers to yield to the demands of the English Government. His representations and remonstrances produced their effect upon Abd'ul-Mejid, who was of a humane disposition and averse to the shedding of blood. By his Majesty's directions, and after a careful examination of the authorities on the Musulman law by the Sheikh-el-Islam and a council of the Ulema, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed a declaration to the British Ambassador, stating that 'effectual measures would be taken to prevent henceforward the execution and putting to death of the Christian who is an apostate.'

The wording of this note was ambiguous, and the concession was not all that Sir Stratford Canning required. He determined, however, to place upon it, in acknowledging its receipt, an interpretation which agreed with his demand that no apostate from Islam, under any circumstances, should be punished with death. In order to give a greater solemnity to the declaration of the Porte, he demanded an audience of the Sultan to return him the thanks of the Queen, and her Government, for the abolition of a law which was an outrage and offence to those who professed the Christian faith. The audience was granted, and Sir Stratford Canning was attended by all the members of the Embassy. He invited me to accompany him.

Abd'ul-Mejid received the Ambassador with his usual courtesy and affability, listening with patient resignation to the discourse on religious liberty which was addressed to him. But Sir Stratford had not yet delivered his reply to the declaration of the Porte. He came armed with it to the Palace, determined to hand it to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs after the audience, and after he had, as he believed, committed the Sultan to the interpretation he desired to place upon the concession made by the Turkish Government.

It was usual, after an audience of the Sultan, for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, or the Grand Vizir, to adjourn with the Ambassador to an apartment where sherbet, coffee, and pipes were served, and matters of political importance were discussed. The former office was at that time held by

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Rifaat Pasha, a clever and wily Turkish statesman. He received Sir Stratford and his suite, as was the custom. The conversation at once turned upon the great question which had brought the English Ambassador to the Palace, and Sir Stratford handed to him the reply which he had prepared to the official communication he had received on the subject. It was to the effect that the British Government would receive with the greatest satisfaction the assurance which the Sultan and the Porte had given, that henceforward no apostate from the Mohammedan religion would incur the penalty of death.

Rifaat Pasha read it with a look of astonishment, and, handing it back to Sir Stratford, declined to receive it, as it placed an interpretation upon the communication from the Porte of which that document did not admit. The concession which the Turkish Government had made, he contended, was limited to the abolition of the punishment of death in the case of Christians who, having made a profession of Islamism, reverted to their former faith. The law as regards Mohammedans who apostatised was inexorable, and being prescribed by the Prophet himself in the Koran, the Sultan had no power to alter or modify it.

Sir Stratford had inadvertently taken the paper from the Pasha's hand. He now sprang to his feet from the divan upon which he had been sitting, and advancing with a menacing gesture towards the terrified Minister, who was crouched cross-legged in a corner, exclaimed that he *should* accept the note, and at the same time thrust it at him so full in the face that, in an involuntary movement of self-defence, he put up his hands and clutched the document. The Ambassador left it with him, and, hurrying out of the room, followed by his suite, and regaining his caïque, returned to the Embassy. The rumour of this scene, which was not one easily to be forgotten by those who witnessed it, soon spread, with the inevitable exaggerations, over Pera, and speedily reached Europe through the press. It added to Sir Stratford Canning's reputation for energy and as the protector of the Christians of Turkey. He persistently refused to take back or modify his note, and the Porte, with equal persistence,

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refused to admit the interpretation that it placed upon the concession made by the Sultan.[3]

In the early spring of 1844 there was a serious rising against the Turkish rule in Northern Albania. Rumours reached Constantinople of shocking cruelties to which the Christians in that part of European Turkey had been subjected by the Albanian rebels, who, it was reported, had defeated the Sultan's troops in repeated engagements, and had succeeded in driving the Ottoman authorities out of the province. Sir Stratford Canning was desirous of ascertaining the real state of affairs in the revolted districts, and proposed to me to visit them, and to report to him upon what had occurred there. I readily agreed to his proposal, and left Constantinople on May 1 for Salonica, by a small steamer belonging to the Austrian Lloyd Company, which traded with that port. The journey from Salonica to Monastir was then a perilous one, owing to the unsettled state of the country, the roads being infested with brigands, who plundered caravans and carried off travellers for ransom, or murdered them for what they had with them. However, I accomplished my journey in safety. At Monastir I lodged in the house of the Greek bishop, where I spent two or three weeks, and had an opportunity of learning something about Greek ecclesiastical life. I was not very favourably impressed with the morals or manners of the priests and dignitaries of the Greek Church. For the most part they led, very openly, dissolute lives, were surprisingly ignorant, very corrupt, and given to the grossest superstition.

