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BY TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES

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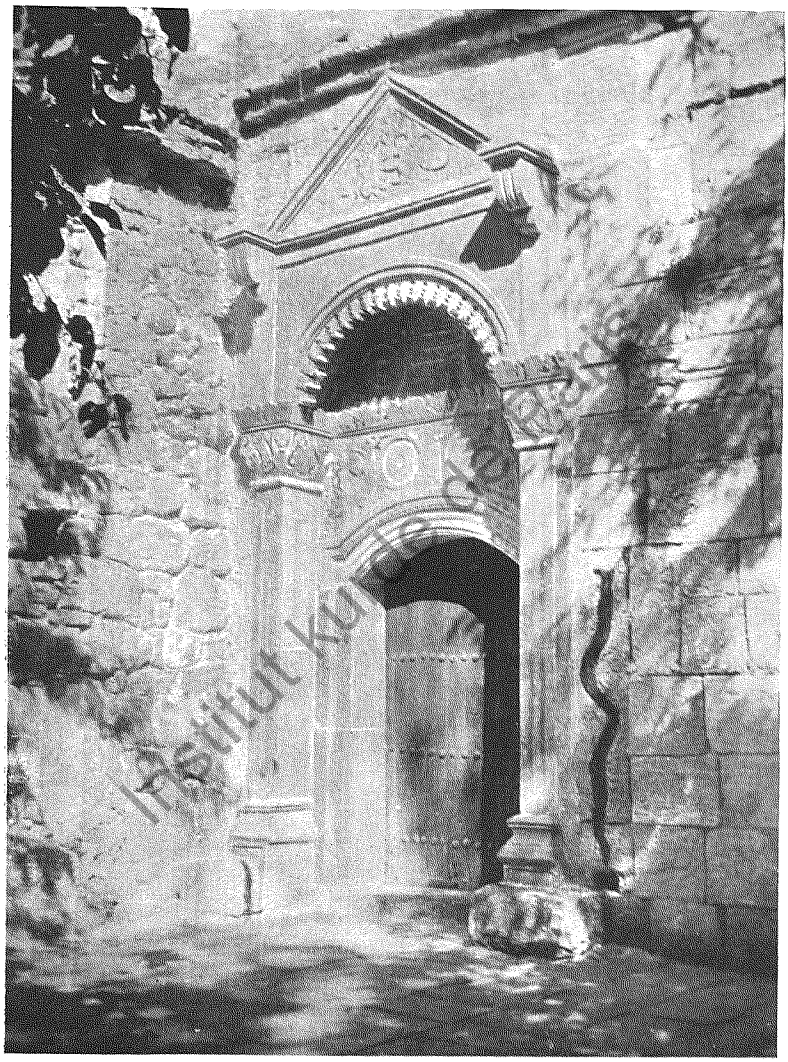

THE DOOR: SHRINE OF SHEIKH ADI.
Note the black serpent and magical signs on the wall.
(*See page* 183.)

By Tigris and Euphrates

By E. S. STEVENS :: *Author of*
"My Soudan Year," "Magdalene," "Allward," etc. ::

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WITH 71 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON: HURST & BLACKETT, LTD.
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, E.C.
1923

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TO

MY HUSBAND,

BEST OF COMRADES,

WITH WHOM SO MANY HAPPY HOURS AND

GOOD TIMES IN 'IRAQ HAVE BEEN SHARED.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

SEVERAL of the following chapters have appeared in part or whole as articles in the *Near East*, *Outward Bound*, *Baghdad Times* and *Times of Mesopotamia*, and I thank the editors of these papers for their courtesy in allowing me to reprint them here. My sincere gratitude is also given to those friends, both British and 'Iraqi, who have helped me with information, hospitality and criticism. Without their generous aid this book could not have been written.

I have likewise to thank Sir Arnold Wilson and others for the loan of photographs, Messrs. Victor for permission to use some of theirs, and Mr. C. L. Woolley for the interesting information he gave me about the excavations at Ur.

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PREFACE

MESOPOTAMIA, or, to use the older name now adopted in place of the " blessed word," 'Iraq, has so long been a battle-cry, a slogan in the mouth of Anti-Wasters, mud to sling in the hand of the Government critic (how apt this metaphor is only those know who have lived in or served in 'Iraq), that to write a book concerning that unpopular land is to imply some political theory.

Therefore I had better state plainly in this Preface that I have advanced none, neither have I deemed myself qualified to criticise, condemn or defend the policy of either home Government or those in 'Iraq who have, without compass, steered the frail bark of the new Arab government through perilous waters and shifting shallows. Too much has been written already by the unqualified observer, and I have no wish to add to the sea of useless ink which has been spilt over matters which only experts in policy and finance can decide.

This book may, however, serve to bring before people at home something of the infinite variety and complexity of the land over whose destinies we have such power, and may help to prove that to leave 'Iraq to the 'Iraqi is not quite the simple matter it sounds. I have chosen to write merely of places, incidents, people and things which have interested me and may, I hope, interest others. Of many of them, something has been written before, but there are several angles from which a country may be viewed, and that of a writer of stories to whom this land and its inhabitants are more engrossing than any fiction ever written, may have its value. I love my 'Iraq home and like the 'Iraqi ; and if I have paid too much attention to legend and too little to history, too much to the

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customs and superstitions of the people and too little to British policy and the problems of local Government, I ask the pardon of my readers and plead in excuse that I am accustomed to write romance, and follow where fancy leads.

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PART I

SHRINES AND SHRINE-CITIES

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By Tigris and Euphrates

CHAPTER I

SHIAH AND SUNNI

To leave 'Iraq to the 'Iraqi sounds excellent as a phrase, but what does it mean? To begin with, the 'Iraqi is not exclusively Arab or exclusively Moslem. 'Iraq contains several nations and several vestiges of nations, several creeds and many sects; in fact, the great land of two rivers, in which the Tower of Babel was built, is still a land of many tongues, many peoples and many creeds, between whom there is, in varying degrees, deadly hatred and intolerance. There are nearly a million Sunnis, a million and a quarter Shiahs, a quarter of a million Kurds, nearly as many Jews and Christians, besides Yazidis or devil-worshippers, Sabæans and others. To whom should power be given?

To give it to any one section of the community is likely, without some controlling force, to lead to acts of oppression towards the rest. The Turks kept a semblance of authority by pitting one tribe against another, by playing one *milla* against another, by setting faith against faith, feud against feud. Moreover, the Turk, being Sunni, the Shiah, Jew, Christian and others of different creed came off second-best.

To him who knows little of Islam, a Mahommedan is a Mahommedan, and he takes no count of the two-and-seventy warring sects of whom Omar the Tentmaker wrote. Of these warring sects, the sharpest division lies between the Sunni and the Shiah. The cleavage goes back to the early history of Islam. The drama which brought about the severance between

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the two great bodies of Islam was enacted on Mesopotamian soil, and the blood of the Shiah martyrs cries out yet from their mother earth to the Shiah fanatic. The Shiah is at once more mystical and more intolerant than the Sunni; he is fanatically against all movements of reform and education; he is the clog upon the wheels of progress in the new state, and yet he represents the largest part of the population.

What is the story that resulted in this deep difference which lies like a gulf between the two great masses of Islam?

When Mahommed died, with no male descendant by any one of his many wives—for Ibrahim, his only son, borne by Miriam the Copt to her lord in the tents of Islam, lay buried in the desert and with him some of Mahommed's dearest hopes—the new religion tottered. On the part of many of the Bedouin tribes conversion to Islam was less a confession of faith than an act of expediency. Mahommed and his warriors had been mighty in battle, and now that he was dead, many luke-warm believers attempted to free themselves from the troublesome new creed. But Abu Bekr, the first Caliph, a simple and stern old man, with his generals, Khalid ibn Walid and Khalid ibn Said, kept the waverers together, forced wanderers back into the fold, and carried the banners of Islam into Mesopotamia and Syria. Abu Bekr had been elected Caliph by acclamation, but the Shiahs think that the mantle of the Prophet should have fallen immediately upon the shoulders of Ali, his son-in-law.

At Abu Bekr's death not Ali, but Omar succeeded to the Caliphate. Omar was in many ways the typical Moslem of chivalry. Single-minded, fanatical, vindictive, wise with the wisdom of the desert, austere, plain-spoken and deeply religious, he was the ideal head for Islam militant, and he carried his armies on from strength to strength, directing his two great generals Khalid and Mo'awiya from his headquarters in the Holy Cities. At his death he was lord of a vast empire, yet lived in the sternest simplicity. The knife of the assassin, which ended his life, brought to a close the career of one of the most stirring figures in the story of the world.

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Soon after his death opens the history of division in Islam. The new Caliph, Othman, after a brief period of muddling, was murdered, and Ali, husband of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, and father of the Prophet's grandchildren, became ruler of the Moslems. His amiable but vacillating character made him unsuited to wield authority over the wild warriors of Islam, and anarchy and trouble soon followed. Ali was a dreamer, a visionary, one of those men whose personality inevitably attracts tragedy. Indeed, sorrow and failure haunted him and his descendants with horrible fatality.

His two sons, Hasan and Hoseyn, were under the same evil star. At the assassination of Ali, Hasan was made Caliph, but at the return of the ambitious Mo'awiya from Syria, he took fright, yielded and abdicated in favour of the warrior, dying miserably by the hand of his own wife. Mo'awiya, despising the house of Ali, and foreseeing trouble in the future if the Caliphate were left to election, proclaimed it hereditary, and named his son Yazid as his successor.

Then followed the martyrdom of Hoseyn, the other son of Ali, who attempted with a small force to raise the standard of his father's house, but with fatal misjudgment allowed himself to be hemmed in by the Caliph's forces near Kufah at Karbala. His family and followers were with him. They were cut off from water, and slaughtered helplessly one by one by the half-pitying forces of their enemies, who remembered the sacred lineage of their victims. One son of Hoseyn was saved alive to carry on the disastrous line.

This is the tragedy which is re-enacted yearly in mystery plays in Persia and all Shiah centres in the month of Moharram; and processions take place during this period of yearly commemoration, in which fanatics rain blows and cuts on their bodies, while wailing multitudes join their lamentations to those of professional declaimers who intone the story of defeat and failure. Karbala and Najaf which contain the bodies of the martyred Caliph and his sons, are places of pilgrimage for the entire Shiah world, also Kadhimein, close to Baghdad, the burial-place of two of Hoseyn's descendants,

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the seventh and ninth Imams. The twelfth and last Imam is said to have disappeared into a cave at Samarra (also a Shiah shrine), to reappear at the end of the world to lead the faithful to their final triumph.

Shiah and Sunni in 'Iraq, Catholic and Protestant in Ireland—one is led to seek points of resemblance between the two conflicts of religion. Roughly speaking, the whole of southern Mesopotamia, from Baghdad to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, is mainly populated by Shiahs. Many of the landowners, men of social importance and men of estate, are Sunni, and nearly all officials under the late Turkish Government were Sunni too. The nomads, the pure Semites, are mostly Sunni. But the peasants, the settled folk in whose blood there runs the strain of those who tilled the soil when Babylon was young, and scanned the stars regardless of what conqueror ruled the land or what race was paramount, these have ever upheld the cause of Ali the Slain; the lost cause, the cause of the oppressed and fallen house of Fatima. At Najaf and Karbala the stream of pilgrims, the votive offerings, the glittering wealth of the shrines, the emotionalism of the faithful, are somehow alien to the stern spirit of Islam. At the dolorous processions of Moharram, when the deaths of Ali and his hapless sons are remembered with tears and flagellations, reminding one of Good Friday celebrations in Catholic countries where wailing crowds bear the murdered Christ to his sepulchre, the analogy strikes one afresh.

Centuries, during which the yoke of rulers of a heretic creed has lain heavy on him, have made of the Shiah a sullen fellow, jealous and fanatical, and like the Irish Catholic, always "agin' the Government." One must not push a comparison too far, but one is tempted to find similarity again between the authority exercised by the mujtahids, and that exercised by the Holy Catholic Church. The mujtahids alone hold the right to interpret the laws of the Quran as explained by the Imams, and they can issue fatwahs to the faithful which, like dispensations and Bulls, lay religious obligations upon a person or excuse him from them. Their authority is immense,

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and is often exercised against that of the powers that be. These pundits are, almost to a man, Persian subjects who look forward to the day when 'Iraq will become part of Persia, to be ruled by a Shiah government which, God willing, will walk in the way prepared by the Shiah jurists and will cast behind it the unholy notions of the infidel European.

Who are the mujtahids? They are those who "are assiduous," to take the literal meaning of the word—they are the high priests of the Shiah hierarchy, the ultimate authorities on law and religion, against whose dicta there is no appeal. There is always a chief mujtahid, one whose years and reputation fit him for such preferment.[1]

A favourite way of acquiring kudos is by making a pronouncement in a difficult matter of religious law. Many a mujtahid has laid the foundations of his reputation by solving a knotty point at law. Religious law with the Shiahs is not unlike the so-called judge-made law in England, a decision establishes a precedent, which again may be modified by a subsequent decision of a leading mujtahid. The three fore-

[1] Miss Gertrude Bell says: "Theoretically all mujtahids are of one grade, but actually they fall into three recognised classes in accordance with the influence they possess and the number of those who follow them. There is no proscribed course of study by which a student of sacred law can become a mujtahid or pass from one grade to the next, nor is any official examination of his attainments required. To be recognised as a mujtahid, the postulant must obtain recognition of his claims from the greatest mujtahids of his time, who certify him to be reckoned among their number and competent to give a Fatwah. This is usually the reward for anything up to twenty-five years' study in Najaf under the great mujtahids only. During this time the character of the postulant must have been exemplary. Solitude is a necessity for the acquisition of the required reputation, and it follows automatically that no man of good family ever becomes a mujtahid. The next step of the certified mujtahid is to gather round himself learned men and to send them out to various parts of the world to preach his fame. His influence, if he is fortunate, gathers in volume like a snowball, until finally he is recognised by universal acclamation as one of the great mujtahids. Students then flock to attend his classes, and pious Shiahs from all parts send him large sums of money to distribute among his pupils and among the poor of the holy town in which he resides. The descendants of mujtahids are not often mujtahids themselves, though they have influence and command respect on account of their birth."

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most mujtahids to-day—for there has been no chief mujtahid since the death of the last chief mujtahid, Seyyid Muhammed Kadhim Subbi in Najaf—are Seyyid Husseyn el Naini, of Najaf, whose claims are prejudiced by the fact that he is a Persian and stone-deaf ; Mirza Abul Hassan of Najaf, an Arab, more or less backed by the Government in his claim to be chief Mujtahid ; Seyyid Ali ibn Seyyid Kadhim Yazdi, a favourite with the tribes ; and Sheikh Mahdi el Khalissi, of Karbala, who, as I said before, has lost prestige over the Karbala meeting.

An incident which occurred recently at Najaf is a good example of what a mujtahid can do. Two Basrah merchants, both of them Seyyids or descendants of the Prophet, were made trustees of a fund to be devoted to the charitable purpose of providing marriage portions for young Seyyids. With good or evil intent, they decided to trade with the money, so one of them took a thousand rupees and went to Najaf, while the other took the rest, some four thousand rupees, went to Hillah, and deposited it in the bank there. The first man was at no pains to conceal his business, which reached the ears of the mujtahid of whose congregation he was. The next day an urgent summons came from the mujtahid. The Basrah man went at once, found the old gentleman sitting in a crowded room, and greeted him respectfully and effusively. The mujtahid feigned ignorance of him and his business, and on his explaining who he was, burst out into a tirade against the evil of Basrah and its people, finishing up by making him sit in a corner and giving him no coffee.

Entirely abashed by his reception, the Seyyid stammered out the whole story of his visit, and produced the bundle of notes as evidence.

The mujtahid arose in his wrath. " And do you, a Shiah, dare to come into my presence with your pocket stuffed with the money of the poor ? Am not I, your mujtahid, the proper person to receive it ? Hand it over ! "

The wretched Seyyid obeyed.

" And where is the rest of the money ? Bring it ! "

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The Seyyid tremblingly explained the whereabouts of the other four thousand rupees.

"What! You have put the money of the poor into an accursed infidel bank? Are you a Shiah or are you not? Until you bring the money you are forbidden to see your wife."

This was the last straw. The Seyyid hurried out of the house and travelled to Hillah, a matter of forty miles, that night, where he had a stormy interview with his partner. He got his way and returned by car next morning with the notes. The mujtahid took them, grudgingly counted out fifty rupees, and handed them to his discomfited disciple for the journey back to Basrah—and the coffeeman gave him a cup of coffee.

They say it is interesting to hear the partner expound his views on women and strength of mind.

In daily life, there is no comparison between the fanaticism of the Shiah and the Sunni. A Shiah donkeyman, when the servant of a Sunni requested him to let the small son of the house in her charge ride one of his donkeys, replied:

"The child is a Christian; he will defile my donkey [1] by riding on it."

"The child is the son of good Moslems," the servant replied.

"Well, he is dressed as an infidel, and Sunnis are almost as bad as Christians."

Any present which may come to a Shiah house from Sunni, Christian or Jewish friends is dipped three times into the river for purification before it is taken into the house, or if the river is too far away, the dirty pool of water in the courtyard will do. In fact, strict Shiahs dip everything that comes into the house from outside into water to rid it from defiling touch—meat, clothes, butter, fruit, everything. A Shiah shopman will compel a Christian, Jew or Sunni who has touched fruit to examine it, to buy it because he has defiled it. So fanatical is this prejudice that some Shiah boys at a Government school in Baghdad asked permission to

[1] The donkey is considered an unclean animal like the pig.

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go home at the hours appointed for prayer (the devout Moslem prays five times a day). The master asked why they could not pray with the other Moslem boys in school, and they replied that as they came into contact with boys of different faith during play and work, they must return and change their clothes before they prayed.

The Shiah, under the present Government, is receiving privileges that he has never before enjoyed, but he is not content. He thinks that he should have a larger share in the ruling of a country which is three parts Shiah. He declares himself no better off with a Sunni Arab Government than with a Sunni Turkish government. He would like to hold high office. But that, in the very nature of things, would be disastrous, for, be it said with all respect to the many estimable notables of the sect, there are as yet few Shiahs in 'Iraq with the knowledge, experience and ability to hold a government post.

The Sunni, with his more rational outlook upon life, his closer assimilation of the facts of civilisation, his ability to meet the European on equal ground, and his greater tolerance of spirit, naturally grows impatient of his Shiah brethren, but the present Arab government is unceasing in its desire and attempt to win the loyalty and approbation of its Shiah subjects. It must be met half-way by the good-will of the Shiahs if it is to be successful. The mujtahids have measured their power more than once against the forces of New 'Iraq and have failed.[1] It is time that they tried the effect of loyal co-operation. If this happened, a new era would dawn for the Shiah in 'Iraq and without disloyalty to his faith and traditions, he would learn the meaning of two words which he has hitherto anathematised—patriotism and progress.

[1] The much-tried patience of the 'Iraq Government has at last given way. Al Khalissi's son being caught red-handed posting up his father's fatwahs forbidding Shiahs to participate in the elections, the mujtahid was arrested, and "sent on a pilgrimage." Other disaffected mujtahids left the country voluntarily as a protest, and, for the sake of peace, it is to be hoped that they will never return.

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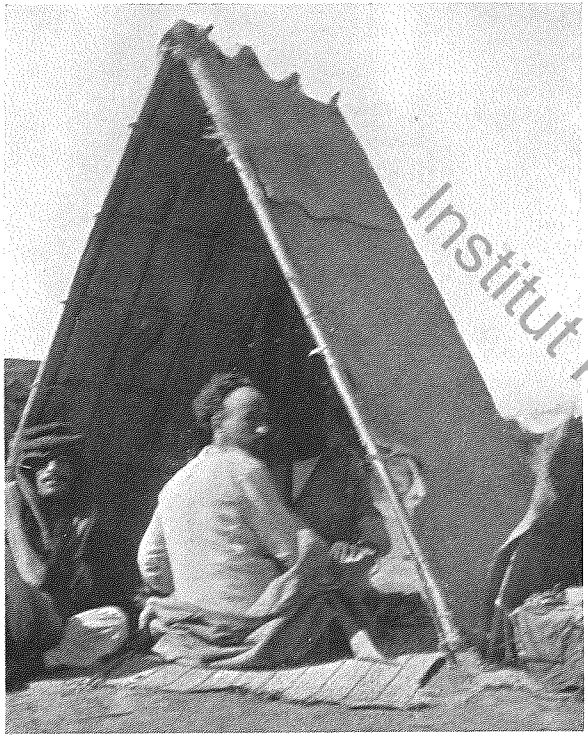

A Barber's Booth.



A Mujtahid.

(*See page* 21.)

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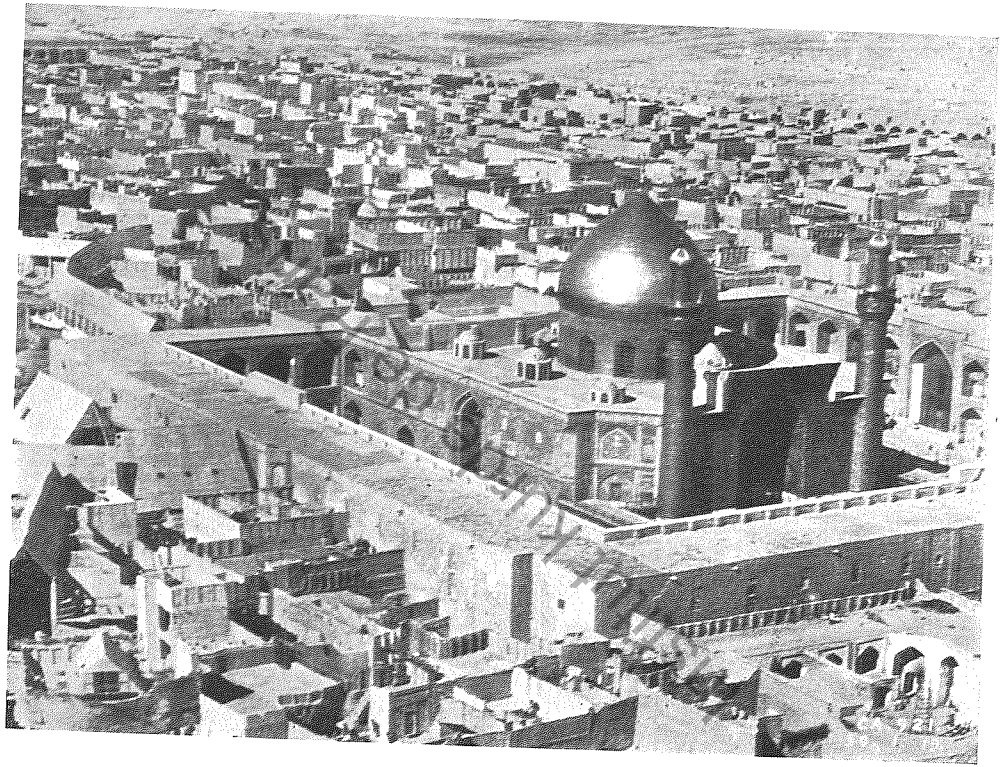
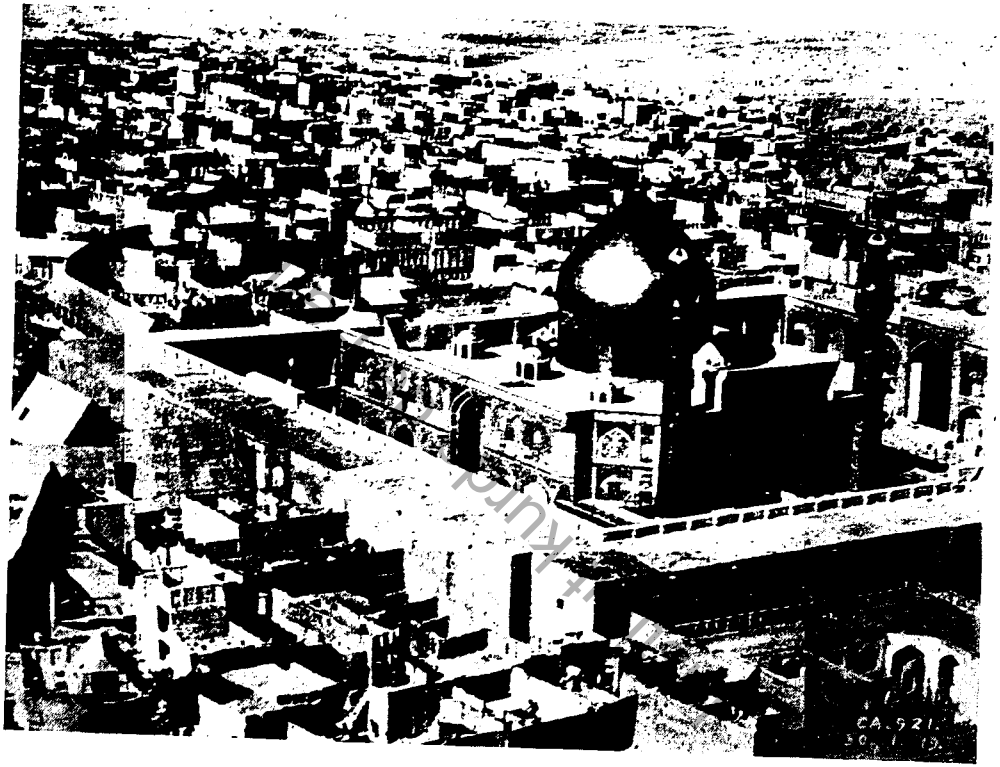


NAJAF FROM THE AIR.



NAJAF FROM THE AIR.

CHAPTER II

NAJAF (MESHED ALI): FIRST HOLY CITY OF 'IRAQ

ALL roads lead to Rome, and many are the ways by which the devout Shiah za-ir, or pilgrim, can reach the Rome of his faith. For Najaf is the most important, politically and spiritually, of all the places of pilgrimage in 'Iraq. In Najaf the chief mujtahid, pope of the sect, usually resides; in Najaf the crooked policies and intrigues of Shiah ecclesiasticism and fanaticism are hatched; in Najaf immense treasures, accumulated during centuries, are hidden from profane eyes.

The railway will take a pilgrim as far as Hillah, from whence, if he is wealthy, he can hire a car to Karbala and thence by the desert road to Najaf. Or if he is not, he can take a seat in a ramshackle omnibus on whose hard, wooden seat, in hot proximity with fellow-pilgrims, he can perform the long journey from Baghdad, stopping each night at one or other of the pilgrim khans on the way. At these khans free quarters are allotted to pilgrims, but they must provide their own food and bedding. Others make the journey on camels or donkeys. Lastly, the very poorest go afoot, dependent on the charity of others for food, and it is not uncommon for such to perish by the way of exposure, fatigue or disease. There is also a constant stream of corpses to the shrines, for it is the ambition of every Shiah to be buried in holy ground. Caravans of this unsavoury description are constantly passed on the road, and there are those whose living depends on the transport of the dead.

When I made my pilgrimage we went from Hillah, and as far as Kufah we followed the pilgrim road across the desert.

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It was in February, and the sky, pale as in an English spring, was hazy and soft as we started. Hillah, with its belt of cultivation, placid amidst its palm-gardens, was soon behind us, and with Birs Nimrud outlined high and clean against the sky in lavender and blue to our right, we pursued the desert track, occasionally crossing an irrigation channel or passing an oasis of springing corn. Towards midday we saw Kifil on our right, the town which has grown up round Ezekiel's tomb, holy to Moslem and Jew alike. Its conical minaret rose white above the palm-trees, but there was no time to turn aside, and we sped through oasis after oasis to Jisr Abbasiat, where a bridge of boats enabled us to cross the Euphrates. Here we lunched in a reed-covered Arab coffee-house. There is a pretty road through Tajia, a district thick with palm-gardens, then again one crosses the Euphrates, and finds oneself in Kufah. We did not stop there, but, leaving the pilgrim road, followed the not-easily-decipherable desert track to Abu Sukheir, where we put up at a rest-house for several days.

This little town was built by the Turks as government quarters, as Jaarah, half an hour away, was so malarious that the officials were always ill. It is on the junction of the canal and the Euphrates, and on the fringe of the rich date-palm plantations which border the canal all the way to Jaarah. It has a small bazaar, and no doubt will supplant fever-stricken Jaarah altogether some day.

But the latter in spring is delightful, with its two bridges over the canal, its narrow winding streets and its fertile gardens. Jaarah is clean and the long souk full of broken lights and shadows is frequented by those who come and go from the desert. Our host at Jaarah, Seyyid Abbas el Zuein, is a man of ancient and honourable lineage. He has just finished his new Mudhif, or guest-house, which, like his own house, is partly built of bricks from Hirah, the ancient city, the ruins of which are close by. A good many of the houses in Jaarah were destroyed in the rising of '20, and the respect, if not the liking, of the English is still upon the people. Here, as in all this district, the men stand up every time an Englishman

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walks through the bazaar, and at our first official arrival the inhabitants gathered at the bridge to wish us "Salaam aleykum."

Hirah lies about half an hour from Abu Sukheir by car. It was built on a bluff at the edge of the abrupt descent from the tableland to the green plain and shining water of the Bahr Najaf below. Beyond the belt of verdure stretches the desert again, illimitable desert as far as the eye can reach. The mound which was once Hirah, home of the flower of Arab chivalry, famous because of its plucky defiance of the Persian hosts, is now nothing but scattered bricks and indications of foundations. Here, facing the plain below, must have stood the palace of the great king or sheikh of Hirah, whom the Arabs call Naaman, who fought with the Chosroes, and here Antar, brave warrior, son by a black mother to an Arab prince, won for himself recognition and the love of his beautiful cousin the Princess Abla. The pure air of the desert sweeps the high ground of Hirah keenly, and the ground around glitters with bright pebbles which, polished by the ever-shifting sands, become almost transparent.

On the road from Abu Sukheir to Najaf we passed nomad encampments; here semi-nomads with flocks cropping the spring herbage, there the black tents of the Kowliyeh, gypsy folk, musicians all, whose girls dance to castanets and whose men play the rebaba or fiddle, flute and drum. Like gypsies at home, these people mend pots and pans, cope horses, talk their own language, and are not in high repute. Occasionally there is a scandal in the desert when a young man of good sheikhly family falls in love with and marries one of their women, for their maidens are comely.

A few miles out of Najaf we were met by the desert patrol, some half-dozen wild-looking brigands who galloped towards us with wild cries, their rifles held high in the air. They wore their hair, Bedawi fashion, in two tousled plaits each side of the face. In the mad gallop one or two cheffiyehs and agals came off. This most unpractical headgarb usually becomes disarranged on the slightest occasion, and the adjusting of it

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becomes a mechanical action, like the hoisting of the aba over the shoulders. An Englishman can forget his clothes, but an Arab's are always falling off.

By this time Najaf was in sight, swimming above the mirage far across the desert—its plump golden dome and slim minarets rising above its brown walls like an illustration to a fairy-tale. To the pilgrim, weary of many days' march, it must look more than humanly beautiful, holding as it does, the holiest associations and relics of his faith. For miles on miles the glitter of its dome may be seen—it is said for forty miles on a clear day—so unbroken is the plain and so lofty the shrine. Beneath the great dome reposes the body of Ali—futile, pathetic, martyr, founder of a doomed race, whose human frailty and vacillating nature has not prevented Shiahs from placing him second only to Mahommed. One sect, indeed, declares that he was an incarnation of the Deity. In the cold light of history he does not cut an heroic figure. Corpulent, amiable, weak of character, culpably poor-spirited, shifty in his dealings, this Caliph seems the last person to have inspired passionate devotion. But thousands reverence him as the true Imam, chosen representative of Allah upon earth.

The story of the founding of Najaf was told me later by the good Killidar, Seyyid Abbas (another Seyyid Abbas), as we sat at our midday meal.

"After our Lord Ali had been assassinated at Kufah, they set his dead body on a camel and turned the beast loose, saying that where the camel knelt, there should the holy remains be interred. The camel wandered for many miles, and knelt on the edge of the high ground above the Bahr Najaf, distant about an hour from Kufah. There they buried the holy dead, but did not dare to mark the spot lest his enemies should desecrate the spot.

"Years afterwards, the Caliph Harun er Rashid was hunting gazelle in the neighbourhood. He followed his quarry and had almost secured it when the creature bounded to a mound, where it stood motionless and apparently unafraid. Dismounting, the Caliph drew his bow to give the *coup de grace*,

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but to his surprise he had not the strength to shoot. Three times he made the attempt, three times the same strange numbness made his arm powerless.

" Then the Caliph began to tremble, and seeing an old and reverend man near by, said to him, ' What place is this ? ' The old man said, ' Commander of the Faithful, if I were to tell thee, evil might befall ! ' The Caliph swore by the Prophet that he would not harm the old man, and commanded him to tell the truth. Then said the old man, ' This is the resting-place of Ali, and because it was feared that his bones would be disturbed, the place of his burial was kept secret. But this gazelle knows that standing here on sacred ground, above the holy bones of the Imam, no human power can harm her. Dig, and see if I have spoken truth.'

" The Caliph dug down, and at a depth of about twelve feet, lo ! there was an alabaster slab, and the bones of Ali were beneath it. He vowed piously that so holy a spot should not be desecrated and first the mosque, and then the town of Najaf arose."

To the north and north-east of the city are cemeteries without the walls, with graves of all kinds, from the costly kubba, gay with coloured tiles, mostly turquoise blue, to the humble earthen mound. Thousands of bodies are brought annually from Persia for interment at Najaf and Karbala, so that one wonders, not at the size of these cemeteries, but at their smallness. They are not bigger than would be justified by the size of the town if only its own dead were buried in them.

I was told that there are ten thousand graves in Najaf, never more and never less, in spite of the annual import of corpses. What is the explanation of this strange phenomenon ? The mollahs say that Ali takes the surplus bodies away, and no trace of them is ever found. Be this as it may, the selling of graves is a profitable source of income to the shrines. There is a fixed tariff for graves according to the sanctity of the site. The Ministry of Owkaf in Baghdad keep account of the monies so paid, which are spent solely for " the upkeep of the

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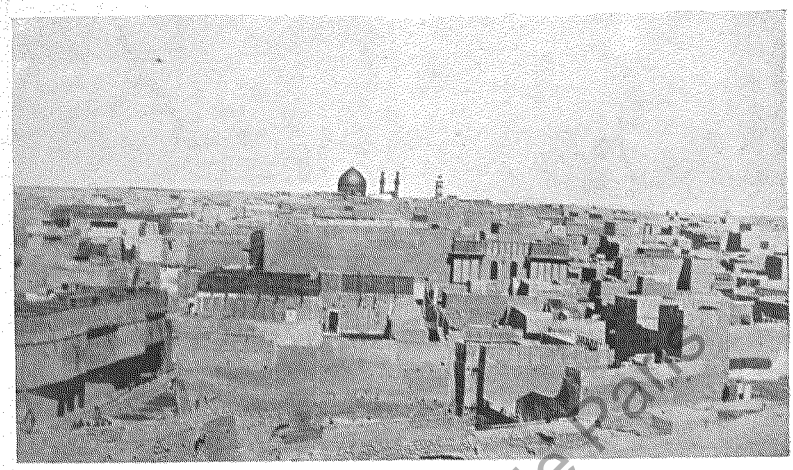
shrines." To be buried in the public cemetery, the Wadi es Salam or Valley of Peace, is comparatively cheap—six rupees, four annas (about eight shillings)—in a private cemetery twenty-five rupees. But in the mosque and its precincts interment is dearer, costing from 750 rupees, in the Rawaq, or inner courtyard, downwards according to situation. The revenue from the selling of graves from 1921 to 1922 was over fifty-seven thousand rupees. The most profitable month was April; the smallest takings were in July. In Karbala the fees amounted to nearly twenty-two thousand rupees, the most popular months for burial being October and November.

In addition to this, the city profits by fees for funeral rites, fees to tomb-builders and grave-diggers, and so on. The bodies, in lidless coffins, are brought from Persia or elsewhere on horses and mules, or in open carts, in the first case the coffins being slung on either side of the pack. Arrived, the corpse is washed, wrapped in shrouds (another profitable industry) and taken round the mosque. Finally, with chantings, incense, hired mourners and priests, the body is interred —until Ali sees fit to disinter it.

Our first halt was at the police khana, where Captain Marshall was so foully done to death in 1918. One of the Arabs with us had been with Marshall at the time, and described how the assassins came, demanding an audience, and killed the Englishman in cold blood. To go into the causes of his death is to go into the story of internal politics in this city of intrigue and crime. There are two leading factions within the city, the Zugurt (or Sgurt) and the Sumurt (or Shmurt),[1] each with

[1] According to hearsay the differences between Shmurt or Sumurt and the Sgurt originated in a tribal quarrel, in which a woman was concerned. A sayyid who lived in El Qusur, or some say Roqbah, small villages in the desert near Najaf, was deprived of his bride or of a woman belonging to his family, and this led to a feud, Sgurt meaning "separated from the family."

A learned Dominican father assures me that this is absolute rubbish. He says: "After the conquest of Baghdad, then in Persian hands, by the Sultan Murad IV., the Shiahs of Najaf, who abhorred the yoke of the Sunni Turk, and were themselves mostly Persian, caused constant trouble. The Turks therefore succeeded by intrigue in forming



NAJAF: GENERAL VIEW.

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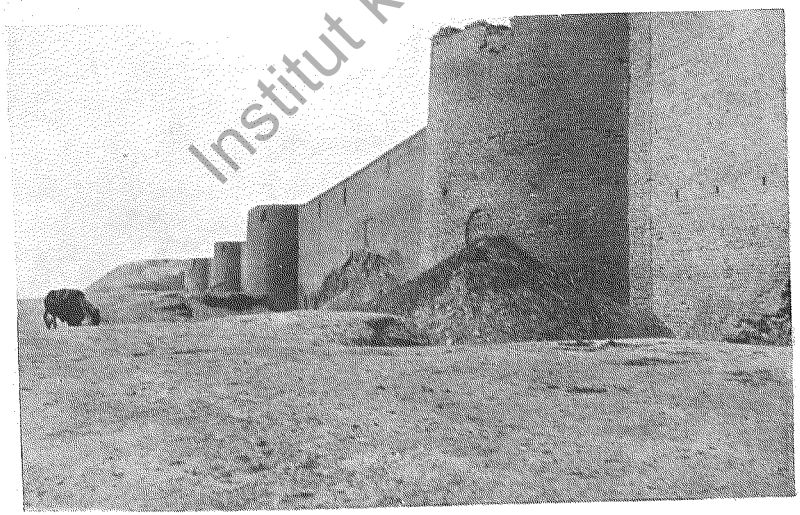

THE WALLS OF NAJAF.



THE NAQIB OF BAGHDAD.

(*See page* 70.)

its own leaders, who quarrel as frequently as did Guelph and Ghibelline in mediæval Florence. They recruit largely from the riff-raff of the town, and even the mujtahids are unable to quell the disturbances and brawls which arise owing to these factions and their bravoes.

Nor is the danger confined to the city, for each faction has its friends and enemies among the tribes outside, and a street brawl in Najaf may end by becoming a tribal war. At times, mostly for evil purposes, the factions ally themselves, and on the occasion of Capt. Marshall's death, Hajji Sa'ad ibn Hajji Radhi, a rough, low-born person, leader of the Sumurt, was undoubtedly one of the chief movers in the plot against the Englishman, and with him was associated Kadhim Subbi, also of low extraction and antecedents, who held authority with the Zuqurt. The principal mujtahid at the time, Saiyid Muhammed Kadhim Yazdi, was probably not privy to the deed and found himself embarrassed by its perpetration.

At that time the hand of the British was strong in the land.

two factions in the city, and constantly stirring these up to strife among themselves, strengthened their own authority. These two parties were formed largely by exciting class hatred. The Turks called the poor and dispossessed, and promised them support against the depredations of the rich, and those who had acquired property under the late regime. These formed the Sgurt party. Later the same governor called the alarmed well-to-do (Shimirt in Turkish means rich, in easy circumstances, just as Zugurt means the contrary), and promised to protect them against the aggressions of the new party, saying that the Turkish Government had always found its best support amongst the people of property and would protect them. They never allowed either party to become dangerously preponderant. By showing first one and then the other favours, by furnishing first one, then the other party with arms, they managed to strengthen their own hands and weaken any opposition to government in the city."

The Sgurt are credited with more courage than the Shmurt, and it is quite possible that both tradition and my Dominican friend are right. There may have been a tribal feud of antiquity in the town of which the Turks took advantage, and one party may have dispossessed the other of power and wealth. Be that as it may, the Shiah clergy, who are supposed to keep clear of these quarrels and to fix their minds on less worldly matters, have, it is said, succeeded in uniting the two factions against the British.

There is a third party, the moderates, the Shqurt, but I have not been able to hear much about these sensible folk.

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Najaf was cut off from all water supplies except those of the wells within the city, the high mounds (to which I shall revert later on) were invested, and Najaf lay helpless. Not a shot was fired, but the city knew that it could not trifle with us. The guilty men were given over to justice, thirteen condemned to death, five transported and a number of suspected persons sent to India.

Najaf has always respected such methods, and for a time her behaviour was exemplary. But the constant press clamour at home that the British must withdraw, and a belief that our forces in the country were weak gave the intriguers fresh opportunity. They were heartened by propagandists for the Pan-Arab movement from Syria. Thus it was chiefly in Najaf that the serious rising in 1920 was hatched. Najaf fosters sedition from habit. In the days of the Sunni Turk she was always "agin' the government," and Najaf and Karbala are at the present moment the happy hunting-ground of the extremist and political malcontent.

The meeting at Karbala in the spring of 1922 is an example. The tribes were called in, ostensibly to discuss methods of repelling the Akhwan, or Wahabis, in case the shrines were attacked by them, the real object being to urge the sheikhs to sign a manifesto protesting against the mandate and to concert more active measures for attaining their object in the event of the manifesto being unsuccessful. The prime movers in the affair were the mujtahid Mahdi el Khalissi of Kadhimein, and the extremists of Baghdad, those directly in the royal entourage being present to guide the discussion into the right path—it not being quite clear as to what their conception of the right path might be. Every influence was brought to bear to induce the senior mujtahids to lend their weight to the propaganda, but comparatively few consented to give open countenance to the plot. However, the sheikhs, bringing simple desert logic to bear, would not be caught. They scented the hand of the effendi in Baghdad. The more moderate spirits got a hearing, the plot failed, and Mahdi el Khalissi's prestige sank.

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Next in importance to the mujtahids in the town come the killidars. With these office is hereditary. They are the custodians of the vast treasures of the shrines. No account is ever demanded of their guardianship by the government, and for all that goes into Najaf, Najaf accounts to itself. The treasure is fabulously great. Not only must each Shiah pay a yearly dole for the upkeep of the shrines and works of charity (the Zahat), but gifts are made by the pilgrims at the shrines or sent in fulfilment of vows to the shrines.

I chanced to see one such gift on its way through Baghdad. A certain lady in Persia, troubled by the illness of her son, vowed a most valuable breastplate to Ali at Najaf if her son recovered. He did recover, but repenting of her vow, she asked the mullas if she could be released from it. Certainly, said they, if you give us the equivalent value of your jewels in money to be spent in good works. The lady gave them the money, but shortly afterwards had a vision in which Ali himself appeared to her and reproached her with not having kept her vow. When she awoke, she hastened to send the jewel to Najaf, and it was her son himself who took it, together with a jewelled sword. The breastplate, hung on gold chains round the neck, was a mass of large diamonds, emeralds and sapphires—crude in design and roughly cut, but of great value.

Such gifts are registered and photographed by the Owkaf authorities as they pass through Baghdad, and it was during the detention of the gift that I saw it. Costly carpets, heirlooms of all kinds, precious stones, gold and jewels, these pour into the holy places, as well as the small sums and humble offerings of the poor. A small aperture above the tomb of Ali is utilised by the pilgrims for the casting in of jewels and money. The Killidar alone has the key to the tomb, and collects the offerings. They say that at the visit of Nasreddin Shah the treasures of Karbala and Najaf were opened, and that the weight of gold and silver alone reached a total of seven tons! Among other items were a lamp made of a single emerald, chandeliers in massive gold studded with

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rubies, and a great carpet embroidered with pearls. The dome and four minarets at Najaf are covered with pure gold-leaf, the gift of Nasreddin Shah.

No wonder that the town is surrounded by high walls and a ditch like any mediæval city. Such wealth must tempt the cupidity of the hungry tribes outside. The walls are not much more than a hundred years old, and have heavy bastions at intervals of about one hundred yards.

Entering by the east gate, one is almost directly in the high covered souk, or bazaar, a maze of covered ways and byways, roofed in from the sun. Here sit the vegetable and fruit-sellers in one aisle, for the trades keep together; in another the makers of scarlet and lemon-coloured slippers have their booths; in another, an old vaulted way, the vendors of abas have their shops, the abas being the silken mantles of every hue for the manufacture of which Najaf is celebrated. A Najaf *aba* is known by the scrap of blue thread woven in among the gold or silver in one corner—to keep off the evil eye. Here is the copper souk, full of din as hundreds of hammers descend on cooking-vessels, pans, jugs and trays in the making; there the pottery souk where you may buy clay pots of every shape and size, white and porous, or daubed with a lovely dark blue glaze.

The narrow souk called the Keiseriya, with its odd corners and jutting gables, is particularly attractive, and fascinating to the European are the hubble-bubble shops where hubble-bubbles in Persian earthenware are sold, and the precious stone souk where there are rows of cases containing cornelians, chrysoprases, turquoises and all manner of agates—above all, Najaf crystals. You can see these last polished by an old man with a polishing wheel. If you have them in the rough, picked up in the desert, he will cut and polish them while you wait, turning the dull, half-transparent pebble into a beautiful clear jewel, full of prismed light.

In the souk you come upon the great tiled gateway of the mosque very suddenly, hung with the triple brass chain, decorated with all the flowery fancy and exquisite sense of

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colour of the Persian tilemaker. Through this high archway you catch sight of the outer courtyard, and of the building it contains—so fair with figured tiles and gold and turquoise blue that one longs to pass through. But one may not even linger by the arch. Dark, brooding looks have followed the stranger as he wanders through the souks. Pale, fanatical faces gleam in the half-light of shadowed shops; no pedlar comes forward smilingly to tempt him with wares, a cold politeness is all that meets him if he wishes to buy. The atmosphere of hate and fanaticism affects one against one's will, the lovely gateway and sunlit court beyond become symbols of the narrow faith they represent, and one is chilled in spite of the beauty of the place.

Najaf is very beautiful. None of her ways are straight. Her alleys, bridged here and there by houses and overhung by oriel windows, are narrow, winding and crooked, with sun aslant into their twilight. Here and there one comes abruptly on a gate of the great sanctuary, a flower of many colours in dark ways, but the general impression is of sombre enclosure, as if a fate brooded over the place.

Indeed, half the city is subterranean, in the very bowels of the earth. There is a second Najaf underground—a network of catacombs with passages leading in some cases far into the desert outside. Every house has its sirdab, a dark cellar-room some seven feet below the surface, to which the inhabitants can retire during the hot weather. But below this there may be a second of even third and fourth storey underground, and passages which connect with other sirdabs, also wells of great depth. This underground city affords almost illimitable opportunity for plotters and criminals to meet unknown, or escape if they are not wanted.

In the walls of the town houses have been built or burrowed, and in the road which runs round them you may meet some of the dirtiest and most unpleasant people in the city. Fanatical and ignorant, the boys shout invective and throw a furtive stone at the stranger, the women avert their faces and the very pariah-dogs bark vociferously.

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There are high, queer-looking mounds outside the city. One in particular, just outside the south gate, overtops the walls. These, it is said, were formed by the earth thrown out in excavating the sirdabs and underground ways of the city. From the big rubbish-heap referred to, one has a wonderful view, first of the city below and next of the Bahr Najaf at the foot of the steep hill below the bluff, a smiling, narrow valley, gleaming with water and green with vegetation. Down the descent to the river and up again toil daily strings of small donkeys laden with water-skins, and the clink of the water-seller's brass cup is heard in the streets within the walls as he cries his sweet water. Beyond the grateful green of the Bahr Najaf comes the wide desert, stretching as far as the eye can reach, Arabia Deserta, feared by these decadent town-dwellers because at any time, out of the blue, may come destruction for them in the shape of an assault from hostile and heretic Wahabis.

On our first visit to Najaf we were courteously received by the Killidar, Seyyid Abbas, at all times a good friend of the English, but in these troublous times a little doubtful of his own wisdom in being loyal to us. His uncle, the Naqib el Ashraf, Seyyid Hadi, was there, Mohsin el Shellash, a wealthy merchant, and a few other notables. They acted broad-mindedly in sitting down to food with us, for the Shiah thinks himself polluted by eating with an unbeliever. Our host, however, was kindly and hospitable, and it was a pleasure afterwards to pay a visit to his pretty wife, to talk to his nephew and to see his infant son, Seyyid Hoseyn.

Seyyid Abbas is a good-looking man of middle age, black-bearded, comely beneath his green turban, mark of his holy descent. His reception-room was long and narrow, one side all windows which gave on the courtyard, and the four walls bordered with the usual divans, covered, like the floor, with costly carpets. The only other decoration was the mirror-mosaic in the walls. We were taken later into a guest-chamber in which we were invited to rest if we wished: the typical fashionable 'Iraqi bedroom, its principal piece of furniture a large double

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bed, with silken hangings in pink, a satin coverlet embroidered with silver, and satin pillows embroidered with gold. Its couches were upholstered in embroidered velvet of crude colouring.

In Najaf, as at other Shiah shrines, you may notice here and there a man or boy with a single earring. The children of Muta'a marriages, or temporary marriages, are so distinguished, but are in no way despised, though the Shiahs of 'Iraq seldom contract such marriages themselves and deprecate the custom, which is probably much older than Islam, and may date from the time when temple girls in Babylon were hired out to pilgrims to the shrines of Ishtar and Marduk.