Omar Pasha, a renegade Christian of Croatian origin, who became famous during the Crimean war, was in command of a small army corps which had been sent against the Albanian insurgents. He was marching upon Uscup, which they had then invested. I joined him, and accompanied him in his expedition.

[3] Many years after, when I was the Queen's Ambassador at Constantinople, I had to refer to these transactions, and to Sir Stratford's correspondence with the Porte, in the case of a Turkish mulla who was accused of having abjured Islamism, and whose life I was able to save after he had been condemned to death by a 'fetvah,' or decree, of the Sheikh-el-Islam.

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The insurgents, who were of the North Albanian tribe of Ghega, were led by one Dervish Czar, a petty chief who had placed himself at the head of the movement. They had taken up arms to resist the conscription, which was then being enforced in most parts of the Ottoman Empire, and the introduction into Albania of the 'tanzimat,' or constitutional reforms, which had been promulgated at Constantinople, and which were opposed, in many respects, to their ancient rights and privileges. The Ghegas were a wild and warlike clan, who had hitherto maintained in their mountain fastnesses a kind of semi-independence—the Porte being rarely able to maintain its authority over them. They were well armed and brave, but without discipline, and when they ventured into the plains were unable to withstand even a small body of Turkish regular troops furnished with artillery, in which they were entirely deficient.

Dervish Czar, with his followers, who were said to number between ten and fifteen thousand men, had descended from the mountains of Dibra into the plains watered by the Vardar, had occupied a large number of villages, mostly inhabited by Bulgarians, and had extorted large sums of money from them, besides driving off their cattle and flocks. It was further reported that they had committed great atrocities upon the Christians, and rumours had reached Constantinople of men, women, and children roasted alive, and subjected to other terrible tortures. As usual, these reports proved to be greatly exaggerated, if not altogether unfounded. From what I could learn, the Christian villagers had been robbed and plundered, and in some instances, when refusing to part with their money or to disclose where it was concealed, subjected to ill-treatment. But I failed to verify the shocking stories of outrages to women and children which were related in Pera, and had been consequently circulated by the European press, although I had opportunities of questioning a large number of persons who would have had personal knowledge of these outrages had they been committed.

When Omar Pasha advanced towards Uscup all the low

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country, with the exception of the towns in which there were Turkish garrisons, was in the hands of the Ghegas. But they retreated before the Turkish troops to their mountains. Thence they sent emissaries to the Turkish commander, with a view to coming to terms with him. He accordingly encamped between Kuprili and Uscup, and entered into negotiations with the insurgents, which, however, led to no result, as he refused to listen to their demands to be exempted from the conscription.

In order to make a last attempt to come to an arrangement and to avoid bloodshed, Omar Pasha proposed to me to see Dervish Czar, and to endeavour to induce him to accept the conditions which had been offered to him. In those days the influence of England was great in the East, and the word of an Englishman was everywhere accepted as a pledge which would never be violated. The Turkish commander believed that the Ghegas would lay down their arms and submit, if I gave my personal assurance to them that the conditions he offered would be fulfilled, and that their lives and property would be respected.

I accepted the mission proposed to me, as I was not without sympathy for these brave and independent mountaineers, who had good reason to fear and mistrust the Turks, and as I was desirous of doing all that might be in my power to prevent bloodshed. Omar Pasha was to give me an escort as far as the outposts of the insurgents at the foot of the mountains. I was to make my way thence as I best could to the headquarters of the insurgent chief. I was accompanied by a tried and trustworthy cavass, himself of Albanian origin, in the service of the British Embassy, who was ready to follow me wherever I might go.

I accordingly left Omar Pasha's camp early in the morning, and after a ride of about two hours across the plain, perceived a group of Albanians on a rising ground. My escort refused to accompany me any further, stating that they had received orders to return as soon as the first outposts of the insurgents were in sight, so as to avoid a conflict. The officer, with his Bashi-Bozuks, then turned back. I rode on, followed by my faithful attendant, who,

considering that a Turk falling into the hands of the Ghegas would have had but little chance of escaping with his life, showed no little courage.