On the arrival of a pilgrim, usually a Persian, he is met in the khan by a tout, who asks him if he would not like to contract a temporary or muta'a marriage. Should the pilgrim agree, the tout, for a fee, brings to him several suitable girls. When he has selected one, the parents being willing, the pair are married by an alim, or any person sufficiently educated to read the necessary formula. The length of the marriage varies. It may be only for an hour, or for months, and is terminated automatically by the departure of the pilgrim or the end of the time agreed, without further formality.

A woman may contract as many as ten such " marriages " in one night. The fees to the woman or her guardians are two rupees an hour, ten rupees a day, and fifty rupees a month. Shiahs pretend that such a marriage is meritorious, and the children, if any, bear no stigma. No witnesses are necessary, and a woman need not wait, as after divorce or death of her husband in ordinary marriages, to see if there is to be any fruit of the union. But a father may, if he wish, claim a child of a muta'a marriage as his own, and remove him, after he or she is seven or eight years old.

To Sunnis, of course, these practices are abhorrent. Before the days of the Prophet they were legal, being heathen, and they declare that he forbade them. But tradition with the Sunni is strong, and the custom survives. As a Shiah remarked apologetically, " It is, after all, inconvenient not to have a woman with one on a journey."

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CHAPTER III

KARBALA

KARBALA, the city which Shiahs consider second only to Najaf in importance, may be visited both from Najaf and Hillah, but the desert road [1] from Najaf is less used, though both are pilgrim routes. As one leaves Najaf by this road, a suburb of tombs is first traversed, some domed with blue enamelled tiles, others built like shrines, some covered by brick slabs and others humble mounds of mud. Pariah-dogs lie yawning about the graves, and here and there a funeral party may be observed.

Flat and sandy desert lies between the two cities, and the track is so easily obliterated that it is not difficult to lose it completely during the forty odd miles of featureless country, especially if a sandstorm is blowing. It is possible also to get one's car stuck in a sand-drift.

It was a grey day in February when I travelled by this road, but uncrested desert larks were singing and the desert in spite of its saltness, was powdered with green and with minute flowers of varieties new to me. I plucked a tiny purple poppy no bigger than a pimpernel, and a number of other queer little flowerets. The flat steppe is sown with crystals and pebbles and the general effect, even after rain, is desolation and barrenness. Even the green, vivid in the distance, vanishes as one approaches it like a mirage, the blades of grass being so sparse that the ground shows brown and bare between.

[1] Taxis run by both routes.

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We passed the Khan Musalla about twelve miles out of Najaf. There are three of these fortified khans on the road between the two cities, and in them pilgrims can obtain shelter and water and purchase food. We stopped at Khan Hamad, half-way, a high-walled village with shops, houses, stabling and pilgrims' quarters. The fear of the pilgrim is always of the tribesmen, and these fortified shelters must seem harbours of safety to them on the desolate and dangerous road. At Khan Musalla one Mendil, mukhtar of the place, took us to his house, where mats and cushions were spread on the mud floor, and offered us great bowls of shenina (curds diluted with water), flat Arab loaves, roast chickens, oranges and omelettes. We ate, of course, with our fingers, and shared the bowls.

Then we sped on to Karbala, leaving the last khan, Khan Noquielah, unvisited. The desert and the town meet together about a mile out of Karbala with the utmost abruptness, like irreconcilable enemies. The palm-trees, domes and minarets of Karbala are visible among the trees long before one reaches them, and the first intimation of the city is the scent of bean-flowers from outlying crops. Then comes a patch of green, one enters the belt of vegetation and is suddenly confronted with a scene of faery beauty. Almonds and apples blossom among the palms which slope down to the canal—the Husseiniyeh—gardens surround one on every side, and a hospitable causeway brings one into the town itself.

After the stern outlines of Najaf, Karbala strikes gratefully on the eye. The streets of the newer part of the town are open and straight, donkeys laden with greenstuff pass to and fro, and one realises that the salty arid desert is left behind and that one is back again upon rich alluvial soil. The older part of the city clustered about the mosques, is winding and irregular, and Karbala, too, has its cemetery, the Wadi el Aoman, or Valley of Security, to which corpses are borne for interment from far and wide.

If Najaf is the intellectual centre of Shiahism, its head, Karbala, is its heart. It is more sacred than Najaf itself,

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for all the emotional devotion of which the Shiah is capable is evoked by the name of Hoseyn. Over the death of Hoseyn the women weep as in the days of Babylonia they wept at the death of Tammuz, and the recital of his sufferings arouses poignant grief. It was near Karbala that Hoseyn, the son of Ali, was surrounded by the heretic Caliph's troops, cut off from their access to water, and then annihilated in cold blood. It is the most tragic story in the history of Islam, and during Moharram it is recited by readers and enacted in passion plays. Men dressed to represent the principal personages of the tragedy go in procession round the town, not forgetting the Ferangi, or European (who is usually made to wear a sun-helmet and European dress), whom legend says performed an act of kindness to Hoseyn. Hardly a Moharram passes without the death of a few votaries as the result of their penitential flagellations and slashings. Moharram is celebrated wherever there are Shiahs, but the place above all others for the observance of the ceremonies is Karbala, where the body of the martyr is enshrined beneath the golden dome of the Hadrat-el-Kabira, richest and holiest of all Shiah shrines, and the month of Moharram is the time above others for pilgrimage.

The second mosque of Karbala, with a tiled dome and golden minarets, is the tomb of the Imam Abbas, Hoseyn's half-brother. If a Shiah swears by Hoseyn, so mild and forgiving, he knows that perjury will not be visited by any condign punishment, but Abbas was a soldier, a stern disciplinarian and a man of hot temper, and an oath by him none dare violate. Do they not show in the ceiling of the mosque of the Imam Abbas the embedded head of a man who swore falsely on his name, with the result that his head flew off? And were one to swear falsely by Abbas, something of the sort might happen again, whereas an oath by Hoseyn is not very binding.

Karbala, without the sinister beauty of Najaf, is full of colour and picturesque corners, though the wide, straight road which leads to the big mosque is unattractive and modern.

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But in the winding souks one comes continually and suddenly upon the various tiled arched gateways to Hoseyn's lovely shrine.

The larger proportion of the townspeople are Persians. Dark, pale, oval in face, somewhat decadent in appearance, they watch you with little favour as you pass, and no one presses you to buy. I do not think that a Christian would find a single shopkeeper in the town who would sell him one of the attractive little pendants of precious stone engraved with texts from the Quran, however high the price he offered, let alone a copy of the Holy Book itself.

But the booths in the souks are tempting. There are many vendors of attars who, if you ask, will permit you to sniff at their yellow bottles of perfume and to choose the essence you prefer. There are sellers of gems, jewellers who display gold filigree boxes destined to enclose charms or a scrap of holy writ, anklets in gold and silver—tinkling with bells for babies—and Persian earrings beautifully enamelled. Rosaries of all kinds are to be bought, of olive wood and mother-of-pearl, of amber, cornelian or other stones, down to the gaudiest glass.

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But there are two very special trades—one the manufacture of shrouds for corpses printed with suitable texts from the Quran, the other, small cakes of Karbala earth (turbah), decorated with mouldings and decorative designs. Thus a pilgrim, returning to his own home, can take back with him a shroud in which to be buried, and a little Karbala earth against which to press his head when praying.

The vegetable and fruit-stalls are full. Oranges, citrons, lemons, shaddocks, beans, lettuces, truffles, egg-plant and other vegetables were plentiful when I passed through, and of course dates of all varieties, and baskets of almonds and walnuts. On sweetmeat stalls you will find Persian dainties, bright-coloured sugar-plums and Turkish delight, and if their appearance might not satisfy the fastidious, is not the dust holy dust, and are not flies sent by Allah ?

What is perhaps most pleasing about these holy cities is

the absence of the tarbush and black coat of the effendi. Here the turban and the cheffiyeh have their own way, and the streets look as they must have looked in the early days of Islam. From the æsthetic standpoint, fanaticism has its uses. One other industry also makes the bazaar pleasing—the coloured baskets which are woven in Karbala and purchased by many pilgrims.

The pilgrim is taken in hand at Karbala, as in other holy cities, by those who make a profession of it. He has the prescribed itinerary of the mosques to make, certain prayers to say, certain fees and bakshish to pay. Within the mosque itself placards upon which suitable prayers are inscribed guide his piety, and there are doubtless those who will guide his generosity. The circumambulation of the tomb is the crowning act of the pilgrimage. In Karbala, as in Najaf, muta'a, or temporary marriages may be contracted by pilgrims. Interment in the Rawaq or inner shrine costs 160 rupees, in the outer precincts forty.

The shrine of Hoseyn is said to be of exceeding richness and beauty. Though the flow of gifts is not quite as great as that to Najaf, the sister shrine, it is considerable, and the costliest treasures lie hidden somewhere in the keeping of the guardians of the sanctuary.

One sees more coffee-houses in Karbala than in Najaf, which gives the streets a kindlier air. The Shiahs do not, like the Sunni and Puritan Wahabi, object to the portrayal of human figures, and the walls of many of these coffee-houses are decorated by outline paintings. I noticed a vivid series representing the story of Rustem and Sohrab, battles, scenes in the harem, and so forth, also a large bird with a female head, probably the Simurgh of Persian legend, and other sketches of fable and history. Close by the Hillah Gate there is a coffee-house always crowded with seyyids, and their green turbans make bright splashes of colour as they sit sipping their coffee in the roofed recess, while a bulbul twitters above them.

We were hospitably entertained in Karbala by some

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Mahommedan ladies, the wife and mother of a merchant of the city. The girl-wife was comely, a black kerchief binding her brows, two long thick plaits of dark hair, tinted with henna, falling on either side of her face. The mother was a kindly, intelligent woman knowing news of the world of men and interested in politics, although she never went outside her own door. Their captivity did not trouble them. "It is the custom," they say, and are perfectly content.

We went away on this occasion, as on a later visit to Karbala, by the villainous road to Hillah. It is in entire contrast with the desert road from Najaf to Karbala. From Karbala to Hillah one is never out of sight of cultivation, of flocks grazing, of flourishing date-groves, with their attendant hamlets or villages, of irrigation channels or running water. Shepherds, agricultural labourers with their long-handled spades, pilgrims in arabanas, on horse, or afoot, pass continually on the road, and one sees any quantity of wild pigeons, magpies and crows. Here and there one passes a family group on pilgrimage that might easily pass for a Flight into Egypt, save that often, in this ungallant land, it is the Mary who walks and the Joseph who rides.

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CHAPTER IV

KADHIMEIN

At Kadhimein one sees the squalor and the splendour of Shiahism to a marked degree. On the one hand the domes overlaid with beaten gold, the minarets slender and straight as lilies, the lovely tiled gateways and the beautiful courts of the mosque; on the other, the squalor of the bazaar, the evil faces and low types seen in alley and coffee-house. The domes, with their guardian minarets, gleam in the sun and shine like a beacon far over the flat countryside as they rise from amidst protecting palms. They seem by their mere beauty to beckon to all the world to admire, but, when one has reached the town itself, and finds one's way through the narrow streets, full of crooked corners and zigzag alleys, to the principal gate of the mosque itself, one can do no more than glance inside through the open arch; and forbidding frowns and lowering looks greet the curious observer if he lingers too long, or too close to the threshold.

Houses and souks crowd in about the mosque, gables and windows jut three-corneredly over the narrow streets. This method of building a window has its uses from the point of view of the Shiah lady, so rigorously confined to her house, for she can see up and down the street, whilst a discreet lattice conceals her from the world. A noise of chanting brings her to peep out: below she sees a wild crowd of fanatical pilgrims, filthy and in rags, staves in their hands, running on bare feet, their sweating faces shining with glee at their nearness to the holy shrine. Or a sound of pipes and drums at night, and she

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sees a bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, going to the great mosque to perform his devotions, while the women utter shrill joy-cries, their hands before their mouths.

Again, the ordinary sights of the street may amuse her idleness, passers-by, such as the Shiah divine, with his neat white or black turban, his pale, smooth, niminy-piminy face set to a fanatical severity, a group of Seyyids with emerald-green turbans, a pedlar carrying on his head fresh oranges or just-plucked lettuces—in fact, all the hurly-burly of the Oriental street, including the man who spreads sand at the corner that he may tell the fortunes of those who consult him.

The great mosque, in which lie buried the seventh and ninth Imams, is a jewel enclosed in a sordid setting. It has seven gateways, and of all of them I like best the east gate, which might be called the Gate of Roses because of the roses which the tile-maker has enamelled on so many of the tiles. The whole gate is a riot of pink and turquoise blue. Here and there mother-of-pearl is let in, there and here pieces of mirror so as to form part of a pattern, but the effect is not gaudy, only exquisitely gay and flower-like. The corner-stones represent vases, and there are four great tiles, about a foot and a half long, each on either side of the gate which represent bunches of iris and roses in a vase.

Through the wide archway one has a good view of the golden dome minarets, and inner court of the mosque. Tiles face every portion of the building, varied here and there by carved wood, mirror work and pearl mosaic. Opposite the Gate of Roses is a tiled fountain, waterless, but very beautiful with its hexagonal interlaced ornament on the roof, and its weatherworn colours.

From the north gate one has another fine view of the courtyard and of the tombs within. This gate, too, is very lovely. A heavy triple brass chain hangs above each entrance, for what purpose I know not.

The great west gate rivals the eastern in beauty, particularly when one comes upon its fairness suddenly out of

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the dingy souk. From this gate one sees well the two-storeyed mosque, with its wealth of tiling, carving and decoration, and of the great golden dome blazing aloft against the blue sky. A passer-by is usually willing to conduct you to a roof close by from which you may view the mosque from above, and on such occasions as Moharram, it is well to seize the opportunity, for the great courtyard is crowded with vast numbers of devotees and pilgrims, who watch with intense excitement and emotion the passion-play which I have described elsewhere.

It must be a spectacle well worth witnessing, if one is not too squeamish. Fanatics streaming with blood, half-naked flagellants beating themselves with fury, wild dervishes mad with religious fervour, jostling crowds half beside themselves with grief and pleasurable sorrow, the scene has been described to me, and I myself have seen a miniature edition in Baghdad. On that occasion a Shiah lady I know permitted the Christian maid of a neighbour to witness the play from a window. Overcome by the tragedy enacted below, and by the grief of the spectators, the girl began to weep like the rest. " El hamdu lillah ! She sees truth, she has become a Shiah ! " our hostess exclaimed, when she perceived it. Another woman spectator of the same company, unhinged by emotion, tore away her clothes and began to beat herself frantically.

Just as to Karbala and Najaf, rich gifts are made by pilgrims to the shrines at Kadhimein. Women come to make their vows and throw offerings of jewellery and money in at the grille which surrounds the tomb of Moussa el Kadhim, locally known as " Kadhim's Cage." Such offerings are picked up by the guardians of the tomb, and transferred to the keeping of the Killidar. The tomb is regarded as holy in the extreme, and miracles and cures are worked at it. A Shiah woman told me :

" One day, when I was in the sanctuary at Kadhim, a woman came in and began to laugh irreverently. Her aba flew off, and she fell down, and she had to go on hands and feet like a dog out of the shrine. This I saw with my own eyes."

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Similarly thieves are compelled to admit their roguery when brought to the shrine by their accusers, or else they "stick to the walls and cannot move." The faith of poor Shiahs in the sanctity of their shrine is so great that hysteria may well work these and similar marvels. The Imams, particularly Moussa el Kadhim, have been seen in dream and vision, clad in the sacred green and of benevolent aspect.

Kadhimein contains the usual number of those who batten upon the pilgrims, and those who gain their living by their so-called piety or holiness. Seyyids abound, and here I must walk warily, for one particular Seyyid is a great friend of mine. He is the essence of geniality, and has been my host on more than one occasion, whether in his clean, pleasant house, or his delightful garden of oranges and date-palms, where in spring the scent of the "qadah" as the orange-blossom is called, intoxicates the air, and bulbuls and doves fill the garden with their flutings and cooings. His wise, humorous, kindly face is, for me, for ever associated with Kadhimein. He has a fine presence, and gives an impression of perennial youth, with his dyed black beard, his neat gown of periwinkle blue, his green turban and his twinkling eyes. He spreads wonderful meals for his guests beneath the cool green shade of his garden, and afterwards cracks jokes and gathers roses for them as he moves at a dignified pace down the green twilight of the walks.

I have visited ladies in Kadhimein, too, and once called on a bride of some ten months' standing, very much of a full moon, plump and comely. She was but eighteen. She was stained with henna on lips, forehead and toes, and sat barefoot on the floor, while her seniors graced the divan. Spoiled darling as she was, with her mass of gold chains, her pink dress and her gold anklets, she was the politest of hostesses, and lit us cigarettes at her own mouth, handing them to us when they were alight. Her bed was in the room in which we were received, a marvellous bed, with pink and silver hangings, and white satin coverlet embroidered with silver. Like the princess's in the fairy-tale, it had several soft mattresses, and the silk-covered pillows were embroidered in galloon, which

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must be rough, but gratifying to sleep upon. The divans also were covered with magenta pink satin embroidered with silver. Carpets adorned the floor and walls. I trust I am not indiscreet in affording a glimpse into the boudoir of a Kadhimein belle.

Kadhimein is only a few miles out of Baghdad, and a horse-tramway unites the two cities. This tramway was constructed by a private syndicate under the auspices of the famous Midhat Pasha, Wali of Baghdad, and unlike so many of his other schemes, paid its way from the first. The trams are somewhat ramshackle, and often carry more than their usual number of passengers, being literally festooned with people at such times as Moharram or other times of " ziara " or visit. I believe that the fare is only four annas, and the way to Kadhimein lies through pleasant gardens skirting the Tigris, and begins and ends with coffee-houses. But then, in the East all things, from councils to funerals, begin and end with coffee, if there are such things as definite beginnings and definite endings east of Suez.

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CHAPTER V

SAMARRA: THE FOURTH HOLY CITY OF 'IRAQ

We left Baghdad one May by the night train, and dozed through the night—Arabs and Indians shout so noisily at each station that one might imagine a riot in progress. We reached Samarra in the cool, clear hour before dawn, and were soon able to distinguish the sober outlines of the walled city, three miles away, its golden dome catching the first shafts of light. At six, having breakfasted, we made our way to the spot where a weather-beaten Ford waited to carry us over the narrow strip of desert between us and the river, for the Tigris flows between city and station.

There were patches of corn wherever we looked, whitened to harvest, some cut and lying on the ground in roughly-bound sheaves. A short run along the desert track brought us to a group of mud-houses, where arabanas, a few Arabs, and dirty children half naked and crawling with flies, awaited travellers and pilgrims. A shabby Seyyid, wearing the green turban of holy descent, informed us that the ferry—a raft slung on a wire rope—was no longer working. We must cross the river by *gufa* a mile up river, for the floods made the current dangerous for *bellums* (boats). This personage was a professional guide to pilgrims, for in every shrine-city there are a large number of people who make their living out of pilgrims—most of the population, in fact, in one way or other. The Seyyid continued, "But part of the road is under water, and your car cannot ford it."

There was nothing for it but to engage one of the *arabanas*

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—ramshackle, springless, cushionless four-horse brakes, the high wheels of which rolled uneasily on their axles as though they would come off any moment. In this we rattled over devious ways, splashing through the flood when we came to it, until the four lean horses came to a stop where a *gufa* was drawn up to the bank. A *gufa* is a large bowl-shaped basket, made water-tight by a coating of bitumen. Some of these round craft are huge; ours would have held thirty people easily. We got in, and the *gufachi* slung a towing-rope over his body, and waded up-stream. His two small boys waded beside the *gufa*, keeping her away from the shallows. Bleached grass grew down to the water's edge, the coarse desert grass so readily replaced by corn in these rich alluvial districts.

After wading steadily for twenty minutes, his clothes tucked up to his waist, the *gufachi* turned riverwards, for this was merely flooded area. When we had reached the actual river-bed, he jumped in with his helpers and began to paddle the boat across at an angle; for Samarra, on the high opposite bank, was by this time a good distance down-stream. The current was so swift and strong that it only took a few minutes before he landed us at the landing-stage below the city. Then we walked uphill to the gate of the city.

Samarra is a miniature Najaf as far as outward appearance goes, but within it is utterly different. From without, like Najaf, it looks severe, fortress-like, mediæval. Like Najaf, a golden dome and minarets rise above its brick buttresses with the same promise of enclosed beauty. But once inside, the larger city is a town, full of townspeople, and one would not guess that the clean desert came up to its very walls. It is a maze of intricate streets, darkened from the sun, peopled by pale fanatics, its evil-smelling alleys suggestive of crime and intrigue.

Samarra gives a very different impression, and is an open, clean, sweet-smelling desert-city. Fanatics one sees as one would see them in any Shiah city, but they do not scowl until the whole atmosphere seems charged with hate. On the contrary, we were met with kind looks and hospitality

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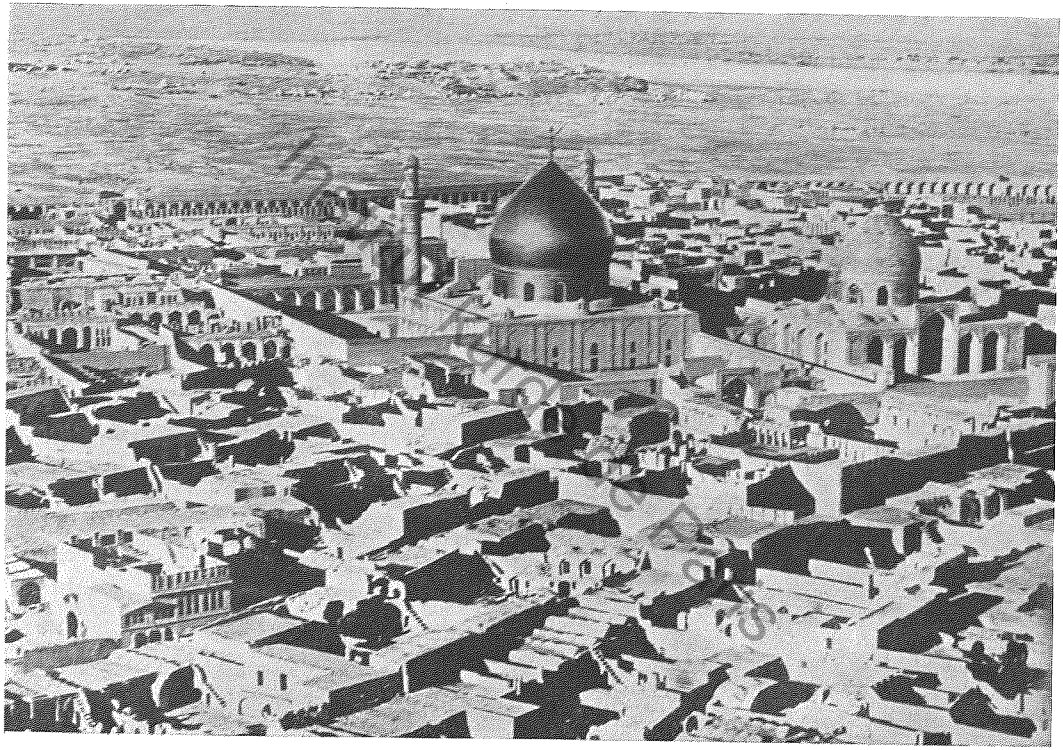
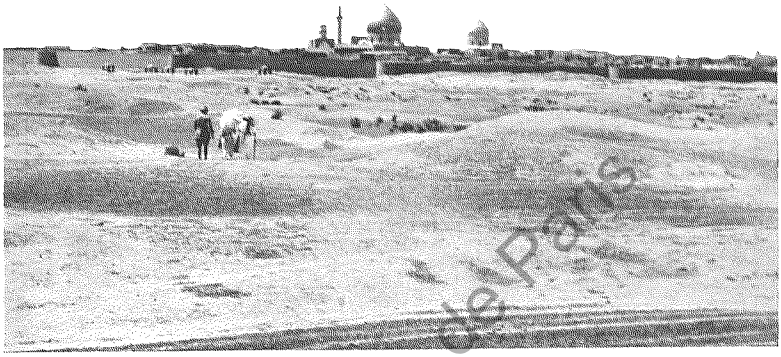


SAMARRA.



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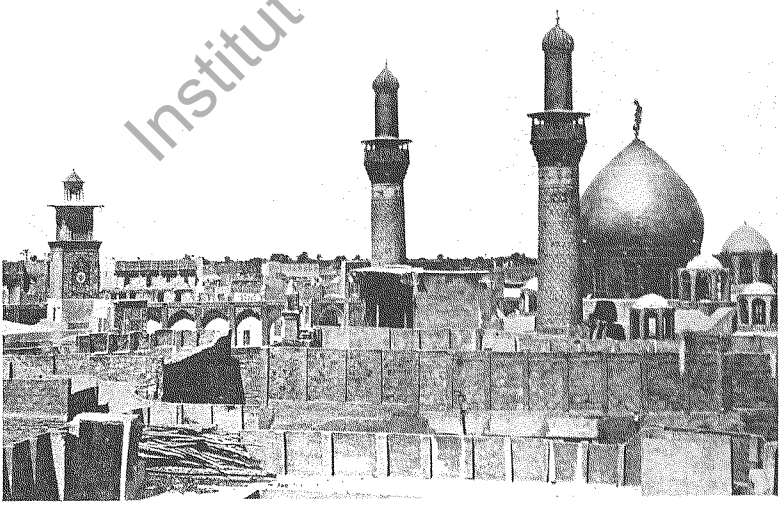

SAMARRA.

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Permission was freely given to inspect the mosque from a neighbouring roof, and a way was courteously made for me when I took a photograph, from the great tiled gateway of the mosque, of the courtyard, haram and minarets within. Like all these Shiah shrines, it is very lovely, with its dome of beaten gold blazing in the sunshine, its flower-like minarets covered with delicately gay Persian tiles, and its invitation to the holy of holies within, richer, as one may guess, than without. Beneath the golden dome is the sirdab, or cave, from which the twelfth Imam, Mohammed-bin-Hasan-el-Mahdi, a boy of twelve, is said to have disappeared, and from this cave he will re-issue in the last triumphant apotheosis of Islam.[1] The tenth and eleventh Imams, Ali el Askari and his son, Al Hasan, are also buried in Samarra.

Our first visit was to the Law Courts, where we were received by the two judges, religious and civil, both wearing the white turban of the Sunni scholar, and slightly contemptuous of the heretic townsmen. They complained to us of the difficulty of getting vegetables, and that the natives were too unenterprising to sow anything but wheat and barley. The city is close to the river, and but a small dole from each pilgrim would buy a pump installation. As it is, water must be purchased within the city from water-carriers, who bring it up from the river and sell it at one anna a small skin (or *jood*), a considerable item in the day's household expenses.

Samarra now only exists as a shrine, and has dwindled down to the present little city, but it has a long past. The great Friday mosque, built by the Caliph Mu'tasim when he moved his capital and court from Baghdad to Samarra and changed the name of the city to "Surra-man-raa" ("Who sees it rejoices"), was built outside the present city, on the site of an older worship. For the minaret to his mosque he copied the towers of the Chaldean temples known as *ziggurats* —a tower with an outside spiral path going to its top, like the

[1] The local legend is that the pursuing soldiers fired the sirdab in which the boy had taken refuge, and then filled it with water. But as no trace of a body was found, the Shiahs declared he had vanished into the earth.

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typical Chaldean " high place," the broad winding path serving as a way by which cattle might be driven to be sacrificed at the top. Mu'tasim put the tower to no such pagan purpose. From its wind-blown top the muezzin called the daily prayer, and his voice could be heard by all in the new-built city.[1]

The tower, the Malwiyah, battered but sturdy yet, stands just outside the ruins of Mu'tasim's mosque, about half a mile without the modern city wall. A climb up the spirial way gives a wonderful view of old and new Samarra. Immediately below is the ruined mosque, derelict in the desert. The walls are all that is left of the structure, and these were further damaged during the war when breaches were made in them for military purposes.

Behind the mosque is modern Samarra, neat within its smug Shiah walls, its dome aflame in the sun. To the right, northwards towards Tekrit, lies old Samarra or Eski Baghdad, the Surra-man-raa of the Abbassids where seven successive Caliphs lived in magnificence. But theirs was not the glory of their forbears, for they were practically prisoners allowed a show of power and spiritual authority by their Turkish masters. A Turkish bodyguard saw to it that no Arab intrigue endangered the real masters of 'Iraq, and Mu'tasim, looking over the well-planned, beautiful city which had sprung up at his command, might well sigh as he remembered Mansur and the city of Baghdad, built when the Caliphate was at its zenith of pride and strength.

To see how well Mu'tasim designed his city it is better to get higher yet. From an aeroplane one can see the symmetrical lines of road, public building and palace as clearly as if a map of the original town were before one. The designer of a modern garden city could not do better. From a great height one can read the plan, almost illegibile from the blurred foundations below, of the entire vast city which, with its suburbs, extended along the river for twenty-five miles.

[1] A young Turkish officer once made a bet that he would ride to the top. But half-way his heart failed him. History does not relate how he got his horse down.

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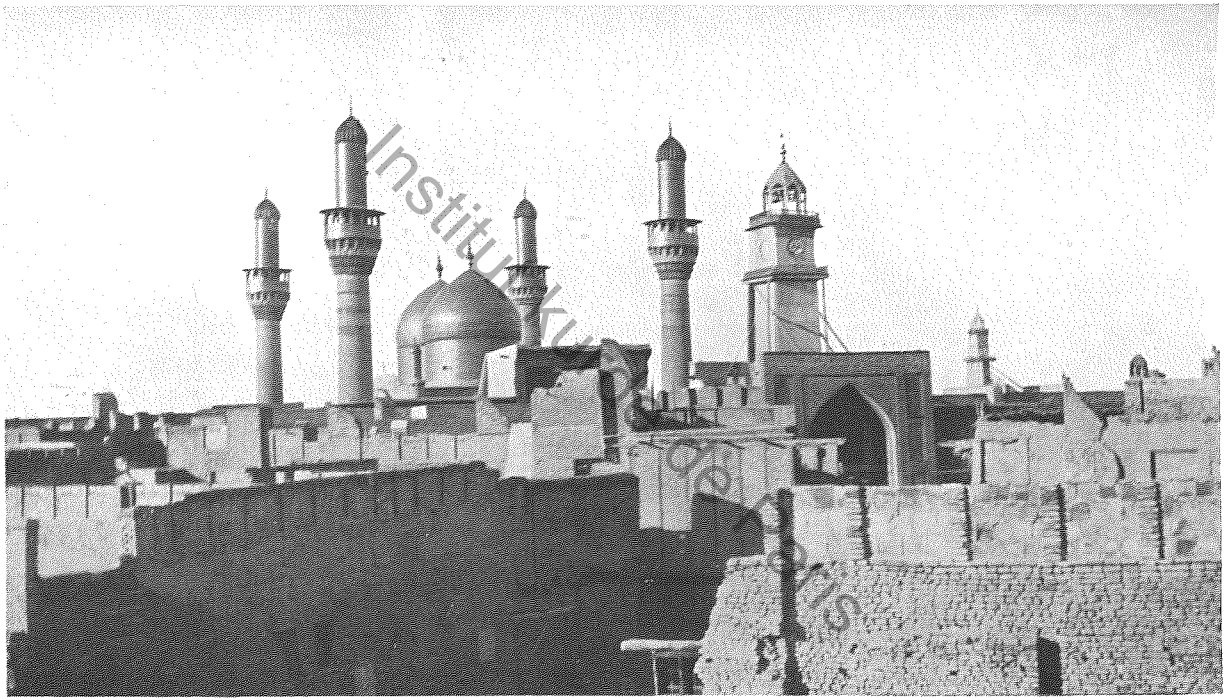
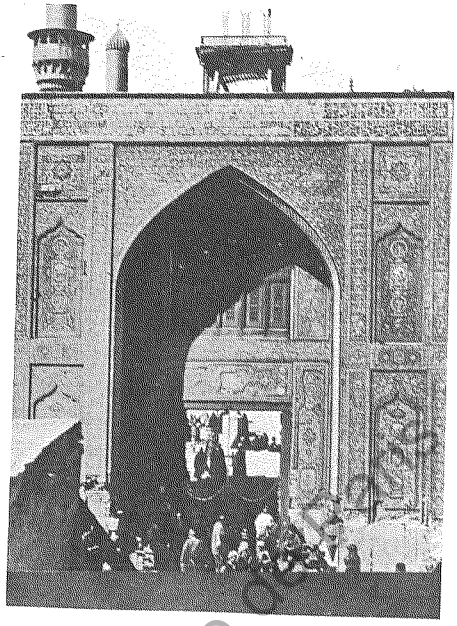
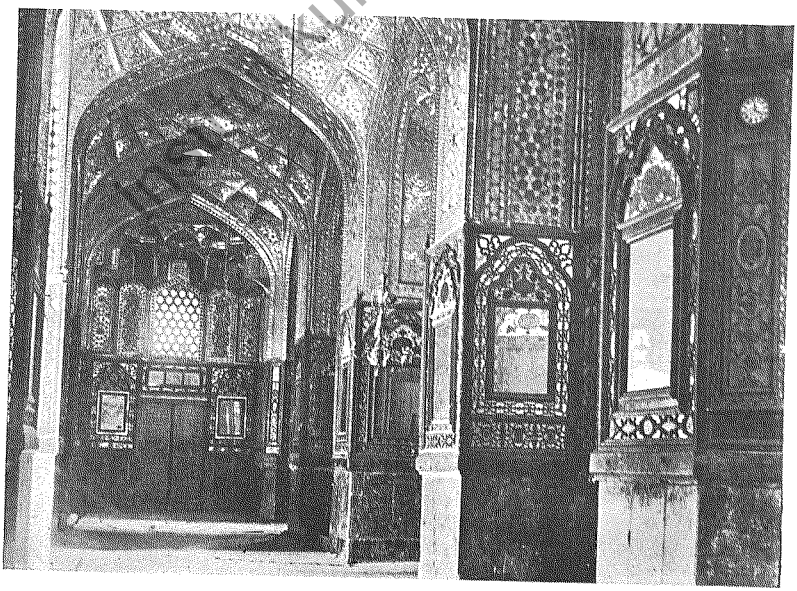


THE MOSQUE: KADHIMEIN.



A Gate of the Mosque Kadhimein.



Interior of Mosque of Kadhimein.

Miss Bell, in her *Amurath to Amurath*, has given a long and detailed description of these ruins, of the beautiful fragments of decoration, and the buildings still standing above ground, and Professor Herzfeld, the German archæologist, published a description of his valuable excavations therein.

From the Malwiyah one only sees a confused jumble, indications of buildings, with here the ruined Bet-el-Khalifa, or Mansur's Palace, with its standing marble arch, and in the distance what the local Arabs call Bet-el-'Ashiq (the lover's house). Here and there other fragments show themselves. But of the other palaces, whose splendour one reads in Arab history, the cost of which was said to have amounted to eight million sterling, there is but little left.

If one stands within the archway of the Bet-el-Khalifa, looking over the old river-bed towards the Bet-el-'Ashiq, local gossip will tell you a pretty story. A young man once had the luck to catch sight of the Caliph's daughter, walking in her father's garden beside the Tigris. She wore a gown of rose, or flame-colour, of texture so fine that the enraptured youth could see the gracefulness of the form beneath. He fell violently in love and had the temerity to ask her hand. The Caliph refused, and the lover fell into an extreme of love and longing. He used to swim the river by night that he might look upon the garden where she walked, or perhaps, who knows?—through the offices of a menial catch a glimpse of his lady herself. At last, however, they said, but did not tell me how, the consent of the father was gained, the pair wedded, and the bridegroom built for her pleasure the palace known as Bet-el-'Ashik, or Kasr-al-Ma'sh'uk—Palace of the Beloved. Legend says, too, that the bridge, the ruins of which still span the disused river-bed, was also built for this lady, so that she might walk dry-shod to her father's house.

History quarrels with this legend. The Kasr-al-Ma'sh'uk was built by Mu'tamid, son of Mutawakkil, the last of the Caliphs to live at Samarra. Mu'tamid did not end his days in el-'Ashik, but before his death in 892 A.D., moved his court back to old Baghdad. With him the glory of Samarra

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departed. One by one palaces, houses, streets, quarters, fell into ruin and disappeared, and one more dead city was added to the many dead cities of 'Iraq. For the Arab is always a nomad, moving his cities as he moves his tents. A village inhabited one year is deserted another, and the mud-bricks soon disintegrate and become part of the soil again. Of the first Baghdad hardly a brick remains.

Another landmark, seen when one stands on the ancient tower, is the tell, or mound, locally known as "Julian's tomb." I am afraid I have not heard what antiquarians think of it, but many local legends have gathered about it. One says that the mound was formed by Julian's cavalry above the body of their beloved leader—each soldier bringing a nose-bag full of earth. Another version says that Julian was such a "shaitan," or evil person, that they heaped the huge mound on him so as to "keep him down." Another story, discarding Julian altogether, tells of a wicked Pasha, who having extorted much grain beyond his dues, made it into a heap in the desert, covering it lightly with mud, Bedouin fashion, to preserve it. Allah, in his wrath at such avarice, turned all the grain into earth, and the Pasha breaking the crust of dried mud, found nothing left of his ill-gotten hoard.

It is scarcely odd that Julian's name should be linked to-day with this city, so fatal for him. It was near here that he died, and here that his retreating army, bearing the body of their young commander, crossed the Tigris in *keleks*, or rafts buoyed with skins, and many, attempting, in their armour, to imitate the natives and swim over on skins (a favourite method to-day), were drowned.

In many ways Samarra is a city of lost causes. The honours paid to Ali and his doomed race have alone kept Samarra the modern city alive. Its walls are only a hundred years old, built, I was informed, by a Persian lady, a pilgrim to the shrine, to protect it from marauders. The town has a clean bill of health, and that is to the credit of the town authorities, for not only does the pure desert air sweep through the streets, but the town itself is well-kept. I visited the

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quarters of the mounted police, and was surprised at the smartness of the men, the cleanliness and comfort of the stables, and the cared-for appearance of the horses. It is not so in every town in 'Iraq. The officer in command, a good-looking, smart 'Iraqi, whom we took by surprise, took us to his house to drink tea from the customary Persian glasses. Upon his roof-top, as upon many others in Samarra, storks had built their nest, choosing the wind-chimney, which conveys air to the deep sirdabs, or cellar-rooms, to which residents descend in hot weather. In Samarra, as in Najaf, these sirdabs are very deep, consisting in some cases of several subterranean storeys.

Of the gardens, so famed in story, in which the Caliphs and their myrmidons walked in, there is no trace. A thousand years have obliterated them. Patches, reclaimed from the desert by hand-plough, unirrigated but for rain, show the richness of the soil. But for these occasional strips of wheat and barley, all is desert and coarse grass as far as the eye can reach. A short distance further on, and the rich alluvial plain of 'Iraq proper ceases, and the table-land begins, which stretches up to the hills of the north.

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CHAPTER VI

KUFAH

KUFAH is a city with a curse on its head. It is the Judas of all the cities of 'Iraq, many times traitor; for ever since Kufah was founded in the first rousing days of Islam, its people have been braggarts, poor-spirited turncoats, quick to espouse but quicker to desert a cause. Pilgrims who visit Karbala and Kufah generally pay a visit to Kufah, for the sake of the great mosque which marks the spot where the Imam Ali was foully assassinated. It was the men of Kufah who lured Hoseyn, the son of Ali, across the desert with his family, only to desert him through fear when he bade them rally to his cause. In vain he reminded him of their oaths of allegiance, of their prayers that he should come—not a Kufan rallied to him, and Hoseyn was slain before their eyes.

Here, too, was Zeid, great-grandson of Ali, betrayed. The men of Kufah urged him in secret to rebel against the Ommayad Caliph, and with burning words pledged themselves to undo the shame that their grandfathers had laid on the city. Zeid listened, the plot came to light, and he put them to the test. His standard was raised in the city ere the troops of the Caliph had ridden in, but only two hundred joined the standard, and of these many melted away, craven-hearted. Those who had talked so big cowered in the mosques, and shut the gates against him. Zeid cried shame on them, urged them to redeem their honour, but in vain. He was slain, with the few that were faithful, while the Kufans huddled together in hiding, afraid to help him.

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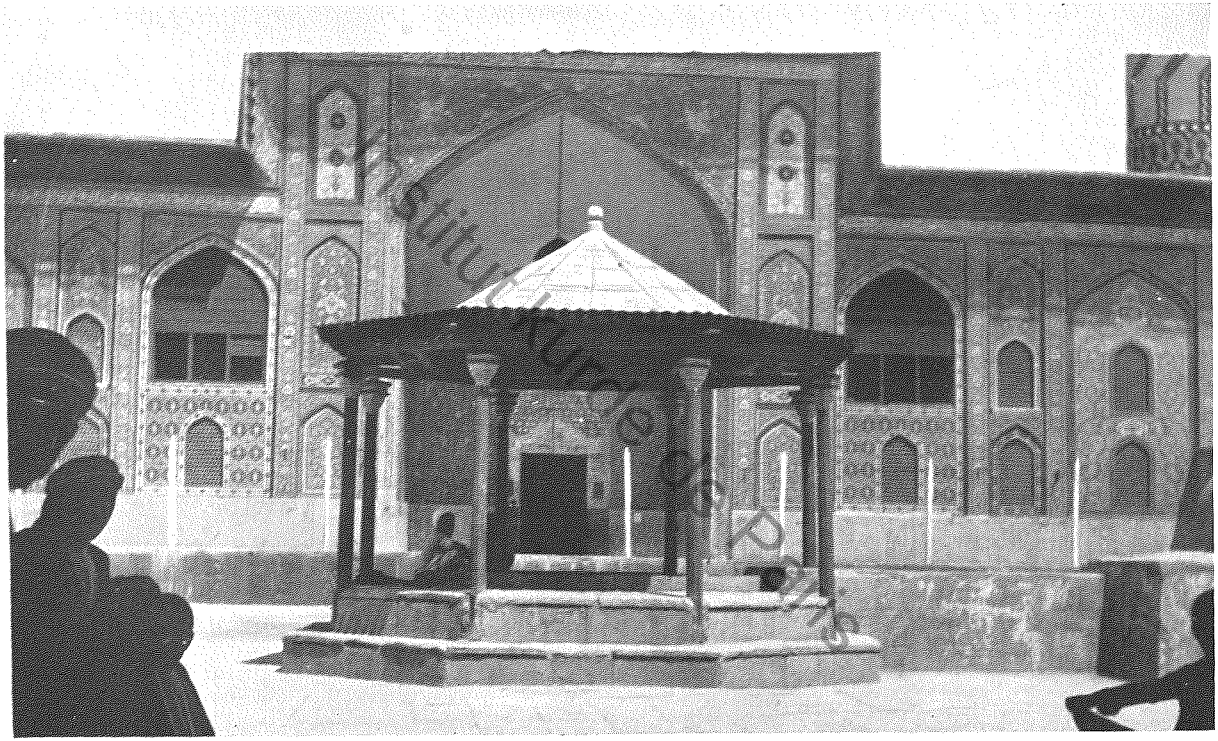
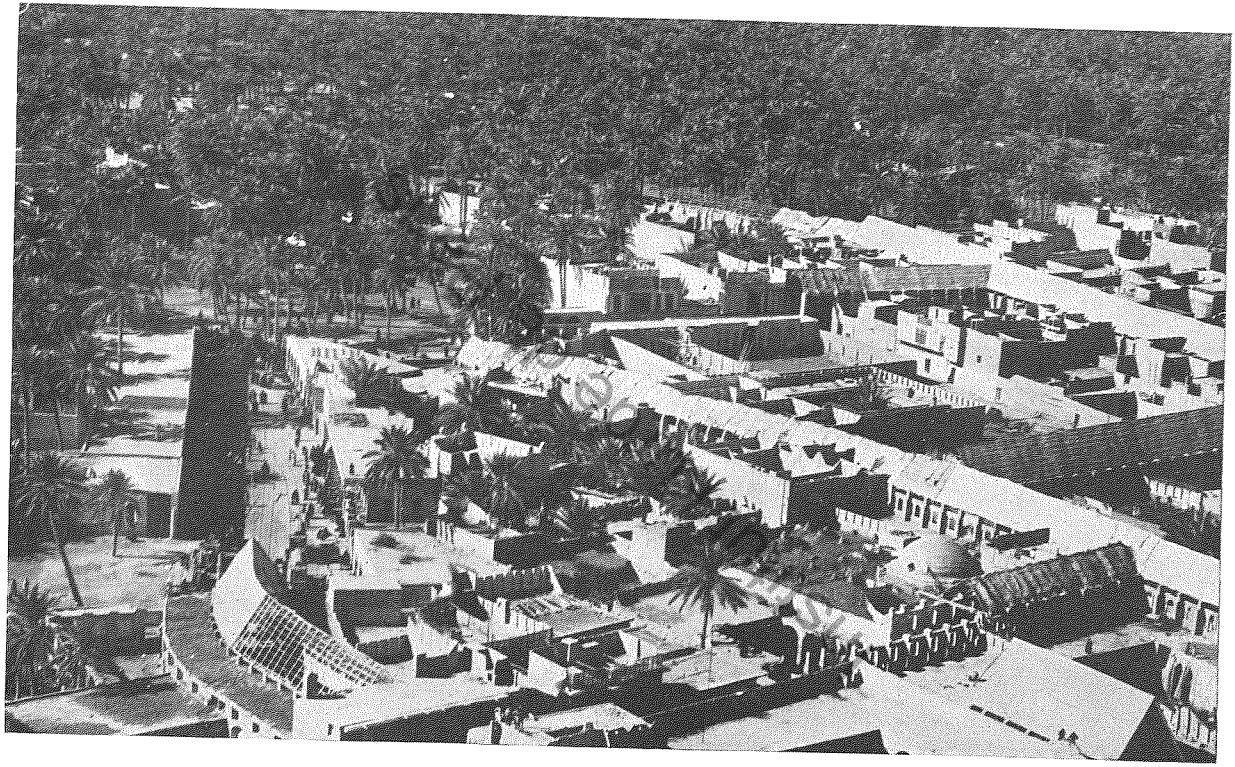


THE MOSQUE : SAMARRA.

(*See page* 51.)



KUFAH.

In spite of its history, so important in the story of Islam, modern Kufah has little character. It is united to Najaf by a rickety seven-mile horse-tramway across the desert, and its mediocrity is the more apparent because of its proximity to such a neighbour, for Najaf is a city of personality.

I visited Kufah twice, once from Hillah and once from Najaf, and on neither occasion did I feel attracted to it sufficiently to wish to see it again. The way from Najaf, by car, is to pick your way as you please across the desert, which is clean and flat as a board, and decorated here and there by clumps of the small blue iris. Behind lies Najaf, its golden dome winking and blinking above its long battlements, always beautiful to the eye. Here and there an ancient water-course is crossed, and on one of these the usual Arab story is told. Once, say the gossips, a beautiful girl lived at Aman. Many wished to marry her, but she gave preference to a man from Basrah. So highly did she prize herself, however, that she did not consent to marry him without a condition, and this was that he should dig a channel so that she might go a bride from Aman to Basrah by *bellum* (boat). Her suitor set to work, but the canal took eighty years to make, and the damsel was more than marriage-ripe when he bore her to his home. The moral seems to be contrary to that of the usual fairy-tale of the task-setting princess.

The great mosque of Kufah, more than a mile from the modern city, comes out into the desert, as it were, to meet the traveller. A fortress-like wall, with semi-circular bastions at intervals, surrounds it forbiddingly. Within there is large courtyard, in the centre of which is the actual shrine, and a grille which marks the exact spot where Ali was assassinated. The guardian, an amiable old man who wore a Babylonian ring of which he was proud, was so far from the usual fanaticism of Shiahs that he bade me stand in the gateway and take what photographs I pleased.

" Is it old ? " I asked.

" As old as Adam ! " he returned seriously.

As a matter of fact, the minaret of the mosque alone has

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any claim to antiquity, and the high walls, which look so mediæval, were built in modern times. I cannot answer for the well, for the legend has it that from this well sprang the waters which flooded the world at the time of Noah, the waters miraculously overflowing at the command of God for the destruction of mankind.

Near the great mosque, in the desert, a small shrine marks the site of the murdered Caliph's house, and the tombs of Muslim bin 'Aqil and Hanihin-Amwah nearby are also venerated by Shiahs.

The town has forsaken the mosque for material reasons, or it is possible that once the river was nearer, and that the town moved when it altered its course. For Kufah is a river-port, an Oriental Bideford, and lies amongst prosperous palm-gardens on the bank of the Euphrates which is crossed by a good bridge opposite the town. Along the town quays are moored high-beaked sailing ships, looking like Viking vessels or pirate craft, broad barges, light sailing ships and other river boats, bearing merchandise of all kinds. The town is open and airy. Before the rising of 1920 the bazaars, they saw, were picturesque, but they were bombed, and a new bazaar has arisen, very cool and clean, with its airy roof and well-built booths. It was between here and Hillah that the Manchesters were cut to pieces during the rising, and to this day bones of horses and other débris of battle tell the tale of the tragedy.

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I drank tea with the Mudir on his balcony overlooking the river. I think that he was afraid to entertain me inside his house for fear that my presence, a woman alone, might cause talk, but I may be wrong. He was a sad-faced young man, who knew little of the outside world. His principal claim to promotion seems to have been his relationship to the local *kaimakan*, a man of well-known anti-English proclivities, reported during the rising to have pulled down the British flag and stamped upon it. He has since been relieved of his duties, not for his open anti-British opinions, but because of a general unsuitability to his post.

CHAPTER VII

MOSQUES AND SHRINES OF BAGHDAD

But for the ancient walls and gates described elsewhere, which lie to the east of the modern city, Baghdad possesses but few traces and relics of her historical past. Houses only last a generation or two, and then fall. For this reason Baghdadis say that they build plenty of timber into their walls and roofs, for wood usually warns the occupants of a falling house by crackling beforehand, thus giving them time to escape. A complaint was made to a British builder that the houses he was building with bricks would not give this warning. One day King Faisal was passing by when a house bowed down and fell. He requested an official to enquire the name of the builder. The matter came in time to a Britisher, who, writing to the official, replied that he had made enquiries, but could not discover who was responsible. From evidences, he gathered that the architect must have been one Heath ibn Robin. He was requested to endeavour to trace the gentleman, but I do not think Mr. Heath Robinson has been called upon to answer the accusation.