As we approached the Albanians I could see them levelling their long guns at us. I made signs that I wished to communicate with them, and as I wore the European dress and a cap with a band of gold lace, which then distinguished a Consul in the East, they allowed me to approach. I found assembled a wild and savage set of men, wearing the dirty 'fustanel,' or linen skirt, descending to the knees, and the embroidered jacket and shaggy white coat, which, together with a long gun and a belt carrying inlaid pistols and a dagger, formed the costume of the Ghega tribe.

They seemed at first disinclined to allow me to approach, evidently mistrustful of the cavass, whom they took for a Turkish soldier. I managed, however, to explain to them that I wished to see Dervish Czar, upon important business. After some discussion, in which I was helped by my attendant, who, being an Albanian, spoke their language, they allowed me to proceed, informing me, at the same time, that their chief was in the mountains at some distance, and warning me that there were guards posted in all directions, who, ignorant of my object and character, and seeing me accompanied by a person in the Turkish uniform, might fire upon me before I had time to explain. They sent one of their number with me as a guide, and to protect me in case of need.

We rode over very rough and broken ground for several hours—armed men constantly springing up from behind the rocks and fixing me with their guns. Fortunately the presence of the Albanian guide prevented them from firing, and after having learnt who I was and where I was going, they allowed me to pass.

In the afternoon I reached Dervish Czar's head-quarters. I found him, with a large number of followers, in a forest, without any other shelter than the oak trees beneath which they were collected. A more savage and truculent, and at the same time a more picturesque, body of men could not well be imagined. They crowded round me, eager to learn

the object of my visit, and eyeing with angry looks my cavass, whose Turkish dress excited their suspicion and their anger. Their chief was only to be distinguished from them by a jacket and vest more richly embroidered than those usually worn by the Ghegas, and by his arms, which were elaborately inlaid with silver. He was accompanied by several chiefs, who, like himself, were covered with gold embroidery.

He received me courteously, for although an ignorant man, of no rank amongst his people, who had by his influence and courage taken the lead in the rising against the Turkish Government, he had, like his countrymen in general, dignified manners and striking self-possession. Finding that I had not breakfasted, he ordered a meal, which consisted of black bread and some boiled rice—all that his camp afforded—to be prepared for me. After I had eaten, I retired with him and one or two of the chiefs to a distance from the crowd which had gathered round us, and, seated on the grass beneath an oak, proceeded to discuss the business upon which I had come.

After having stated the numerous grievances that the Ghegas had against the Porte, Dervish Czar declared that they were resolved not to receive any Turkish authorities in their mountains, nor to submit to the new laws of the 'tanzimat,' nor to furnish conscripts to the regular army. In all other respects they were ready to obey the Padishah, of whom they were the faithful and devoted subjects, and to supply him with any number of irregular troops, under their own chiefs, that he might require. If their terms were not accepted they were determined, he said, to fight to the last and to defend their mountains against the Sultan's soldiers.

I replied that it was impossible for the Turkish commander to listen to these terms, and that if the Ghegas persisted in demanding them their country would be invaded by the Sultan's armies, and that they would, in the end, be compelled to submit to such conditions as the Porte might think fit to impose upon them. I then stated to them the conditions which I had been authorised by Omar Pasha to propose to them, which were fair and reasonable enough, and urged them to accept them to prevent bloodshed, the

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complete subjugation of their country, and the destruction of what remained to them of their ancient independence.

After a prolonged discussion they agreed to all the terms offered by Omar Pasha with the exception of that relating to the conscription—upon which point they were not to be shaken. They declared that to give conscripts to the regular army, to be drilled and clothed according to the European fashion, was opposed to their religion and their tribal habits. They were ready to serve as irregulars—as they had always been—but they would never consent to be enrolled in the regular army. Rather than yield they would resist to the last, whatever might be the consequence.

Night was now approaching, and large platters piled with boiled rice mixed with bits of meat were brought to the chiefs, which, with a little black bread, formed their simple meal. When it became dark, preparations were made for a dance. We moved to an open space in the forest where the warriors had assembled. Some hundreds of them then joined hands and began to move round with measured steps to the sound of drums and oboes, stamping their feet and swinging their arms to and fro. It was a kind of 'Romaica,' or Pyrrhic dance.