The careful brickwork of the Abbasids has, however, survived the vandalism and decay of the centuries in several corners of Baghdad, above all in certain mosques and shrines.

At Exchange Square, at the right as one goes northward, there is an ancient arch near the entrance to the Shorja bazaar. This gateway and the minaret above it must have been photographed and sketched many times since the English came to Baghdad, for they are gracious and beautiful, whether seen with the yellow sunlight baking their old bricks,

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or by moonlight when the bazaar beside them is dark and empty.

They are part of the Mirjaniyah Mosque and Madrasah, built in the fourteenth century by one Mirjan ibn Abdallah ibn Abdul Rahman, el Auljati. The name tells us much. Mirjan is derived from the same root as *marjan*, coral, and by such fanciful names slaves were known. Mirjan was in all probability a Kurdish mameluke, freed by the Sultan Auljeyta or his family (the "el Auljati" tells us this). It is known that he rose from humble birth to become eventually the governor of Baghdad, and a wealthy man. He is buried in the mosque which he founded and has left a memory fragrant with piety and good works behind him.

Passing through the gateway, the buildings within are grouped about a courtyard and are two-storeyed, most of the upper storey containing the cells of students. The material used for building was the fine, hard-burnt brick of the period, into which inscriptions and decorations were carved, for the principal means of ornamentation are the incised inscriptions which run round the walls, both inside and out. These are wrought with the utmost care, for the art of the caligraphist is honoured in Arab countries where the Prophet's ban on the representation of living things has limited artistic efforts to two directions—geometrical designs and decorative lettering and writing. The eminent French Orientalist, M. Louis Massignon, has photographed and translated these inscriptions with great care in a valuable monograph he published on the mosques of Baghdad.

To the right as one enters is, first, the Quran school, in which little scholars drone away at the Holy Book, and next to it the mosque or Musallâ itself. The mosque is beautiful in its simplicity, the only ornamentation, except that of the mihrab, being, as I have said, the inscriptions. The wording of these is so characteristic that I transcribe a little, using M. Massignon's translation:

"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

"Glory to God, Who has helped his faithful obedient

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ones to raise to Him buildings for His worship, Who has inspired virtuous men to surround with walls the pillars of dwellings wherein obedience is practised, Who has purified the devotion of sovereigns in making them found monuments due to their generosity, Who has indicated to the powerful the roads which lead to good works, Who has gratified persons of wealth by this verse : ' by which their good actions blot out their faults,' Who has freely granted His pardon to all, men and women. God bless with prayer and peace the Prophet of His Mercy, Mahommed the Chosen, the best of His creatures, and also His Companions, lights in darkness, full moons in obscurity. Here are set forth the words of him who has need of the mercy of God, Mirjan ibn Abdallah ibn Abdul-rahman—may Allah change his ill deeds into meritorious actions !

" I, who have wandered about the world a space, spending my strength year-long, hither and thither, right and left, plunging into peril by land and sea, escaping mortal danger, cold and heat, until the day when glory ascending received me and helpful providence approached me. Then I understood that this vile world was the habitation of perishable things, I realised to what purpose all riches should be devoted, and what was the aim most befitting human effort, what, moreover, is the means of attaining the gates of Divine Mercy, goal of our wanderings, what the treasure for the Day when an account shall be demanded of us. The Prophet tells us—on Him be prayer and peace—' When a man is dead, his work is struck into nothingness and only three things live after him, perpetual alms, knowledge profitable to others and a pious son to pray for him.' Thus, perpetual alms is *waqf* [pious bequests]. Therefore I hurried the execution of my plan of charity, pure work, thought of good and peace. And I have undertaken the legal formalities necessary for the erection of this school named the Mirjaniyah, conjointly with its dependencies, under the reign of the most high sovereign who has mounted the steps which have led him to the " neighbours of God ' and into His Gardens, of him who now reposes

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in the highest abodes of His Paradise, Shaykh Hasan Nouyan —may God make resplendent his profession of faith ! "

Thus loquaciously the inscription runs on, giving lists of the shops, khans, lands, houses, gardens and so on from which revenue is to be obtained, ending with exhortations as to equitable and honest administration and payment of these Waqf funds. " For this place must remain the fatherland of the learned, the shelter of the pious," it goes on, and ends with curses on those who interfere with the administration or tamper with funds.

Does not this mixture of genuine piety, self-satisfaction and anxiety to stand as well in the next world as in this, give one a complete picture of the ex-slave turned wealthy potentate ? Having built his own fortunes in this world, this self-made man decides that his munificence and piety shall secure him a good place among the elect. His tomb stands in a chamber off the mosque, together with that of No'man el Alusi, a great scholar, who restored part of the mosque in 1888. The Turks, respecting the antiquity of this mosque, avoided cutting into the madrasah when they cut New Street, and left a corner projecting into the road.

On the side of the courtyard facing the mosque is the washing-place for the use of students and worshippers, and a stairway beside it leads to a library in which are some valuable books. This owes much to the care of the Alusi family. The library also contains astrolabes of Persian workmanship in brass, with plates for various towns, clinometers of wood with a hanging string, and a magnificent beaten copper candlestick of the fourteenth century bearing an inscription which says that it is the gift of the founder, Mirjan. A lovely window of incised brick should be noticed above the mosque. It belongs to a student's cell.

A narrow side-street, winding down into the heart of the city, brings one to another old mosque, the Aquliyah. Its founder was a man of different character from Mirjan, one Abdallah al Aquli, born in 1240 A.D., died 1327. He was a

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learned cadi, who taught at the Mustanseriyah School, and so great was his authority that his decisions in delicate cases of law and religion were universally accepted and adopted. He was buried, " at sunset, in the presence of the cadis," in his own house, which he had left for the maintenance of a sheikh and ten orphan children who were to be instructed in the Quran. The mosque has been much re-built, but the chamber in which is the beautiful carved wooden tomb of the founder reached through the courtyard in which a nebbak-tree grows, is probably little altered. The extremely ornamental Cufic inscription of the tomb defied translation for a long time, and is interesting as an example of the decorative uses of the Arabic alphabet. One panel seems older than the rest, and may have been taken from an earlier tomb. Translated, the inscription is this :

" 1. In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate ! Their Master gives them tidings of his mercy and bliss, and the gardens of enduring joys where they will abide eternally. (Quran ix. 21-22.)

" 2. In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate ! As for those who have said, ' Our master He is God,' and then have walked straight, fear will not exist for them, nor grief, for they will be admitted into Paradise and they will dwell there forever as the reward of their good works." (Quran xlvi. 12-13.) "

The Mustanseriyah School, in which this good Cadi taught, is best seen from the river, where its bold inscription runs along the length of the building, which is now used as a Customs House. This is, however, only part of the original building, which was once a flourishing madrasa, or school. Here students studied the sciences and theology of the day, discussed the heresies of the mystics, and learnt the subtleties of the Shara. Part of the building is now incorporated into the bazaars, and a wall with decorations may be seen as the back of a baker's shop. The brickwork is fine and good, and the repaired inscription runs :

" This has been made by order of the Commander of the

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Faithful, Khalif of the Master of Worlds, whose benefits and justice shelter like a grateful shade all lands, whose piety and virtue enfold the faithful, Abu Jafar al Mansur al Mostansir bi Allah. . . ."

Much laudatory matter follows, and then the ending:

"And this is in the year 630. God bless with his prayer and peace Our Lord Mahommed and his people, the good, the pure, and his kindred."

The same prince, Al Mostansir bi Allah, is credited with the building of another ancient mosque, now totally disappeared, the minaret of which, eaten by time, exposure and the irreverence of grey pigeons, stands in the Souk al Ghazl, one of the poorest quarters of Baghdad. Its inscription has become illegible. When the British first came to Baghdad, the military engineers proposed pulling down this ancient minaret, which looked as if it could scarcely survive a gale. But the offer was declined in the belief that the old tower could weather out a few more years after all the centuries, and the belief has justified itself. The engineers were permitted to consolidate the base.

M. Massignon, as well as Lestrange, thinks that the mosque of which this was originally a part was possibly that of the vast palace of the Abbasids, the site of which is now overgrown by a mass of poor houses, by a souk and by a modern mosque. There are records of an inscription on a door adjacent, now disappeared, bearing the date 633, that is to say, 1235 A.D., making it of the same date as the Mustanseriyah. But this does not prove that the minaret was not built a good deal earlier, as its Cufic inscription would seem to indicate.

Across the river is a group of most interesting shrines, bearing names celebrated in the history of the holy men of Baghdad. Crossing the Maude Bridge, and turning to the right by the railway station into the desert, and following the Kadhimein road, one comes after about a mile to the city of the dead, which was a city of the dead even in the days of the first Baghdad. Low hills are covered with tombs, with here

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and there palm-trees for shade, here and there the dome or shrine erected over a saint or great man.

Here is the curious cone-like tower known as the tomb of the Sitt Zobeydah, though that celebrated Arab wife of Harun al Rashid, through whose machinations the Barmecides owed their downfall and betrayal, was in all probability buried elsewhere. This tomb has a mosque beside it, clustered about by graves and palm-trees, and both were repaired towards the end of the nineteenth century by the son-in-law of the Sultan Abd ul Hamid, the mosque having fallen into complete ruin.

A quarter of a mile further on, going towards Akkerkuf, three other shrines are reached, all three much visited by women, who make petitions and vows to the holy men interred here. The first is that of the celebrated Sheikh Jonayd, the great mystic who lived in Baghdad at the beginning of the tenth century, wore the woollen robe of the ascetic, and instructed many disciples in the mysteries of Allah. He is accused by some of pantheism, but he contrived to die within the confines of Orthodoxy, unlike his pupil, Mansur al Hallaj. I have described in Chapter XVIII. the wonder-working well and tomb which are found in this shrine.

A[1] few feet away Al Bahlul has a shrine, enclosed by a courtyard in which some trees throw a pleasant shade. I think that the present building is entirely modern, but a fourteenth century edifice was seen on the site by Niebuhr, who transcribed an inscription over the door, "This is the tomb of the Sultan of supreme ecstatics, whose 'Me' was annihilated in God."

Al Bahlul, or Al Majnun (the Demented One) was the nickname of a mystic named Wahb ibn 'Amr al Kufi. His tomb is much visited by women, who build in the courtyard small houses of stone and brick in token of matters in which they have prayed for his intercession. The doors of all these shrines are plastered with henna, gift of grateful visitants.

Just beyond Bahlul's tomb is the tomb of Joshua. This

[1] *See* Chapter XIX.

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is, of course, not the great Joshua, but one Yousha, a Jewish Rabbi of some repute who was buried here. Jews and Moslems alike, misled by the name, reverence the shrine as the tomb of Joshua the Patriarch. There is a constant dispute as to the ownership of the shrine, which is now in a tumbledown condition. The Jews at one time buried their dead here, and used the building as a synagogue, but the Moslems constantly disputed their right, and in 1885 appealed to the Sultan of Turkey, who granted an *iradé* in favour of the Mahommedans. The Jews were turned out, dead Jews were exhumed and their bodies thrown out into the desert (whence pious Jews transferred them to the Jewish cemetery), and the synagogue made a mosque. At the coming of the British the Jews again made an effort to enforce their rights. They were not backed by the British authorities, as far as I know, but the place now is practically deserted, and will soon fall into ruin, though pilgrims resort to it still.

Following the road which country people take into the town of Baghdad from this point, one reaches a mass of tombs, amongst which the blue dome of the shrine of another mediæval mystic, Sheikh Ma'ruf al Karkhi, shows amidst the palms. It is reached through an avenue of graves, and the portal is plentifully besmeared with henna. It is said that within there are some interesting features in this shrine, which, like the Aquliyah, was built about the house of the saint, but I must confess to having only gazed at it from without. Nor was I more fortunate at the domed shrine of Mansur al Hallaj, whose churlish guardian refused me admittance to the tomb, or rather, cenotaph, for very little remained of the body after his martyrdom. This tomb is not far from Sheikh Ma'ruf, close beside the Isolation Hospital.

Of all the mystics of Islam, Al Hallaj was, perhaps, the most romantic and attractive figure, and he is reverenced in distant countries—Afghanistan, Persia and India—from whence pilgrims come to visit his shrine. It is said that after his martyrdom devoted disciples collected his ashes from the river into which they were thrown, and placed them here,

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whence they continued to work miracles of healing and grace.

Mansur al Hallaj, the Carder, was of Persian extraction. His father was a carder of cotton, and he himself seems to have had skill in manipulating the carder's bow; but the nickname was gained because he carded men's consciences, just as the carder flocks cotton. He adopted the religious life early, gave himself up to asceticism, and donned the woollen robe of the mystic (hence called the Sufi), finally becoming a pupil of the celebrated Sheikh Jonayd in Baghdad.

Sheikh Jonayd early recognised the dangerous qualities of his disciple's mind, and more than one reproof is recorded. Where Sheikh Jonayd crawled in humiliation, Hallaj's spirit soared. To his mind, love of God became union with the Beloved, the mystic union of the soul with its Maker. "In my jebbah" (mantle), he is reported to have said, "there is only God!"

His mystic utterances, full of ecstasy, soon gave umbrage to his more literal hearers. The orthodox murmured, "This man talks sacrilegiously, he makes himself God!" He worked miracles—his enemies said by leger-de-main—to impress the ignorant; his fame travelled far and wide. He was accused of heresy, captured, endured a long imprisonment and trial which lasted over many years, and was finally condemned to death for heresy and blasphemy. The execution took place by the bridge of boats over the Tigris, he was beaten (some say crucified), mutilated, and finally beheaded and burnt, his remains being thrown into the Tigris. Legend says that the waters of the Tigris began to swell in flood, and that the ashes as they floated down murmured the words of the mystic, "Ana el Hagg!" (I am the Truth). Fearful, they sought the servant and disciple of the saint, who threw his master's woollen robe on the stream so that the waters subsided, while the holy remains were reverently gathered by the faithful.[1]

The Yazidis reverence Mansur al Hallaj. They have a

[1] See M. Massignon's recently-published monograph on Al Hallaj.

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legend that when al Hallaj's head was cut off and thrown into the river, his soul flew over the water, and it happened by chance that when Mansur's sister went to the river to fill her jar, her brother's soul hid in the jar, though she knew nothing of it. On her return, feeling thirsty, she drank of the water in the jar. Nine months afterwards she gave birth to a son, who exactly resembled her brother, and was in reality a re-incarnation of his spirit. Since then Yazidis never use a jar or water-pot with a narrow neck, because when the water gurgles out it sounds like the gurgles caused in the water as the head of Mansur sank in it.

Somehow these ignorant devil-worshippers see in the exponents of the love of God a queer affinity of spirit, for they pay reverence to all the mystics, beginning with their greatest saint Sheikh Adi.

There are yet two other great Sunni shrines in Baghdad. One is at the suburb of Mu'adham, some three miles beyond the north gate of the city. Just beyond half-way, near the Sporting Club, is the poor little tomb of another mystic, Bishr al Hafi, or Bishr the Barefoot, who died in 840 A.D., a Moslem St. Francis, who loved the poor and practised austerities.

At Mu'adham is buried a great figure in the history of Islam, Abu Hanifa, the jurist, founder of the Hanefite rite and code of law. In the days of Baghdad's greatness this tomb was in the ancient cemetery of Khayzoran or Cemetery of the Koreysh. The shrine and mosque were built by the Seljuk Vizier, Sharaf al Molk abu Sa'd al Khwarizmi, in 1066 A.D., but unfortunately none of this early structure remains, unless it be a small turret in the madrasah. The shrine is celebrated, and is visited by many, for wonders have been worked at the last resting-place of the father of Moslem jurisprudence, who is supposed still to take a paternal interest in the welfare of his people.

The village of Mu'adham is a pleasant spot, and wealthy people have summer-houses and gardens here. One garden in particular, in which we have several times drunk tea with its owner, a hospitable merchant of Baghdad, is a paradise

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in spring, with its carnations of every hue, its double stocks, its roses, lavender, honeysuckle, violets, verbena, jessamine, and a host of other flowers. It is watered from the river, and is a riot of colour and scent, over which the heavier odours of the orange-blossom and shaddock-bloom brood like a benediction, while full-throated doves coo unceasingly in the shade.

The shrine of Abu Hanifa, with its blue dome, whiskered with grass, and its tiled minaret, dominates the village. We saw a young student just within the precincts of the madrasah, which we visited, occupied with binding his own book; for money is scarce with these students, and their life is disciplined, hard and simple. One of them took us to the upper storey and showed us the dormitories, which are spotlessly clean and neat. Next we visited the various class-rooms, and caught sight of one fatherly tubanned divine, a Hajji, a Father O'Flynn for wit, it is said, and much beloved by his pupils. The highest class is often unattended, because the second means standard of attainment so high that the students are engaged as teachers, divines, and so forth, before they enter their final studies. The subjects taught are mathematics, physics, logic, philosphy, and above all, religion and jurisprudence.[1]

From the madrasah we walked into the mosque, where, before leaving the courtyard, one, of course, removes one's shoes before entering. The Killidar, or guardian of the mosque, a kind and dignified Moslem of middle age, accompanied us. The columns which support the mosque are painted blue, and there is much beautiful old tiling; some of the carpets, too, must be at least two hundred years old, ragged and tattered and moth-eaten, but exquisite in colour, design and execution. Then, as a favour, we were shown the

[1] The Madrasah of Abu Hanifa will soon be incorporated in the new Arab College which is being built beside the Mu'adham road. This will be primarily a religious college, but will also have faculties of medicine, technical arts, and science, the students intermingling in a very salutary intercourse. The building, with its lecture-halls, laboratories, and class-rooms, promises to be a fine one, and King Faisal has taken a great interest in its construction.

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tomb itself, which stands in a separate chamber. The door is of pure beaten silver, and within, the tomb is surrounded by a grille of silver and carved wood. The Killidar displayed at the same time a valuable Quran, bound in solid gold and encrusted with diamonds, the gift of the notorious Enver Pasha; also two beautifully-chased silver candlesticks of great size, presented by the mother of a Turkish Sultan.

The other renowned Sunni shrine is in Baghdad itself, that of the great Sheikh Abdul Kader el Gilani, whose name is celebrated wherever the muezzin calls to prayer, from furthest India to Moslem China. This most celebrated of mystics was born towards the end of the eleventh century of the Christian era, and died in 1166. He was born near the Caspian Sea, but when quite young came to Baghdad, where, having adopted the woollen robe of the mystic, he soon excelled his masters in the practice of virtue, asceticism, and doctrine, and was credited with the power of working miracles. Disciples flocked to him, and the order of the Kaderiyya, which he founded, exists to-day, an order akin to the Eissowa in Tunisia, or to the various orders of Darwishes in Turkey. Like the darwishes and Eissowa, the brethren of the order work themselves into a state of trance by certain physical exercises and deprivations, and the ceremonies of initiation, of which I hope to write in future volume, are extremely interesting.

The family of Abd el Kader live in Baghdad. The offerings of centuries have made them immensely wealthy, and the head of the family, the Naqib of Baghdad, for some time held office as Prime Minister in the Arab Government. His irreproachable personal character and the prestige which he enjoyed on account of his saintly birth, lent weight and dignity to the Government which he represented, and in spite of his great age, he rendered keen and valuable assistance to the Government. The family of the Naqib is celebrated for a mental peculiarity, they carry cleanliness to a point of mania. One relative of the Naqib is said to give her furniture a weekly bath, and it is Baghdad gossip that the Naqib always washes

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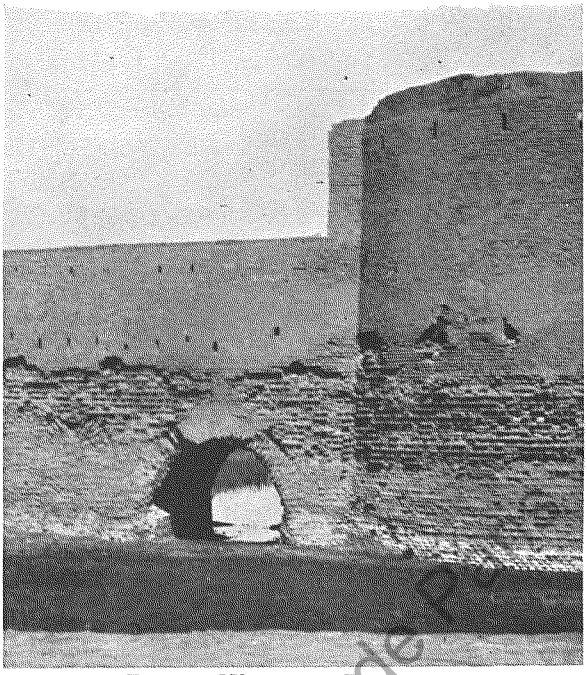

BAB-EL-WASTANI, BAGHDAD.

(*See page* 128.)



THE MOSQUE OF ABD EL KADER EL GILANI: BAGHDAD.

(*See page* 71.)

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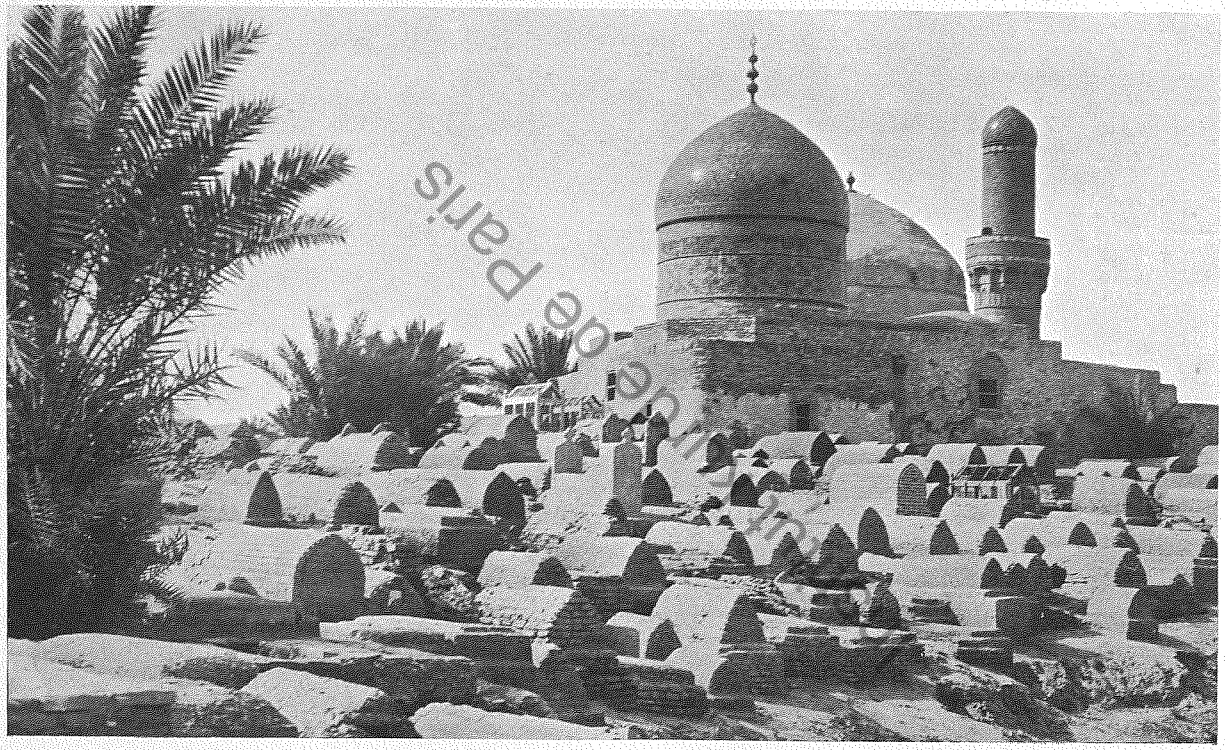

TOMB OF SHEIKH MA'RUF AL KARKHI.

(*See page* 66.)

and changes his clothes if he comes into bodily contact with a stranger, so as to get rid of the polluting touch.

The shrine and mosque of Abd-el-Kader el Gilani is near the Bab-esh-Sheikh (the Sheikh is Abd-el Kader), in the city of Baghdad. Over the door are verses supposed to have been written by the great sheikh himself,

"The sun of the ancients has passed, but our sun will never descend from the firmament on high.
"I am the nightingale of joys, which fills souls with gaiety; I am the silver falcon in the heights of the sky."

Abd el Kadir was known as the "Baz al Ashhab," the Silvered Falcon, the poetical Arab mind seeing in his soaring soul catching the rays of the Sun of suns on its silvery plumage, a likeness to the falcon shining aloft in the sunlight.

Europeans do not usually enter this mosque, but, sheltered by an aba and face-veil and accompanied by a Moslem friend, I made my way one day into the interior. The outer court-yard of the mosque is very large, and contains, beside the usual washing-place, an open-air mosalla, or praying-place, raised like a platform, and enclosed by a railing. In one corner of this stands a clock-tower, which chimes all the quarters. Around the courtyard are recesses containing rooms for the use of hodjas, hangers-on, pilgrims and others, an upper storey being entirely devoted to pilgrims, who get the rooms rent-free for the period of their stay. Hence the courtyard has a pleasantly domestic air.

We sat on a square of matting waiting for the attendant to open the tomb, and watched a man kindle a fire in the courtyard and kill a fowl to cook upon it; saw a woman hang out some clothes to dry, and a congregation of some five hungry cats begging from a cake-seller who wandered about peddling his wares. Close by, in the hot sunshine, an old man read the Quran to himself in a sing-song voice, his eyes never lifted from the page. Across the yard a number of small boys sat in a Quran school, the master being invisible. None had books, but they droned away in chorus, their eyes

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straying in all directions as they got the Holy Book by rote. Beggars sat and asked alms from those who entered ; a darwish, whose hair was long and matted and clothes in rags, squatted with his begging-bowl in somnolent contemplation. Above, the blue dome of the mosque lay like a jewel against the flower-blue sky, and grey pigeons circled and wheeled and settled struttingly on the pavement.

Tired of waiting, we bought some pickles steeped in vinegar and some pastries from some of the peddling boys who strolled about crying their wares, and distributed them to the little boys of the Quran school, some of whom began to fight over the tasty morsels, when the schoolmaster appeared and cuffed them into order.

At last we entered the long antechamber of the mosque, painted blue and white and laid with matting, left our shoes in the care of a small boy, and followed the guardian of the tomb as he unlocked the door and admitted us. The door to the sanctuary is of wood, most richly carved, and I afterwards learnt was an Indian gift to the shrine, as were the three other doors which, standing parallel to that of the shrine, admit worshippers into the three praying places, Shafite, Hanefite and Hanbalite, into which the mosque is divided; for each sect has its separate section, so that prayers can be said according to the different rites. These mosques within the mosque are richly carpeted.

Within the sanctuary, an anteroom, or *tarma*, leads into the chamber, which contains the tomb itself, enclosed in a heavy, cage-like, solid silver grille. The tomb is covered with drapery, a large green turban being placed at one end, and above it hangs a silken canopy. Around the top of the silver grille is an inscription from the Quran. A couple of glass candelbra, and the inevitable ostrich eggs depending from them, are the only ornaments apart from the rich carpets and the grille.

My companion knelt and said a Fatihah. I knelt likewise, and then we went out past a row of extended hands, beginning with the guardians, for one is expected to be generous when on a pilgrimage to so celebrated a shrine. Worship is

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a very individual thing in these mosques apart from the hours of organised prayer. I watched an old blind man mumbling long and piously, but a second blind man dropped down beside him and the two were soon cracking some quiet joke.

The mosque is not very ancient, and is in good condition. Most of the present structure dates from the eighteenth century, when the Sultan Murad rebuilt it, but when at some recent period repairs were being done to the dome, they found a date proving that part of Suleyman the Magnificent's mosque of the sixteenth century was still standing. Few Moslems have much respect for the past, unless for reasons of piety, and one sighs over the vandalism which has left so little of mediæval Baghdad, and would sooner pull down than repair an ancient monument.

I have not touched yet upon the more modern mosques of Baghdad, though some of these, such as the Asafiyah, the Haidar Khaneh Mosque, the Ahmadiyah, which dominates the north of the town, and the Serai Mosque, where the king prays every Friday, lend Baghdad much of its beauty with their noble blue domes, and their minarets gay with the tile-maker's art. It is worth recording that, from the artist's point of view, the modern mosque carries out the old traditions, and is fair to look upon with its simple lines of brick masonry, its cool, wide spaces and sobriety of decoration.

In 'Iraq, religion has proved a worthy custodian of beauty, and the tawdry and meretricious does not enter her courts. A Scotsman is Adviser to the Minister of Waqf (or Pious Bequests), and he keeps a jealous eye over the administration of funds, seeing to it that mosques and shrines are kept in proper repair, and that such building as is undertaken may be carried out in the old spirit and with the old traditions. He has need of no architect, for the Arab builder, working like his forefathers, and the birds, according to ancient rules and instincts, produces something which is more characteristic of the country than a European architect could design and, if he only takes the trouble to do his work properly, quite suitable for its purpose.

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CHAPTER VIII

ANCIENT MONASTERIES AND EARLY SAINTS

CHRISTIANITY in 'Iraq may claim proudly equal age with its sister church of Rome; and, secluded from contact with the more sophisticated West, retains much of the simplicity and fervour of the earlier ages of the faith. Its history is the history of one long persecution. Hardly freed from the opposition of the priests of Bel and Ishtar, its newly-won prosperity was threatened by the Moslem. When the fierce tide of Islam swept over 'Iraq and Kurdistan, Christianity bowed its head. Churches were converted into mosques, tribes which had been more or less Christian, embraced the faith of the Prophet. A persecuted religion it has been ever since, its roll of martyrs swelled only lately by the massacres of Christians which took place during the war.

In spite of all, there are ancient sites upon which worship has been carried on for over a thousand years, and monasteries which have held men devoted to the contemplative life since the days when Julian the Apostate marched, full of ardent dreams, to re-establish dying paganism in the land of the Two Rivers. More, there are men in whose veins there flows the blood of the earliest converts in the history of Christendom.

Tradition says that the apostles Peter, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Judas the son of James, and Thaddæus first preached the Gospel in the land where the temple ziggurat raised its head above the rolling plain; and even in the first century after Christ the Persian government was troubled by the growth of the new faith. Sects are many to-day in Mesopotamia, the Jacobites, the Nestorians, the Syrian and

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Armenian communities, the Greeks and the rest. Each barely tolerates the existence of the other, and each has its hierarchy of church dignitaries: patriarchs of reverend appearance—beautiful to the eye in their puce and vermilion, in their church jewels and officiating robes—archbishops, bishops, monsignors of various grades, black-robed, black-bearded priests looking strangely Assyrian with their long hair and high stiff hats, fathers of Catholic orders in the robes of their various fraternities, monks, sisters and black-clad aspirants for priesthood.

But it is not of modern Christianity in 'Iraq that I am writing, but of two ancient monasteries which hold embalmed the spirit of the earlier ages, both of them fallen upon evil days, both of them romantically remote from the life of cities and civilisation.

To visit the one I left Mosul one October day, about seven of the morning, with two companions, one a Chaldæan priest. The wind blew sharply from the Kurdish hills as we crossed the pontoon bridge across the Tigris and, turning north under the mound of Kuyunjik, beneath which lie buried the palaces of ancient Nineveh, we followed the road to Tel Keyf. This Chaldæan village has a reputation throughout Mesopotamia. Its women are celebrated for their beauty and picturesque dress, and not without reason, for their headdress, looped with gold coins, coral, blue glass, amber and other beads, is striking and pretty. The men are equally notorious for their love of strong drink. The village sends many emigrants to America, but what the Tel Keyfi does in a dry country I cannot think, for on Sunday, after he has been to Mass with his pretty women-folk, he settles down to soak on arak and local-grown wine, and attains a blissful state of fuddle-headedness which lasts until he wakes on Monday morning.

A notable of the village entertained us with a beverage which he said was sacramental wine served in none-too-clean glasses, but the hospitality was genuine, and his pretty wife peeped at us shyly as we sat in the *diwan*.

They say that in Tel Keyf women work while men drink,

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but I am able to gainsay this, as on the several occasions on which I visited the village the men were industrious enough, winnowing the corn, which was heaped in large mounds outside the village, grinding gypsum, or carrying stones for building, for Tel Keyf is a prosperous place with great ambitions. It talks of collecting money to have a proper water supply laid on. Now, all the water is drawn from wells by the women, and borne on their heads to their homes. As the principal well is in a cemetery, half-way down a hillside, it would seem that a change might benefit the health of the village. Tel Keyf was obscured by a cloud of chaff, for the grain is separated by throwing it into the air, where the wind catches the chaff and blows it away, and the next village was similarly veiled.

One gathers an idea of the richness of the country from the enormous quantities of grain that are heaped round each village of the district. For miles and miles, as one follows the uneven track, one sees swelling down-land on either side, chequered like Salisbury plain with cultivation: patches of fallow, patches of yellow, patches of brown. The long drought of summer banishes the green and flowers from the rich soil; but the first autumn rain works a miracle, and in springtime the shallow hills laugh and sing with rich verdure and masses of wild flowers.

The name of the second village is Batnai, or House of Zeal, and soon after leaving it we made a détour to visit Mar Ubraha, a monastery which is being rebuilt on the site of an ancient foundation dating from the seventh century. Of the original monastery nothing but the well was left. From the flat roof of the modern building we had a wonderful view in the clear autumn atmosphere of the ocean-like plain, and of Jebel Maklub, rising sheer and sharp to the south-east, its sides pink and amethyst; while before us on the road we had to travel was the wall of hills, behind which the mountain country of Kurdistan was hidden. We regained the high-road and proceeded to a third Christian village, Tel Uskof. Here again we stopped to pay our respects to the village priest, a kindly white-haired old man, who gave us tea in the usual *istikan*, or small glasses,

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and talked, knowing we were going into Yazidi country, of some of his experience of this strange people. Such a priest occupies much the same position as the *curé* in a small French village. His people come to him in every kind of difficulty, and he finds himself called upon to decide quarrels, disputes about land or money which never reach the courts, family differences and knotty domestic problems.

The hills grew higher as we left Tel Uskof behind, and sometimes we passed a mountain stream, abounding in fish and crabs, making the valley green in which it ran; sometimes a flat-roofed village perched on the top of a hill. These mound-like hills continued until we were within sight of Al Kosh. Al Kosh lies in the shelter of the foot-hills of the Kurdish highlands, which rise abruptly into the sky like a wall. The country reminded me of hill-country in Sicily. Spurges grew in profusion, as above Catania, and in spring the land, like Sicily, is tapestried with wild flowers of every variety. The grey village of Al Kosh, within its walls, is almost invisible as it clings to the grey rock. About a mile from it lies the monastery of Al Kosh, white and neat and surrounded by vineyards.

The village is celebrated because it once produced and still holds the sepulchre of a prophet—Nahum, the Al Koshite. We picked our way on foot up narrow streets, or rather stony gulleys, until we came to his tomb. This is in the charge of a Jewish custodian, and resembles the tomb of any Mahommedan saint, but on the tomb lies a parchment roll upon which is inscribed in Hebrew the Book of Nahum. The custodian pointed out the words, "the Koshite," in the roll, and it does seem that this must be the Al Kosh which gave birth to the prophet rather than the Syrian Al Kosh, because of its nearness to Nineveh, against which so many of the prophecies were launched.

The local clergy acted as our guides, and showed us with pride their church, built of grey marble from local quarries—a fine, plain, simple structure, solidly built, and dignified of outline, wholly individual and characteristic of all the

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architecture of the district. We lunched with the nuns of the place, good-tempered kindly women who carry on a school for girls. I do not think that the children learn much more than a little reading, sewing and manners; still, the discipline is salutary. The nuns are Chaldæans, and wear a curious black garb which reminds one of mediæval Flemish portraits. Lunch, an excellent *pilau* followed by juicy mountain-grapes, eaten and digested, we went on over an execrable road to the monastery. For the benefit of others I may mention that the road approaching the village is atrocious, boulders and stones lying haphazard in the rocky way, and where the track skirts ravines it is not without danger. Our tyres were badly cut.

The monastery lay on a slight eminence, and was enclosed by walls of defence. Within the gateway we were received by the Father Superior and some monks of the place, who begged us to rest and drink tea before setting off again.

The monastery consists of three communicating quadrangles, the rooms and offices grouped, like those of an Oxford college, about an open space in the middle. The first contains guests' quarters and various offices, while adjoining it outside are sheep-yards and cattle-stalls; the second has a fine church on one side and the cells of the brothers on the others. Here we saw an aged brother whose day-long occupation is carving beads for rosaries. His spectacled face was cheerful and child-like; indeed, there was an air of joviality and good-humour about these monks which seemed to prove that their lives were thoroughly congenial, in spite of the barrenness of their cells and the simplicity of their lives. The third quadrangle is devoted to novices.

All the buildings are two-storeyed. From roof and windows there was a panorama of rolling downs and wide plains, and the air was the clean, pure air of the hill-country. Here the religious live simple, hard, industrious lives, and there was not an unhealthy-looking man amongst them. That night—for I slept little—I heard them trooping off, long before daylight, to chant in their chapel—the minor, barbarous chant of the Asiatic churches. Things have changed so little

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in this land that one is ready to believe that priests of Bel and Ishtar intoned their hymns to similar cadences.

We were not yet at the end of our pilgrimage. The monastery of Al Kosh is but a modern institution, and its community once inhabited the ancient eyrie high above us, to which we were bound. Steep crags towered up abruptly to the north of the monastery, and on the very face of the rock, in a mountain gorge, we could see a reddish-looking building, which appeared to cling to the face of the precipice or form part of it. Mules with gaily-embroidered saddles were ordered for us, and our hosts sped us on our way to Rabban Hormuzd, one of the oldest Christian monuments in this ancient land.

The road was tortuous and steep, trying even to the agile mule of the country. Every turn of the mountain path, as we crept up and into the gorge, increased the length and breadth of the wonderful view to the south, whilst above us the marten's nest of a retreat which was our goal, grew gradually more defined. Black spots on the mountainside were pointed out as hermits' cells, for the community lived a life of Thebaid solitariness in this wonderful amphitheatre of rugged rock, and the face of the mountain is honeycombed with caves and cells, more like the dwellings of conies or foxes than of lonely men devoted to a life of religion. Roughly-cut steps, perilous paths and narrow terraces afforded communication between the solitary and his fellows, for even anchorites bent on mortification of the flesh must eat and drink, and, moreover, at certain times in the day the brothers met for praise and prayer in the church. Many of the terraces had fallen away, broken by the rush of winter torrents, and some of the cells had crumbled off and tumbled down below.

After about an hour we were near enough to see figures climbing up a stair to the roof of one of the buildings, and soon we discerned that one of these was examining the newcomers with a pair of field-glasses. The monastery dogs, faithful guardians of the unprotected monks, gave tongue,

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their voices echoing and re-echoing in the recesses of mountain and ravine. In days of persecution and violence, which may at any time return, the barking of the dogs must cause the brothers to scrutinise anxiously the approach of strangers, for though the road is so steep and narrow and takes such sharp turns that it would be easy to defend the place against attack, it could easily be reduced by starvation, and it is better policy to open the door, even to an enemy.

The final approach to the gate is over rough paving-stones. Here we dismounted, being met at the entrance by a servant, who relieved us of our tired beasts and led us up steps to the flat roof of the monastery, where the superior, a gentle old man with smiling eyes, received us, and made us sit down by pots of sweet-smelling herbs while cigarettes and good home-made wine were brought.

It was a pleasant place in which to rest in the afternoon sun and listen to the prior's hospitable talk. From the terrace one may gaze out over the miles and miles of rolling plain which lie beyond the gorge, or peep dizzily down at the depths beneath. Truly the monks must often have thought, as they looked at the green plains framed by the wild beauty of the ravine, of the temptation of Christ by the Evil One, for never can the world look fairer or more tempting than when seen from such an eagle's nest as this. The craggy path up which we had picked our way curled down below us ; in spring it must be bordered by many mountain flowers. Below the monastery of Al Kosh could be seen, a miniature thing, and then far and wide the low hills and fertile fields of the rich plains, with Jebel Maklub and distant heights against the horizon ; blue against blue, purple shadow against purple shadow.

Presently tea, flat loaves, mountain-honey and grapes were brought, and while we ate, the superior told us the history of the monastery and its people, now so few.

When Rich visited Rabban Hormuzd, in the early part of the nineteenth century, there were fifty monks in residence, now there are only four. Originally, the Superior told us,

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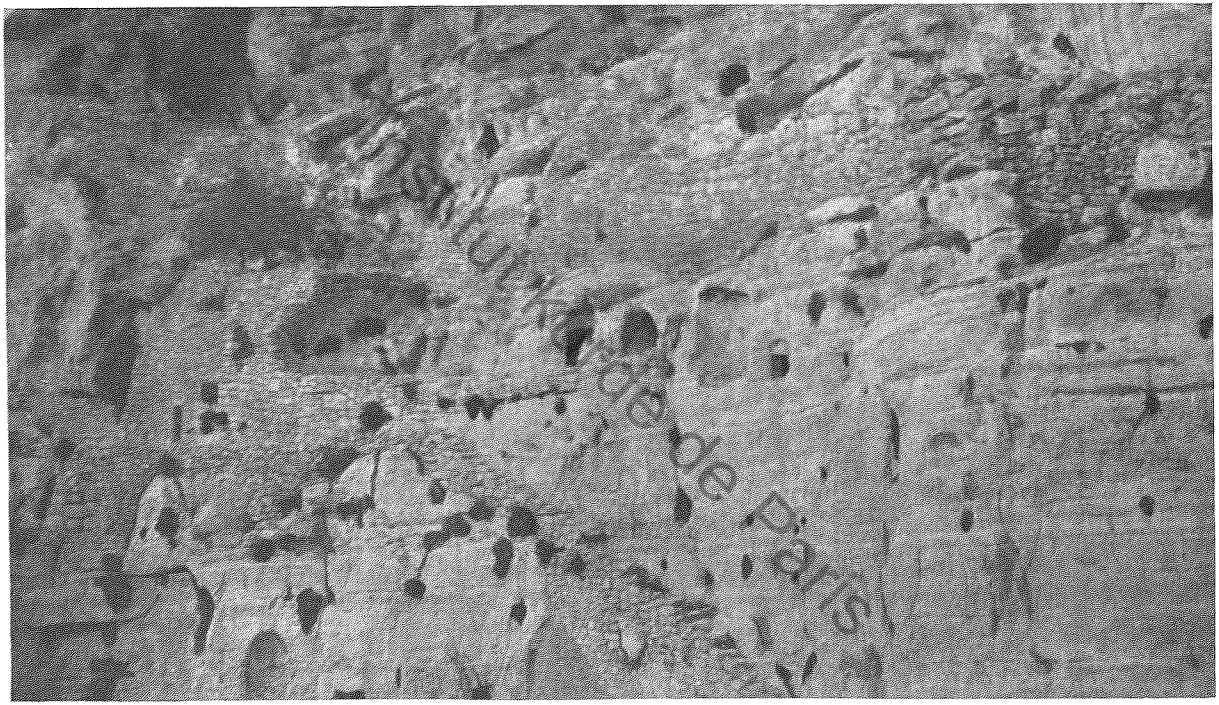

ROCK-CELLS AT RABBAN HORMUZD.

(*See page* 79.)



THE HAIDAR KHANEH MOSQUE: BAGHDAD.

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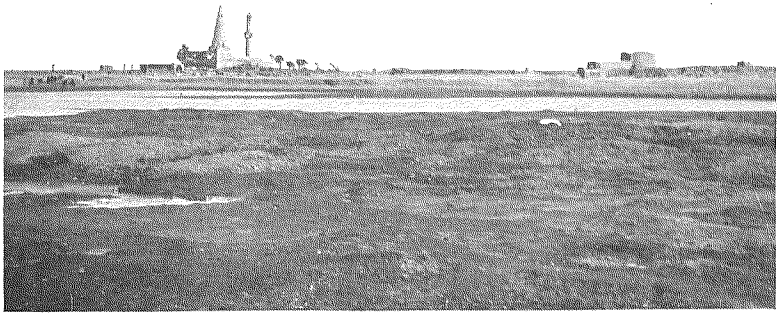

MOSQUE OF SHEIKH OMAR: BAGHDAD.

there were three hundred and fifty brothers. According to their records, the monastery was founded by the patriarch of the Chaldæans at Ctesiphon towards the end of the fourth century. There are many tales and legends about Rabban Hormuzd, who was the first prior, is one of the most popular saints of Chaldæan hagiology, and lies buried in the monastery. Legend says that he was the son of a king of Persia, who embraced the Christian faith, became a bishop and was finally martyred; but this story is not entirely borne out by such history as has been gathered together about him. He was a Chaldæan-Nestorian by religion; that is to say, of the old historical faith of his country, and his life was written by Shimun, the monk, one of the pupils of Yusadaq, a contemporary of Rabban Hormuzd. A monk of the community called Sergius, put this life into verse during the tenth century, using a form called *Muashshah*, each couplet terminating with a different letter of the alphabet, and beginning and ending with the same letter. Both biographies have been edited by Sir E. Wallis Budge. One of the manuscripts is at the convent of Deir es Saida.[1]

Rabban Hormuzd was born, say the chronicles, in Shiraz in the second half of the sixth century, of a rich family, whose reputation for charity and liberality stood high. He studied the sciences of the time in his native town. At twenty years of age he left his father's house with the intention of making a visit to the Holy Places, but while at Mosul he met three monks of the famous convent of Bar-'Idta, who counselled him to become a monk in their convent. He thought this a call from God, and made his way to the convent, where the superior, Rabban Sabrishoh, having tested his vocation during his novitiate, gave him his monk's robe.

At Bar-'Idta at that time there were two hundred and sixty-four anchorites, and amongst these Rabban Hormuzd soon distinguished himself for his piety and spiritual gifts. His biographers cite many miracles worked by him, such as the expulsion of demons, the cure of sick persons and others,

[1] *See* Journal Asiatique 1906 (3) pp. 63, 64.

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still on the tongues of simple people to-day. He remained thirty-nine years at Bar-'Idta, then decided to become a hermit. Following the advice of Silvanus, bishop of Kurdu, he practised mortifications, fasts, prayers and vigils like the great hermits of history. His name became celebrated, and miracles were multiplied.

After seven years of solitude he thought himself inspired by God to go to another monastery, Deir er Rais, near the village of Tana, in the district of Amadiyah. Six companions accompanied him, and the seven practised the religious life with all its austerities. He did not remain there long, but, together with his companions, journeyed yet further to Bet Adhra, now a Yazidi village, where there was a congregation of solitaries, and here, beside the mountain-stream, he made his home in a grotto on the hillside.

The odour of his sanctity spread into the land, and men came from far and wide to seek his benediction, or to implore his healing touch, among others the Mahommedan prince of Mosul, who, hearing of the saint, asked him to cure his son, which he did. It is even said that he raised the son from the dead. Hormuzd henceforth stood high in the favour of the prince, and was accorded permission to build a convent in the hills. He chose the inaccessible gorge which now bears his name, and the convent was completed, the grateful Moslem contributing to the building fund.

Rabban Hormuzd suffered much from the jealousies of fellow Christians, who, according to the biographers, at one time sought his death : but he won his enemies' hearts by his good works, and lived in his convent in peace and honour to the end of his days. Monks flocked to him, and he soon gathered a hundred anchorites, amongst whom he lived, teaching and preaching until his death at the ripe age of eighty years.

After the death of its founder the community flourished for many centuries, and was the seat of much learning and holiness. Yuhanna Bar Khaldan, writing in the tenth century, mentions that he had three hundred companions in the convent.

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Yuhanna Sulaqa, in the sixteenth century, a prior of the monastery, made a pilgrimage to Rome and presented his submission to the Holy See, receiving consecration from the Pope Giulius III. This was not at all to the taste of some of his more independent co-religionists, and they laid in wait for him and killed him at Diarbekr.

The monastery went through many vicissitudes, above all at the time of Timurlane, and during the Turkoman dynasty. When the Mongol hordes arrived at Mosul, they occupied all the convents, pillaged them, and maltreated the monks. After each persecution, however, the monks returned like homing birds, and it was left to Nadir Shah to reduce it finally and disperse its occupants. He attacked Mosul twice (in 1732 and 1743), and came as far as Jazirat-ibn-Omar, massacring the Christians, carrying off women and children, and destroying towns and villages. As the Christian recorder says, "All Assyria became a desert where the owl made her nest." He fired convents, put the monks to the sword, and carried off their possessions.

The convent was deserted for many years, and was not reconstructed until 1808, when a Catholic Chaldæan of Mardin, a merchant who turned priest, reopened it with fifty monks. Persecution and disaster have followed the monks until this very day, and it is no wonder that, during the brief respite of peace and security after the war, they look anxiously towards the north, and ask what British policy is to be. A Moslem government, they say, freed from British control might at any time deliver them over to the Kurds or other brigands, and were this to happen it would be hard to persuade them that we had not betrayed their trust in us.

Our meal over, we set off to inspect such of the rock cells as were easily accessible. Little of the monastery is actually built. Most of it is hewn out of the living rock, and one cannot help but be reminded, as one bends one's back to enter, and sees the recesses chiselled out for sleeping, of the Sikel tombs used to this day by Sicilian peasants as living-rooms, the stone platform on which the corpse rested serving as bed.

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Did Rabban Hormuzd and his anchorites adapt a Persian burying-place? Did the good hermit as he settled to sleep on the suggestive ledge murmur a Chaldæan equivalent for:

"Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed"?