A crowd of men surrounded the dancers, many of them holding torches made of pine wood, which threw a lurid glare over the performers, others brandishing their swords and raising their war-cries. The white fustanels of the Albanians, their glittering arms, their savage countenances lit up by the red uncertain light, the gloom of the forest beyond and the star-lit sky above, formed a singularly weird and picturesque scene.

After the dance had continued for nearly two hours, the circle being constantly recruited by fresh dancers to replace those who were tired or wished to withdraw, the assembly broke up, and the warriors, scattering themselves in the surrounding forest, laid themselves down for the night. I followed the example of the chiefs, and stretching myself under an oak, wrapped in my cloak, soon fell asleep.

I was roused at dawn by a general movement in the camp. The Ghegas were preparing for the day, and

buckling on their arms, which they had taken off for the night. I observed that very few performed their devotions, as good Musulmans are required to do on rising in the morning, although a mulla had intoned the usual call to prayer at daybreak. But in this respect the Albanians were not very particular, and although professing to be good Mohammedans were very lax in the performance of their religious duties, and were neither fanatical nor intolerant to those who differed from them in creed.

Immediately after we had risen, my conversation of the previous night with Dervish Czar and the other chiefs was renewed, and the same arguments repeated, but with the same result. They were willing to give way on every point but the conscription. On this subject they were resolute. Finding that it was useless to press the matter any further, I remonstrated with them upon their treatment of the Christians, referring to the rumours which had reached Constantinople of the cruelties to which the Bulgarians had been subjected. They indignantly protested that there was no truth in these reports, which, they maintained, had been invented by their enemies, the Turks, to damage their cause and to set European nations against them. They declared that, with the exception of raising taxes, to which, as occupying the country, they considered themselves entitled, and which they had collected from all classes and creeds alike, they had in no way interfered with the Christians, who were their brothers and had not been troubled on account of their faith. I was inclined to believe that what they stated was to a great extent true ; but I exacted a solemn promise from the chiefs that they would protect the Christians and not suffer them to be molested.

My mission to Dervish Czar having thus proved unsuccessful, I returned to Omar Pasha, to whom I gave an account of what had occurred. I dined with him, and retired early to rest in a small tent which he had assigned to me near his own. In the middle of the night I was awoke by the report of firearms and by the bugle-call resounding in the camp. Fortunately, the Pasha had not neglected, as Turkish commanders usually did, to take the necessary

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precautions to meet a night attack, and the pickets had given timely notice of the approach of the enemy. His dispositions were soon made. The troops were formed into a square enclosing our small encampment, at the angles of which he placed his artillery. The attack soon became general. The Albanians greatly outnumbered the Turks, but, ill-armed and without discipline, they failed to make any impression upon them, and were beaten back whenever they attempted to charge, which they did with great courage and determination, throwing themselves upon the bayonets, and discharging their long guns and pistols almost in the faces, of the Turkish soldiers.

Morning beginning to appear, the Ghegas, repulsed in every attempt to break the square, retired to their mountain stronghold. I had been by the side of Omar Pasha during the struggle. He had no misgivings as to the result, having perfect reliance upon his troops, which was justified by the discipline and calm courage they displayed during the attack. Like others who have had the command of Turkish soldiers, he maintained that they were the finest in the world, and only required to be properly led. Our losses were small; those of the enemy considerable, and the ground round our encampment was strewed with the dead and wounded.

As soon as the necessary preparations were completed, Omar Pasha resumed his march, and late in the afternoon reached Uscup, which was held by a Turkish garrison, and had been fortified so as to resist any attack that the Albanians might make upon it.

I remained a few days at Uscup, and then accompanied the Pasha to Prisrend and Pristina, which were also garrisoned by Turkish troops. After the failure of their attack on the Turkish camp by night and their disastrous repulse, the insurgents had again opened negotiations with Omar Pasha, which were mainly carried on through influential Albanian chiefs and mullas who resided in these towns. As they dragged on, and I had nothing to do with them, I returned to Uscup, the capital of the province in which the Ghega insurrection had taken place, where I could obtain better information as to the state of affairs in Albania. I lodged

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in a respectable Christian house, and had thus an opportunity of hearing any complaints that the Christians might have had to make, and of interceding in their behalf with the Turkish governor of the place when those complaints were well founded. I rarely failed in obtaining redress, as the Pasha knew that I was in correspondence with Sir Stratford Canning, and a representation to the Porte from the English Ambassador would have inevitably led to the dismissal and punishment of an official who had neglected his duty or misconducted himself.