One rock-chamber communicates with the next, and some are of considerable size. The Superior showed us the ancient cave-refectory, half of which has been precipitated into the ravine below, but once held a hundred and fifty monks at their frugal meals. Further on we bent our backs and entered a rock chamber which was once the ancient library. There are but few books there now; all that have escaped pillage and destruction and are of value are in the library of Al Kosh. Rich said of the library:

"Some of the lost Syriac and Chaldæan manuscripts would in all probability have thrown light upon this curious place. There were formerly kept in this convent about five hundred volumes of old Stranghelo manuscripts on vellum; but they were thrown together in an old vault on the side of the hill, a part of which was carried away by a torrent, and the books being damaged were deemed of no further value, and consequently were torn up and thrown about. Some scattered leaves were shown to me which were, unquestionably, of the highest antiquity."

The shadows were lengthening and we hastened to visit the church while there was yet light. It is faced with sandstone and shows blood-red when the sun shines on it up the gorge. The tower is double, one tower being clearly much earlier than the other. The more modern of the two is of grey stone, cut in large smooth blocks. There are thirty courses of cut stone about fifteen inches in length each, and above a clerestory and a window which looked as if it had been designed by a Norman architect, though it may be quite modern. There are curious carvings on individual blocks here and there, a couple of ducks, a serpent, a Maltese cross,

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inscriptions and patches of conventional decoration. There is a crypt beneath of rough, uncut stones, and all four sides are on big foundation blocks. A carved and painted door in a ruined condition led into the crypt.

Another carved doorway brought us into the church or, rather, into the first and lower church, for the place is an assembly of chapels rather than a single building. This is small—only eighteen feet by fifty-four—and very simple. A dome over the altar admits light through a single window. The stone portal of the altar, or solid altar-screen, is carved in bold designs and coloured. On the higher of the two sanctuary steps, a quaint serpent with a crocodile's head is carved, painted green with scarlet tongue and eyes, and an equally realistic tiger in red and green faces it. Below these monsters are carvings coloured in yellow and black. Round the sanctuary are niches, but unoccupied by images or relics. The brothers lit tapers, and we were conducted into a succession of rock chambers which led out of the church, beginning with the sacristy, in which was a fine modern box of wood inlaid with bone. They displayed, rather touchingly, a tawdry modern picture of the Virgin and Child, which, they said, bled when Ismail Pasha ran his dagger into it, and peered close in their effort to discover and display the blood-marks, but were unable to find any convincing stains!

A chapel leads off from the sacristy, and on the north side of the church a vestibule, in which there were tombs, brought us into what is probably the oldest part of the church, dating back, they said, to the time of Rabban Hormuzd. It seems possible that this small chamber was indeed the origina church of the brethren. It is plain, undecorated and unlit. By the altar steps are some iron chains with what were apparently large dog-collars attached. These, we were told by the brothers, were used by Rabban Hormuzd when praying, his method being to fasten himself by the chain to a hook in the ceiling, so that he might not lie down and repose himself when tempted to do so by fatigue. The chains and collars have miraculous uses now. They bring mad folk here, place

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the iron collars round their necks, and leave them chained in the dark church for twenty-four hours, or even three days, by which time the evil spirit has departed from them. In Rabban Hormuzd's cell, which is gained through a warren of subterranean passages, with yet lower catacombs beneath, they show you the ring to which the saint's chain was attached. It looks in remarkable preservation, but that is doubtless because it is sanctified.

From the older church another chapel is reached (St. Anthony), and in one of the passages there is a fine carved rock tomb. The place is a maze of mysterious and coney-like burrowings into the solid rock, the very history and origin of which has been forgotten, the scene of austerities and spiritual aspirations which have passed from the memory of the living. It is said that the discipline was once so severe that monks who came to Rabban Hormuzd rarely achieved a great age, dying of melancholy or sickness before they were rich in years; but that age is past, and the handful who are left as caretakers are cheerful souls with a keen enjoyment of the beauty of the place, and a justifiable pride in its antiquity.

Dusk was falling as we left the church, and we reluctantly abandoned the idea of visiting the upper chapels. I bade the Superior remember the cell I had chosen for my retreat in my old age, and he laughingly promised. "Yes, come; too few women are seen here," added the lay brother jovially, and we abandoned ourselves to the discretion of our mules as they stepped and slipped the downward path to Al Kosh, the farewells of our hosts echoing above us, and the moon clear and pale in the sky.

A few days later I visited another ancient monastery of great repute. It is south-east of Mosul, within a few miles of the mound of Nimrud, and some forty-two miles south of Rabban Hormuzd as the crow flies. It lies, square and unlovely, among the swelling downs of the plain, and beside it, like chickens by a mother hen, are the poor houses of a Christian village. Like most of these monasteries, it is fortified by a

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high wall of defence, and its church is one of the most interesting in all the country.

Like Rabban Hormuzd, it is under the protection of a Chaldæan saint, Mar Behnam. Popular tradition, which is always fond of attributing high birth to saints, makes Mar Behnam, son of a king, *ibn*, or of the line of, Sennacherib. There are many versions of the tale of his martyrdom, for there is apparently nothing authentic about Behnam, merely a mass of stories in the mouths of the people. His father was probably a local potentate who lived in the fourth century. The story as told me by a priest was that the princely youth was out hunting one day when he started a big stag, which he pursued as far as Jebel Maklub. Night overtook him before he came up with his quarry, and he found himself forced to shelter in a cave on the hillside. Though he was not aware of it, he was close to the Deir, or Monastery, of Mar Mattai, and the holy influence penetrated his dreams. The next morning at dawn, the saintly hermit Mattai was disturbed in his devotions by the prince. "I have come," said Behnam, "in answer to a vision in which I was bidden to seek thee out and hear something of thy faith."

The holy man expounded his creed: the young man listened and was convinced. Seeing that his convert was in earnest, the saint offered him baptism. The prince gladly consented, but begged the saint first to accompany him to preach Christianity to his mother and sister, who, with his retinue, were not far off. Mattai agreed to do so, and as they went, Behnam explained that his sister, whose name was Sara, suffered from leprosy. Arrived at the camp, the holy hermit convinced the two women of their error and of the truth of Christianity. No water for baptism being near, he struck his staff into the ground, and immediately a sulphurous fountain, full of healing qualities, sprang into being, curing the leprosy of the princess from the moment in which she received baptism.

"The prince, now a Christian, re-entered Nineveh," continued my informant (regardless of the fact that Nineveh must

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have been in ruins long before), " and going to his father, told him of his conversion. With converts to the new religion in such high places, the priests of the old gods became alarmed and angry. They gained the ear of the king, and to such purpose, that the monarch used every means to induce his son, wife and daughter to recant their faith. But in vain; they were staunch to the new creed. Then Behnam and Sara begged that they might be allowed to fetch the saintly hermit so that he might plead the cause of Christianity before the king. The king consented, and Behnam, with forty knights, set out to bring Mar Mattai from his retreat on Jebel Maklub. The priests of Asshur were in despair and decided on a desperate measure. Gathering together a horde of fanatics, they made an ambush, set upon the prince and his companions as they rode unsuspecting to the mountain, and murdered the prince, thus giving Assyria her earliest martyr."

According to other accounts it was the king himself who killed his children, the mother escaping. Later, says this version, she erected a shrine to the memory of her martyred children. But there are many versions of the legend told, and miracles and doings belonging to other saints are fathered upon Behnam. It must remain a matter for conjecture as to who he really was, for the Chaldæans are fond of romancing about their saints, and an anachronism more or less does not worry them. And within the church of the monastery you may see a stucco effigy of Behnam on horseback (say the monks, but it looks like St. George), spearing the devil, who rolls beneath his horse's hoofs, and the effigy of his sister opposite. These stucco reliefs are poor things, and probably date from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

The monks claim that the church is fourth century, but there is little, if anything, of the original building left. Mr. J. M. Wilson, F.R.I.B.A., Director of Public Works, 'Iraq, who visited the church some time ago, was told by Monseigneur Kalyan, who was then the Superior of the monastery, that the oldest part of the building is the small ruined edifice, probably the original tomb, a short distance from the present church.

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This building is domed, and the niche above the altar is dated, showing that at any rate to have been built at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This certainly appears to be a portion of a building of considerable size. By means of a short and very small underground passage an octagonal chamber is reached, well built and lit from the apex of the dome. In it are some very interesting inscribed panels, one of which, in light-coloured marble or alabaster, now yellowed with age, is, Mr. Wilson thinks, Byzantine, or possibly imported from the West. The usual traditions of secret underground passages are associated with this spot. Visitors are shown the entrance to one which, the monks say, originally ran to Nimrud.

It is generally thought that the date of the greater part of the present church, which has been rebuilt and restored many times, using the old bricks and stones in the fashion of Chaldæan masons, is twelfth century, and Mr. Wilson drew me a plan of the church, showing what he considered possibly to have been the form of an earlier church on the present site. The simpler-minded brothers do not consider the question of re-building. "The church was here," said a brother to me, "when the Emperor Julian marched with his army against Ctesiphon."

The monastery is built in two quadrangles, the first containing the church and the latter the cells, refectories and offices of the brothers. Chaldæan women were driving cows out of the first courtyard as we entered it, others sat and twirled distaff and spindle by the great gate. It was the kind of subject loved by a French landscape-painter of the eighteenth century. The yellowing light of the setting sun was full on the ancient church, with its porch and curious symbolical carvings of serpents, beasts and saints. It is a low, T-shaped building a little below ground level, and looks like an old book, written in a forgotten tongue, full of promise to the scholar who can peruse it with understanding.

Within, a double nave is divided by arches supported by

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large columns. There is no high altar, but the east end contains two chapels, a sacristy and a vestibule containing tombs; while the north and south walls end with chapels, both domed and lit from the dome. The stone wall dividing the eastern chapels from the body of the church is covered with inscriptions in Stranghelo, Arabic and Chaldæan and decorated freely with sculptures, in relief, bold and quaint. The arched doorways into each chapel are richly carved; that of the chapel next to the sacristy in the north-east corner, with its angels and bishops in bas-relief, being particularly attractive. The stones of the arches are cut, zig-saw fashion, into patterns which fit into each other and interlock, like the arches in some of the twelfth-century mosques in Mosul. A tablet in the east end records that Hulagu the Tartar visited the church and was received by the prior and brethren in full canonicals.

The big stucco bas-reliefs I have referred to above, are on the centre supporting columns, and are faintly coloured. Plump angels hold the crown of martyrdom over the prince's head, and the figure of the leprous sister, Sara, is exceedingly clumsy.

This church is certainly one of the most interesting mediæval monuments in Mesopotamia, and its record as having been a place of Christian worship all through the long story of conflicting religions and persecutions from the early days of Christendom until the no less troublous twentieth century, makes it a shrine very dear to the Christians of the country. It is a pity that so many of the brothers are illiterate, unscholarly men. The day I visited the monastery there was not one present who could read the Stranghelo inscriptions or tell me what they contained, and their ideas of the history and age of the place were crude and shadowy. But that is what is most irritating to the stranger who comes into contact with the Christian priesthood of Mesopotamia. Always ready to enlarge upon the enormities of their Moslem neighbours or the errors of their Christian brothers, there are few who can give accurately any historical fact or have any profound

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archælogical knowledge. With a few notable exceptions, this is true of the majority of Christian ecclesiastics throughout the country.[1]

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[1] Mr. Wilson writes: "It is difficult to state accurately without careful study the exact form of the earlier church. All the marble doorways are, in my opinion, of approximately the same date. The surrounding rooms may be earlier or later, probably later. Craftsmen of very considerable merit designed and built the doorways, but evidence of a period of decadence is clear from the over-elaboration of several of them.

"In the village of Karakosh, a few miles from Behnam, there are three very interesting old churches, much more primitive in design and construction than Mar Behnam, and possibly, considered in entirety, older. They also possess evidences of having been re-erected from remains of still older buildings."

There is an interesting legend attached to one of these. On a wall inside, the sun is supposed, once a year, to project the moving shadows of all those of the district who are to die during the ensuing twelve months. An Englishman tells me he actually saw these processing shadows. He thought the cause might be either an effect caused annually by the sun's rays striking something outside which moved, or a manipulation on the part of the priests.

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PART II

BURIED CITIES

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CHAPTER IX

SOME BURIED CITIES OF ASSYRIA

FAMILIARITY breeds contempt, says the proverb, and Nineveh and Babylon, once so distant and inaccessible, have been wandered over by many thousands of Britishers since the war. By the waters of Babylon many picnics have been given; on the walls of Nineveh bottles of Asahi beer have been broached; at Nimrud good-tempered British vandals have amused themselves by making targets of human-headed bulls. Small Arab boys have earned annas by parting with bricks inscribed with cuneiform to soldiers who think they will "send it home to the missus for a paper-weight." Lastly there is the subaltern who, pondering deeply over the sculptured physiognomy of an Assyrian king, remarked, "What jolly old beavers these Assyrian chaps were!"

Imagination is not a predominant trait of the British character, and it must be conceded that if Babylon is "disappointing," as so many report after a day spent among its ruins (the railways run excursion trains), Nineveh and the buried cities of Assyria make still more demand upon the inner eye of faith. Unless he has archæological knowledge—and few have—it is with a slight shock of surprise that the average man first sees the mounds which cover the cities of dead Assyria.

Nineveh, just across the river from Mosul, is his first disillusionment. Nineveh was an exceedingly great city of three days' journey, says the Bible, and an ordinary walker can encircle the two mounds which are all that is visible above

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ground in a morning. Diodorus, wildly inaccurate as he was, must at least have relied upon travellers' tales when he wrote of its vast dimensions. The great ruined city mentioned in the Anabasis, whose walls were six parasangs in circuit and one hundred feet in height, can be none other than Nineveh, though Xenophon calls it Mespila. But the term "city" is a loose one. The two mounds which rise so sharply from the plain, just beyond Mosul, Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus, could not have contained all Nineveh. They did contain its power and glory in the palaces of its famous kings Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashur-bani-pal, but around these princely buildings and the inner city confined by the strong walls whose course can so clearly be traced to-day, were further ditches and fortifications, suburbs, houses of the poorer quarters, gardens, villas and hamlets now long since vanished and gone—mud to mud, stone to stone and garden to wilderness.

Kuyunjik, the greater mound of the two, is bare and desolate, a literal fulfilment of the prophecy that the defencéd cities of the Assyrians should be turned into ruinous heaps. The other mound, Nebi Yunis, covered Ashur-bani-pal's palace, and a picturesque crookedly-built Turkoman village has grown over it. The local belief that the prophet Jonah lies buried beneath the mosque on the summit of the mound has prevented excavators from exploring all its treasures, and when our army occupied Mosul our over-scrupulous tenderness to fanaticism left the mound still sacrosanct.

As a matter of fact, the tomb supposed to be Jonah's is in reality that of a Christian ecclesiastic, for a Christian monastery once stood on the mound, and the mosque is on the site of a Christian church. This fact must make the Assyriologist long for a little helpful higher criticism in Islam. If only the villagers could be made to understand that the bones they regard as so holy are only those of an infidel! But they would be reluctant to believe that, for Nebi Yunis is a place of pilgrimage, and pilgrims bring their money to the village. If they lost Jonah, they would lose prosperity as well as prestige.

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But at Kuyunjik it is different, and Sir Henry Layard, when he excavated here in 1845, could dig over its surface with comparatively little opposition, unearthing its secrets and uncovering its long-buried halls and chambers. Here he discovered the most precious treasure-trove ever found by an Assyriologist—the Royal library of Nineveh, founded by the warrior king Sargon in the seventh century before Christ, and added to by his successors Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. But it was to Sargon's great-grandson, Ashur-bani-pal, the Sardanapalus of legend, that the library owed most. He was a lover of learning and archæology, and in his reign scribes were sent to other cities, such as Babylon and Asshur, to copy valuable tablets and works of learning wherever they were to be found, making translations into Assyrian of the ancient Sumerian tablets, for Sumerian had by then become a dead language, a language of the priests. The library was well stocked, and contained works on religion, history, grammar, astrology, incantations, legends, laws, riddles, hymns, commentaries and many other works. The clay tablets on which the scribe's stylus so carefully impressed the cuneiform characters were shaped differently according to their subject, the backs of some being round and of others convex, obviously for reasons of classification.

Here were found the wonderful tablets giving the Babylonian version of the story of the Flood; and here, too, were the tablets of the epic of Gilgamesh. One can picture the bearded librarian absorbed in his work, labelling a tablet here, adding a tablet there, reprimanding a careless underling who had cracked a list, conducting a visitor to the group of tablets containing the information he wished, listening to compliments on the richness of the library and the learnedness of its scribes. Well was it for Assyria that Ashur-bani-pal was patron of letters as well as mighty warrior, for in making this library he did more for the glory of his people and the preservation of his name than by all his bloody battles and empire-building—an empire which had already begun to crumble before he died.

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We drove out the evening of our arrival across the Tigris by the bridge of boats to where the two mounds rose above the plain. Leaving Nebi Yunis on our right, we skirted the foot of Kuyunjik, following the line of the great wall until we stood at its north-eastern angle. The sun was setting behind Mosul on the further side of the river, and the mounds, with their buried palaces, caught the fire of the setting sun. A flock of long-haired sheep, led by their shepherd, moved leisurely over the coarse, sun-bleached grass on their way homewards, stopping here and there to crop a mouthful. The air blew clean and pure from the Kurdish hills, and behind us rose Jebel Maklub, flushed in the evening light. Not a sound was to be heard but the call of the shepherd and an answering baa now and again from his black and tan flock, as they moved towards the golden west.

In this death-like peace and silence it was hard to picture the high, grass-grown ridge on which we stood as a wall on which armed sentries paced, guarding a great and busy city. Through the gates must have ridden the Assyrian " captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men," laden with the spoils of successful war, trains of dusty and dejected prisoners behind them, and bearded infantrymen marching in order, eager for the delights of the great city after their long campaigns. Perhaps Jonah had walked these wide walls, unhappy because of the fate which he foresaw for the beautiful city which was the home of many of his captive countrymen. And the words of another prophet came to mind, that most eloquent description of a dead city :

" He will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness,
And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her.
Both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it ;
Their voice shall sing in the windows ;
Desolation shall be in the thresholds."

In the brief twilight we scrambled about the mound of Kuyunjik, holes and openings here and there showing where

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excavations had been made. Layard kept his word with the Turk, and scrupulously covered up all that he might not remove to England, and it is fortunate that he did so, for little would remain if he had not. As it is, Nineveh has been a brickyard for Mosul for many centuries, and even now its walls are supplying blocks for the rebuilding of the mosque of Nebi Yunis, which fell last winter.

We visited Nebi Yunis some mornings later. It is perched high on its mound, enthroned like a Tuscan hill-city above the plain, and from the roof of its mosque one sees Nineveh, the rolling plains and the hills beyond spread beneath one like a carpet. From this vantage point Mosul looks like a town from a fairy-tale book, with its high northern bluff, its broken city wall, its leaning minarets and its broad river. On the roof of the mosque the imam greeted us and offered us tea, which we accepted, sitting there awhile with him and enjoying the air and the view. The inhabitants of the village talk a Turkoman dialect, and gazed upon us without being able to converse.

When we were refreshed, our host conducted us into the mosque. It is a low building, and smells sweet of incense. A long carpeted aisle, the walls of which held niches, tombs, and inscriptions, the latter being coloured, brought us into a second chamber, carpeted with thick rugs, in the centre of which was a large wooden case covered with an embroidered cloth, a turban placed at one end. This seemed an indication that the Prophet lay beneath, or rather the Christian corpse that has been honoured in mistake; but it was not so, for the case, they said, merely concealed steps leading to a subterranean place in which is the real tomb. The latter, however, they were unwilling for us to see, so that we were unable to visit what was probably the most ancient and interesting part of the mosque.

Outside the tomb are many pious saws and texts from the Quran in fine illuminated script, framed like pictures, for in the East the art of caligraphy is much honoured. On the wall of the chamber containing the entrance to the crypt a piece

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of swordfish is suspended on the wall; they declare, with great solemnity, that it is part of the whale which swallowed Jonah!

From this sacred place we passed into the Mosalla, or mosque itself. The carved stonework here was all coloured and the effect was charming in the subdued light. Both mihrab (niche which shows the direction of Mekka) and minbar (pulpit) were so decorated. The carpets of this mosque are celebrated, for it is customary for each Sultan of Turkey to present one in honour of the shrine.

As we put on our shoes again on leaving the mosque, a man brought up a brick with a cuneiform inscription upon it for us to examine, and they were anxious to show us an "antika" inscription in the place used for ceremonial ablution in a small yard close by. This proved to be a Syriac inscription, another indication that this was once a Christian site.

There is a good deal of promiscuous and unscientific excavation going on in Nebi Yunis. Antiquity-dealers from Baghdad and elsewhere buy up houses in the village and dig beneath them, selling whatever they discover. It is to be hoped that the new laws for the preservation of national monuments now being discussed in Baghdad will provide against this particular form of pillage.

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Nimrud

If the ghost of Sir Henry Layard walks, it must haunt Nimrud even more than Nineveh, for that city, the ancient Calah of the Assyrians, was the scene of his most successful operations. Calah was the seat of government before Nineveh was made the royal residence, and an incription of Ashur-nasir-pal, King of Assyria, towards the end of the ninth century B.C., says that the city of Calah was founded some four hundred years earlier.

It lies some twenty miles out of Mosul, and the road is good. I should like to see it in spring, for the way lies through one long stretch of cultivated land. The waving corn and wild

flowers of April and May were dried and withered when I visited it in October, the plains were steppes yellowed with stubble and withered vegetation, and dust-devils rose freakishly on either side of us, sometimes bobbing up uncannily just in front of the car or playing beside it along the way. Here and there we passed villages, winnowing the season's grain, this year so plentiful that it is hardly worth the cost of harvesting. Here and there camels, laden with grain or other produce, plodding their slow way southward, nearly always led by a man on a small donkey. Here and there hoopoes, the crested birds of Solomon, ran along, or bee-eaters flashed their bright bodies in the sun.

To reach Nimrud we branched away from the main road to Arbil, and followed a short track through fields of stubble which took us to the foot of a high artificial mound, unmistakably Assyrian, in the early year covered with wild flowers but now burnt and brown. A steep path leads to the summit, below which are heaps of big blocks of stone which were being used by local contractors until they were forbidden to quarry there by the British administration.

There is more to see at Nimrud than at Nineveh. A number of human-headed winged bulls remain half in the ground and half out, and a short while ago a British regiment for their own amusement unearthed a statue of a man, which has now been re-covered. The outline of the city is traceable, showing it to be about 7,000 by 5,000 feet, and doubtless a practised eye would glean much from what remains above ground and from the hummocks and ridges formed from what is beneath it, but to a casual visitor, like Nineveh, Nimrud is a city's tomb rather than a city.

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Asshur

Asshur, some forty miles further south, about four miles from Kalat Sherghat station, is more spectacular. This was the early residence of the Assyrian kings, city of the warlike youth of the Assyrian nation, and named after their patron deity, Asshur, God of Battles.

What manner of men were these Assyrians? They were kinsmen to the Akkadians, for it is assumed now that the Assyrians were Aramæan settlers on the North Tigris. The cold winters of the north and constant fighting with their neighbours made of them a race of soldiers, a hardy and virile nation of which the softer Southerners of 'Iraq might well wax fearful. War to the Assyrian was no polite game, nor was he squeamish. The bas-reliefs which are in the British Museum show him burning cities, counting heaps of human heads, torturing prisoners, and otherwise engaged in proving that war is war. One sculpture represents Ashur-bani-pal enjoying a quiet glass of wine with his wife in a garden—the severed head of the King of Elam hanging close by from the branch of a tree, to lend a really festive air to the proceedings.

Like the nomad Arab, they were inveterate raiders, and the habit eventually made them masters over most of the known world, which they held, not as the Persians after them, governing conquered peoples for their own good, but as a source of revenue, tribute, and troops. They took vast numbers of prisoners, literally taking "nations captive," as the Bible has it. When they went forth to conquer they went forth to loot, and this was one reason why their empire crumbled so quickly and disastrously. What is merely held by the sword can never be held for long. It was left to Cyrus the Persian to prove that the surest way of holding conquered peoples is to give them freedom and justice.

Asshur stands on a crag high above the cultivated plain, with the range of the Jebel Hamrin behind it. It was built of brick, stone, and marble, like modern Mosul, and must have looked a fair city as it rose above the wide lake which then lapped at its walls, for a barrage down-stream kept the basin, still visible below the city, filled with water. The stone quays to which the men of Asshur moored their boats are still to be seen just below the temple mound. In the days of its prosperity the town must have been bowered in verdure, but now that the water has forsaken it, it is treeless and only

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dons a mantle of green in the early year when the corn springs in the rich, rain-irrigated soil.

The city was very thoroughly excavated by the German Orient Society, whose operations were stopped by the war, and their tunnellings and re-tunnellings honeycomb the place, vast mounds of earth thrown up by the diggers flanking the city on either side. Little has been re-covered, and the outlines of streets, large buildings, temples, houses, and massive fortifications can be traced amid the jumble of blocks of stones and fragments of brick and marble. The city of one period was built over the city of another, so that there are several layers to be penetrated before one comes upon the actual first city. Asshur existed yet in the days of the Sassanids, and in that of the Parthians, and each have left traces of their occupation and culture.