The governor of Uscup was a dignified Turk of the old school; not a bad man, and one of a kindly disposition, but an adept in all the arts and wiles which characterised Turkish policy and diplomacy. I was in the habit of going to him when he was at his breakfast—a meal which I frequently partook with him—to learn the news of the day, and especially to ascertain what progress the negotiations with the Albanian insurgents was making. One morning I found him in unusually good spirits. When I was about to take my leave of him he begged me to stop, 'for,' said he, 'the principal Ghega chiefs have agreed to submit to the Government, and I have given them a safe-conduct to come to Uscup to arrange as to the terms of surrender. I expect them every minute, and as they are all men of influence in their tribe, and the principal promoters of the insurrection, their submission will put an end to it.'

I accordingly resumed my seat and my pipe. After a short time a discharge of firearms was heard, indicating the approach of the Ghega chiefs and their attendants. In the meanwhile, the Pasha had given orders that the gates of the fort should be closed, and that only the chiefs, after depositing their arms, should be admitted, whilst their followers were to remain outside.

To these conditions they refused at first to comply, suspecting treachery; but after some negotiation, and reassured by the safe-conduct from the Pasha, which was solemnly confirmed by a mulla sent by him for the purpose, they consented to give up their arms and to leave their followers without the gate. They were ushered into the

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governor's presence and invited by him to be seated. They were twelve or fourteen fine-looking men, with a bold independent gait, very different from the cringing demeanour which was usually assumed in Turkey by those who were permitted to approach so great a personage. They were served with the usual coffee and pipes, and the Pasha then addressed them in a set speech extolling the infinite clemency and goodness of the Sultan, and the heinousness of the crime of rebellion against him.

He had scarcely got to the end of his discourse when, upon a preconcerted signal, a number of armed cavasses and soldiers rushed in and threw themselves upon the Ghega chiefs, who were without means of defence. They were hurried out of the room, and after having been bound were consigned to prison until nightfall, when, chained hand and foot and placed on mules, they were sent off, under a strong guard, to Constantinople.

During this scene the Pasha sat with an imperturbable countenance, smoking his pipe, which rarely left his lips, as if nothing extraordinary was happening. I was seated near him and was lost in astonishment, and beyond measure indignant, at this gross act of treachery. After wishing him good-morning, and showing him by my manner and countenance what my feelings were, I quitted the 'konak,' not to return to it. The next day I left Uscup for Monastir.

Similar violations of the most solemn pledges, and of safe-conducts given by Turkish officials, had been so frequent and were so notorious, that it was surprising that the Albanian chiefs should have been deceived and have been entrapped as they were in this case. The successful treachery of the Pasha of Uscup had, however, the effect of putting an end to the rebellion. Dervish Czar, without the support of the most influential insurgent leaders, who had been made prisoners, and deserted by his followers, soon after surrendered. In the following year, when riding one day from Pera to Buyukdereh, I passed a gang of convicts in chains, engaged in mending the road. One of them approached me, and holding out his hand, begged me to give him some 'paras' to buy tobacco. I thought I recognised his coun-

tenance. The convict was Dervish Czar. I exchanged a few words with him, gave him the 'tutoon-parasi' (tobacco money) for which he had asked, and then passed on. I never saw him again, and am ignorant of his fate.

As there remained nothing more for me to do in North Albania, the insurrection having collapsed and my mission being thus brought to an end, I prepared to return to Constantinople; but, before doing so, I spent a few days at Ochrida, a small town on the beautiful lake of that name. I lodged there in the house of a very intelligent native Christian of the Greek faith. He was a widower, and the father of three lovely daughters, who did the honours of his house and waited upon me. They were dressed in the picturesque costume then worn by Albanian damsels—jackets of cloth, richly embroidered with gold; ample 'shalwars,' or trousers; and skull-caps, adorned with pearls and long tassels of blue silk. They lived in mortal dread of the Turks, upon whom, on account of their religion and the atrocities attributed to them by the Christians, they looked with the greatest horror. On my return to Constantinople I corresponded for some time with their father.

Ochrida had been the residence of one of those Albanian beys who, before the time of Sultan Mahmoud, had exercised almost independent authority. Both North and South Albania once abounded in these semi-independent hereditary chiefs; but one by one they had been swept away, either put down by force, or betrayed into the hands of the Government by the usual treacherous devices. They and their families had been, for the most part, removed as prisoners to Constantinople, or as exiles to some distant part of the Empire, where they rapidly died out. When I visited Albania in 1839, a few of these beys still remained; on my second visit they had nearly all disappeared. It was the policy of the Porte to destroy these troublesome vassals.

The palace of the former beys of Ochrida still remained, although deserted and almost in ruins. It was a picturesque building standing on a rock overhanging the lake, and richly decorated, without and within, in the ancient Turkish fashion. I passed many hours of the day in a charming kiosk, built

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on a headland overlooking the expanse of blue water which stretched beneath, hemmed in on all sides by lofty mountains.

In the evening, after dark, lights were seen issuing from the little bays along the shores of the lake. These were the torches of the fishermen engaged in the trout fishery, to attract the fish to the top of the water to be speared—a pursuit in which they were very skilful. The Ochrida trout are renowned for their size and for the delicate flavour of their pink flesh.

Another way of catching trout at Ochrida I have not seen practised elsewhere. The Drin, a clear and rapid stream, issues from the northern end of the lake. The fishermen made on its banks, and in covered huts, little ponds, which communicated with the river by a passage sufficiently wide for the largest trout to enter. In these huts, which were quite dark within, there being only a glimmer upon the water, they sat watching for the fish, which, impelled by curiosity or by some other motive, entered the pond, and were then captured by a hand-net. In this way a large number of trout were taken.

After passing some very pleasant days at Ochrida, I returned to Monastir, and taking post-horses rode to Salonica, where I embarked, and arrived at Constantinople towards the end of July.

In the summer of 1845, Sir Stratford Canning had made arrangements to avail himself of a leave of absence from his post, as soon as the settlement of several important questions pending with the Porte permitted him to do so. His family had already left for England, and he was anxious to follow them. The Honourable Henry Wellesley (afterwards Lord Cowley) had been sent to Constantinople to act as *Chargé d'affaires* in the event of the Ambassador's departure.

In the meanwhile I was still kept waiting for my promised attachéship. Sir Stratford felt convinced that when he had an opportunity of communicating personally on the subject with Lord Aberdeen, the difficulties which stood in the way of my appointment would be removed. But the time of his departure for England was uncertain, and he might still be delayed until the winter at Constantinople.[4] I had never

[4] He did not, after all, leave for England until the following summer.

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given up the hope of returning on some future day to Mesopotamia, and of exploring the ruins of Nineveh. The success of M. Botta's labours at Khorsabad had added to my desire to make excavations in the mounds of Nimroud and in those opposite Mosul, which I was convinced covered monuments of great antiquity and importance.

I was not desirous of remaining at Constantinople after Sir Stratford Canning's departure, and I was anxious to find some means of spending my time profitably until he had been able, after his return to England, to obtain for me from Lord Aberdeen the permanent appointment in the Constantinople Embassy of which I had the promise. I therefore suggested to him that I might proceed to Mosul for the purpose of examining these Assyrian ruins.

Sir Stratford not only approved of my proposal, but offered to share in the expenses which would be incurred in making tentative excavations. I was able to contribute a small sum from my own resources, which, added to 60*l.* he was ready to advance, would, if employed with the strictest economy, be sufficient for the purpose. I was persuaded that, if the results proved such as I expected, funds for carrying on the explorations on an adequate scale would be forthcoming in England, where M. Botta's discoveries had already created considerable interest.

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It was not until early in October (1845) that I was able to leave Constantinople for Mosul. I required very few preparations for my journey. My effects consisted of what a pair of large leather saddle-bags—such as were used by the Tatars—could contain. I had no need of a servant, and I determined to use post-horses, then the most expeditious way of travelling in Turkey.

The result of my first expedition to Assyria is known to the public by my work on 'Nineveh and its Remains,' which I wrote during a short residence in England in 1848, and which was published after my return at the end of the same year to Constantinople, where I had been appointed, as a reward for my various services, and for my discoveries, an unpaid attaché to Her Majesty's Embassy.

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