The Germans dug trenches at intervals of every few hundred feet, carrying them to the lowest stratum, so that little escaped their notice. They were able to trace the plans of the ancient Assyrian temples, such as that of the famous shrine of Anu and Adad; to follow the lines of their narrow, stone-paved streets, and to lay bare house after house with their open courtyards and the sanitary arrangements, which seem to tell us that the Assyrians were a cleanly race.

A man's house was also his cemetery, for the dead were enclosed in jar-shaped coffins and buried beneath their own homes, a practice still common among some savage peoples to-day.

In the space between the outer and inner walls of the city was found, among others, a stele, which throws light on the romantic legend of Semiramis: legend, for, alas! Semiramis is a myth, half-goddess, half fairy-tale. The cold, sober fact is that she was one Sammuramat, "woman of the palace" (*i.e.*, wife) of Shamshi-Adad V. (825-810 B.C.). During her matronly widowhood and regency for her son (Adad-nirari IV., 810-781 B.C.), she became a person of sufficient power to stamp her personality on the golden legends of the world, but not by the mighty achievements attributed to her by Greek historians. The Asshur stele runs:

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"The memorial of Sammuramat, woman of the palace of Shamshi-Adad, King of the World, King of Assyria, mother of Adad-nirari, King of the World, King of Assyria, daughter-in-law of Shalmaneser, King of the Four Quarters."

But the crowning point of the city is the lofty ziggurat, the high place and shrine of the god Asshur, E-Kharsag-gal-kurra, "great-mountain-house-of-all-lands," which must have showed like a beacon to tired Assyrian troops returning home across the plains laden with the spoil of battle. This temple-tower is built of unburnt brick, solid but for a small chamber in the core of it, into which the industrious Germans bored their way. The proud war-god gazed from his high tower far over the lake and smiling country, and if one climbs up by means of the steps cut into its surface, one has a complete view of the city spread below, its bare bones whitened by the suns of three thousand summers, of the wide depression that was once the lake, and of the Tigris winding and shining on its way southwards. Near the river is a building which was formerly the headquarters of the German excavators, a well-built house used until recently as a hospital, for British troops were encamped close by.

The hill on which the city is built is known as the Mountain of the Moon, and it is well-named, for in the barren half of the year its craters, depressions, bare contours, and craggy excavation holes remind one of photographs of the moon's surface—a dead city like a dead world. Even so, it does not need much effort to picture this mother-city of the Assyrian race as it was in the days of its pride, its great temple tower and turreted walls mirrored in the lake, its pleasant gardens stretching to the water's edge, and the rich country which nourished it yellow with corn in the month of May. It must have been a place for warriors to sigh for on long campaigns in distant countries, but now:

> "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria,
> Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust."

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CHAPTER X

SOME BURIED CITIES OF BABYLONIA

I.—*Babylon*

SUN, silence, and a brown expanse of ruins. And such ruins—masses of rubble, mud brick and burnt brick, all below the earth's surface and looking as if builders had dug the foundations of a city and fled, leaving nothing behind them but dust and rubble. This is Babylon, "that great city." Above desert larks twitter, here and there a mongoose peeps from a hole, or a jackal slinks away. By the water-filled ditches beside the space which the Germans say was once the site of the great tower of Babel, raising its lofty platforms sky-high, Eutemen-Anki, "the house of the foundation-stone of heaven and earth," water-wagtails paddle and flirt their tails among the reeds. All is silence, desolation, and the little wild things of the desert; silence and sun-baked dust.

If one does not know the way, and comes by car from Baghdad to visit Babylon, one may easily mistake the high ridges of ancient water-courses for the walls of the great city long before one arrives. This happened to me, and whenever I tried to inquire if I were on the right road, and "How far is Babil?" from a shepherd, he gathered up his skirts and fled from the car, as from a thing of the devil. I caught up with one, who walked placidly before his flock, and he turned an astonished face on me. I found out why he, too, had not run before the noise of our approach—he was deaf-and-dumb.

When one does reach Babylon, however, it is unmistakable. The mounds stand clear and defined from the plain, and one

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is quickly in the heart of the excavations. I have been several times since that first visit alone by car, and on no other occasion could I renew the romance of the first acquaintance with the "city that sits desolate." Even lunch was memorable, eaten on the top of the mound of Babil, scattered by bricks bearing the great name of Nebuchadnezzar in cuneiform; for this mound was the site of his fortified palace, and from its height one can see the city like a map spread beneath one. We shared a patch of grass on its summit with a woolly black sheep, which resented the intrusion and nibbled up to our very feet. Here we could sit and open our books, Koldewey, Maspero, and the others, puzzle out the position of the mounds on the maps, and spell out the history of the city spread beneath.

Babylon was a parvenu city compared to Asshur in the north, and still more to Ur in the south. It only comes into prominence some two thousand two hundred years before Christ, when, after a long period of war and division, the King Khammurabi, one of the great and benignant figures of history, freed Babylonia from Elamite conquerors, and established his empire in peace and prosperity. For almost fifteen hundred years after his great reign there was an undivided Mesopotamia, in which arts and agriculture flourished, and of this prosperous Mesopotamia, Babylon, which had come into prominence only about four generations before Khammurabi, was the heart and inspiring principle. It remained chief of Babylonian cities though often conquered, and brought under the sway of the Assyrian empire, until its final ruin under the Seleucids.

Its temple of Marduk (Bel) was one of the principal shrines in the land; its processional street, along which the gods were carried and kings passed in order to worship at the altars of the great temples of Marduk and Ninmakh, was one of the streets of the world, just as Fifth Avenue and Piccadilly are world-highways. What was mooted at Babylon was, sooner or later, discussed by people all over the world; it was a centre of commerce, art, and letters, and the seat of civilisation.

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I have said that under Assyria its importance did not diminish. When the great Assyrian ruler, Ashur-bani-pal, died, full of years and surrounded by enemies, about six hundred and forty years before the Christian era, the glory of the empire had already begun to wane. Its destruction was utter and complete. Weakened by the incursion of barbarians from the north, both Babylonia and Assyria were swept for a time beneath the tide. When they emerged again, the troublous times had found a master in the Chaldæan general, Nabopolassar of Babylon. The old hatred between the two states flamed out once more and this Nabopolassar, aided by the Median king, Cyaxeres, besieged and finally reduced Nineveh. This great city held out for two years, but at last was taken and laid waste. This happened about 607 B.C.. Henceforth Nineveh, proud capital of one of the greatest military empires ever seen, counted for nothing. The two allies divided the Assyrian empire, the Medes taking Assyria and the general Nabopolassar, Sumer, or 'Iraq proper, and of course its capital, Babylon, which emerged, phœnix-like, from the ashes of its past. Most of the Babylon seen now in ruins was the result of this new empire.

It was a more vulgar age. The Assyrian was a soldier, and one feels, however ruthless, something of a gentleman. The prosperous New Babylonian empire, which lasted only about seventy years, had something of the blatant about it. It is as difficult to get away from Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon as it is to forget that egoist, Rameses the Great, in Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar had not Rameses' justification for self-advertisement. One cannot escape Nebuchadnezzar in all that is left of Babylon. It is true that he and his father found many buildings ruined or destroyed, but, when this was not the case, he pulled down earlier buildings and erected his own, and his name, printed clearly in cuneiform, is seen on brick after brick that one picks up whilst walking about the excavated city. He was determined to stamp himself indelibly on history, and he succeeded. This Nebuchadnezzar, second of that name, came into his father

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Nabopolassar's new-won empire about 605 B.C., and during his reign Babylon reached the summit of her glory.

Fortune favoured Nebuchadnezzar. His discreet father, as wily in council as he was bold in battle, had cemented his alliance with his too-restless and ambitious neighbour, Cyaxeres of Media, by a marriage between Nebuchadnezzar and the Median princess, Amytis. In order to preserve the balance of power, he also acted as mediator between the prosperous kingdom of Lydia and that of the Medes when war broke out between these two states, and peace was furthered by a marriage between a Lydian princess and Cyaxeres' son. Thus Media, Lydia, and Babylon formed a triple alliance, each suspicious of the other, each powerful, each insatiable of power, but for policy's sake keeping the peace.

Fortunately for Nebuchadnezzar, when Cyaxeres' son succeeded to his inheritance he proved less warlike than his father; nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar, remembering his father's counsels, in spite of alliances which might have lulled him into security, built a powerful wall of defence, the ruins of which may be seen from the train between Samarra and Baghdad; constructed waterworks of such a nature that the country could easily be flooded in case of invasion; and fortified Sippar, the most northern of the Babylonian towns. He refused to be tempted into a career of conquest like his forbears. During the forty-three years of his reign, he fought campaigns in Egypt and elsewhere, but aimed chiefly at consolidating and strengthening his rule at home. It is almost as if he had premonition of the doom to fall upon his country so soon after his death, and determined to avert it if possible. Above all, he was determined to make Babylon beautiful and strong.

"Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?"

What is left for the curious to see of this royal city to-day?

The excavation of Babylon owes most to the Germans,

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whose careful and patient work under Dr. Robert Koldewey lasted from 1899 until the present war. When the Germans fled, they took with them as much as they could; the rest they stored at the rest-house in which they lived, where they are now bricked up in a room set apart for the purpose. But this was not until a good deal of damage had been done, and the collection suffered from looting, both by Arabs and Britishers. An officer told me that he was just in time to save one of the precious blocks of the Ishtar Gate from removal. A bullock cart was ready, and marauders endeavouring to haul the block from its place. When the Germans left, many of the enamelled tiles which adorned public buildings, were still *in situ*—now, not one remains. Of course, the British authorities soon got control of the matter, but not before much irremediable vandalism had taken place.

The most important mound is the Kasr Mound. Here is the famous Ishtar Gate, once brilliant with blue, yellow, and white bulls, lions, and dragons in low relief in the beautiful tile-work for which Babylonian craftsmen were famous. Of these tiles not one now remains, but the blocks of brickwork are carved. On them face, in delicate low relief, figures of beasts and monsters, exquisite in the fineness of their finish and the skill of their execution. It is thought that the gate was decorated with hundreds of these creatures, only those above ground being enamelled, for part of the gate was beneath the surface, like those parts of modern houses in Baghdad which are built below ground in order to combat the heat. This part is now all that is left of the gate.

Here, too, is the famous Processional Way, paved with huge flagstones or alabaster and limestone laid in asphalt. Through the lovely gateway of Ishtar, past the temple of Ninmakh, where women prayed to The Lady, making then the age-old petitions made at Hoseyn's shrine to-day, the traveller in Herodotus' day could traverse the broad processional road which led him past the royal palace with its hanging gardens and other public buildings to the temple of Marduk, whose ziggurat or platformed tower rose proudly to

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the sky. Along this sacred way the great gods were carried in procession, and no ordinary traffic was permitted to pass down its wide paving-stones, for only those who went afoot were allowed to tread the holy road.

Here, too, once a year was borne the image of Bel, when taken in procession to visit his son Nebo at the outlying suburb of Borsippa, where the ziggurat of Nebo stood, a landmark in the brown plain, just as its fire-stained ruin stands now. Even in the days when Babylon, fallen, had become a Persian dependency, the ancient cult still flourished; the gods made their yearly journey down the Sacred Way; and the Great King, himself a believer in a higher creed, tolerantly sacrificed to Marduk and Nebo, and won the gratitude and loyalty of Babylonian priests.

One can walk along the Sacred Way to-day, pausing to enter the ruined shrine of Ninmakh, which shows plainly the plan of the ancient temple. Part of the walls still stand. These temples were all built of unburnt brick, that is to say, in the fashion of an earlier and less skilled age, for religion is conservative.

Further on, to the right, lies the Kasr, or palace and Government buildings of Nebuchadnezzar, a vast mass of foundations and walls and bricks. The Germans think that the remains of vaulting seen here must be the foundations of the famous Hanging Gardens, for they are obviously designed to carry great weight, and pipes have been found which may have connected with hydraulic machinery for raising water from the Euphrates to irrigate this airy pleasaunce. There was nothing startling to the Babylonian mind about a garden on a raised platform. The temple ziggurat, the "high-place" of the Bible, was a commonplace to the men of Sumer and Akkad, and, owing to the want of hills, their learned men made observations from the tops of these artificial mounds. The garden was a natural development of the idea.

In the Kasr, on the same level or layer as the Processional Way, are the remains of what must have been a vast hall, with its pavement. No wall is standing, but its plan is visible,

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and in his book Professor Koldewey traces out its dimensions and probable uses. Those eager to find sites mentioned in the Bible see in this the banqueting hall of Belshazzar, in which the Hand traced doom upon the walls, just as they think the probable site of the lions' den into which Daniel was thrown was near the Lion, that curious group of statuary [1] unearthed by the excavators and set up near the Ishtar Gate, for near this spot were the walls of the inner citadel, and it is surmised that lions were kept in the moat which surrounded it. I am not an antiquarian and give no opinion, but in any case it is pleasant to toy with these theories.

One is on firmer ground when one goes to the mound of Amran, passing on the way the mound of Markaz, on which are seen the rubble and traces of many private houses. For round royal Babylon poorer quarters were huddled, where lived the commoners, whose small mud houses, built much as the houses of Arabs of to-day are built, of sun-dried brick, have long since been trampled into the earth, returned to dust like the bodies of their builders. Prudent Nebuchadnezzar, mindful ever of the menace of invasion and siege, saw to it, moreover, that cultivated ground was enclosed by the great city wall, so that if the city were invested the inhabitants might be able to raise corn for their need. This great wall, the uttermost girdle of Nebuchadnezzar's city of cities, was so wide that two four-horse chariots could drive abreast on the ramparts.

On Amran, not far from a small modern mosque, is all that can be seen of the temple of Marduk. Spectacularly speaking, it is nothing but rubble and a few mud walls, but the Germans were able to trace much of its plan and dimensions, and to find little secret passages which led to it. Most of it is still buried seventy feet below the surface. In this temple the generals of Alexander consulted after his death, and in this temple, long, long before, the great King Khammurabi placed his famous stele of laws, that all men might read of their rights, a copy of which is now in the British Museum.

[1] A lion standing above the prostrate figure of a man.

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Here stood the great zigurrat of Eutemen-Anki, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—now a reed-grown hollow, filled in winter with water.

From this ancient fane, it is only quarter of an hour's walk to the Greek theatre, which is rapidly crumbling away, leaving little but the form of the amphitheatre to be seen, and this is close to the halt on the railway, where those who come by train can arrange to alight and visit Babylon. Thousands of British soldiers have availed themselves of the facilities given them by G.H.Q. during their stay in Mesopotamia, and wandered over the buried city under the guidance of those who could explain what was before them, thus lending a temporary appearance of life to the dead city and letting their talk and laughter echo amid the long-silent walls. Arab children, eager to sell "antikas," are the only living beings the solitary visitor finds, and at sunset these vanish and return to the village near by, leaving the city to the jackals and foxes, or, say the Arabs, to the jinns which flit and prank where once Nebuchadnezzar feasted and sat in council.

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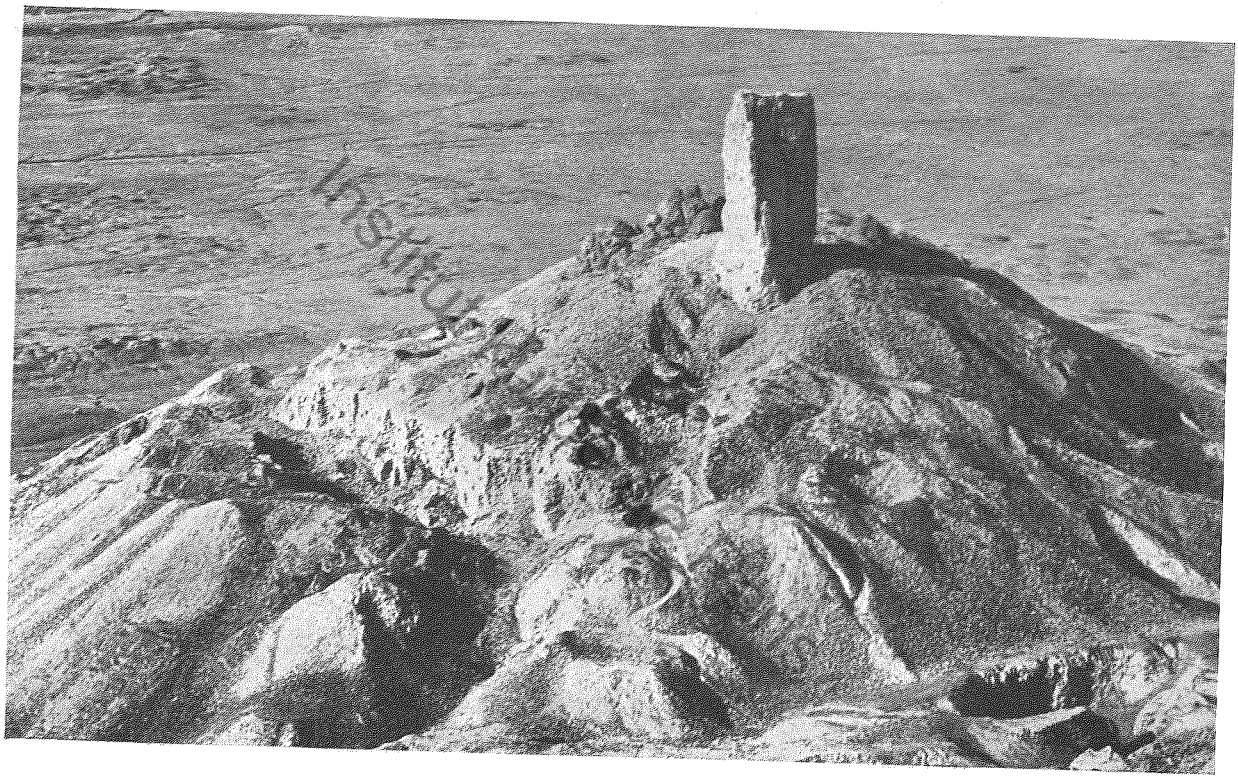
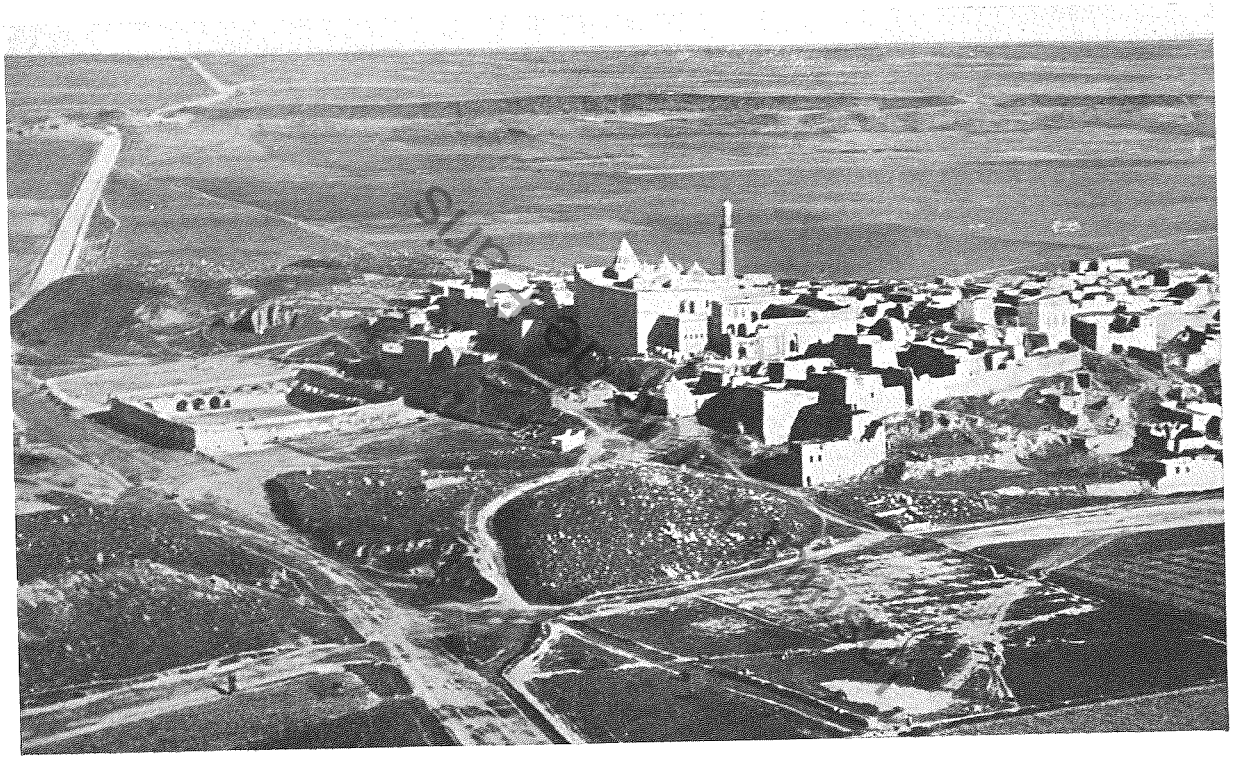
II.—*Borsippa*

I have spoken of Borsippa, the suburb of Babylon in which stood the famous temple and ziggurat of Nebo. This, too, was rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar. The mound, which rises so sheer from the sun-dried plain, is reached from Hillah in half an hour by car, and is called by the Arabs "Birs Nimrud." Local tradition makes this the high tower of Babel which called down the wrath of God, and the bricks, which are fused together by great heat, were, they say, struck by lightning from heaven. But in spite of its great wind-blown height, visible for thirty miles across the plain, this is not the famous tower of the Bible, though it was honoured as being the shrine of the god Nebo, son of Bel, the patron of letters and writing; and its ruins, explored several times, have yielded much that is interesting, and will yield yet more. I have fossicked on three or four occasions amid its mounds, picking up scraps of



BIRS NIMRUD.



NEBI YUNIS.

(*See page* 99.)

broken pottery, pieces of inscribed brick, a bead or so, and ancient coins, so thick with verdigris that little is left when the surface is removed by immersion in vinegar. Every winter's rain washes the surface of the mounds and brings some small, worthless relic of the past to light.

What has Nimrud, the Hunter-King, to do with this mound? It is curious that the name of Nimrud, above that of any potentate of the past, lives to-day in the legends and folk-names of the Arab. As I sat near the mound on a cloak which a courteous old Arab spread for me, I listened to some of these legends told of the ancient hero-king.

When Abraham was dragged before Nimrud the king for judgment, after he had broken his father-in-law's gods, the king bade him worship the fire.

"But water is stronger than fire, since water can quench fire," replied Abraham.

"Then worship water."

"It is the cloud which sends the water."

"Then adore the cloud."

"Rather the wind that tears the cloud to fragments."

"Then worship the wind."

"Oh, king, man uses and controls the winds."

"Thou art a wind-bag," said Nimrud. "No more of such talk. Either worship the fire, as I do, or be cast into it."

Abraham refused, and was cast into the furnace, and seven days after was discovered unhurt, the flames having turned into fair flowers.

Nimrud then said that he would discover whether Abraham's God existed or no. He built a tower of immense height, but finding heaven still many furlongs above him, he caught two eagles, attached a chariot to them, and urged them up by holding meat above their heads. Up and up they went, until Nimrud heard a voice asking, "Infidel, whither darest thou go?" He drew his bow and let fly an arrow towards the voice. The arrow returned to him stained with blood, and he exulted, thinking that he had wounded the noblest quarry ever stalked by mortal—God Himself.

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III.—*Akerkuf*

So close to Baghdad that one can run out by car, breakfast leisurely on the mound, and get back before the sun is high, is another ziggurat tower which stands high and lonely above the plain, its reddish bulk and zigzag outline reflected in glassy water when the low-lying country is flooded after spring rains. It is as impressive as Birs Nimrud, and, like that mound, is associated in Arab talk with the mighty hunter of beasts and men, but it is far, far older; in fact, all that is known about it hitherto is mostly guess-work. Yet few people in Baghdad go to see it, and there are those who have never heard of its existence. It is supposed to have been built about the time of the foundation of Ur, in honour of what god I know not; in fact, having never been lucky enough to hear the opinion of a qualified archæologist on the subject, I can do little more than describe its outward appearance.

The tower, then, still stands about two hundred feet high, and is built entirely of unburnt brick. At irregular intervals courses of reeds, brown with age, are laid, and so well-preserved are these reeds that donkeys will nibble at them as they project from the masonry, apparently finding nourishment in them. The brickwork is drained and ventilated by square holes, utilised to-day by the birds, for the high-place of a forgotten god has now become a home of wild-fowl—shel-drake, black and white crows, blue jays, and others—which wheel, scream, and settle about its desolate majesty in the utter solitude of the place. A nomad sheikh sometimes pitches his black tents at the mound, but he does not remain for long, moving, as all things in the desert move.

Like Birs Nimrud, the tower is visible for many miles, but its curious, serrated outline gives it a different appearance from that of the solid, fire-fused pile of Borsippa. If one climbs up the mound of loose, sandy earth, and finds a niche in the broken masonry, one can see a broad horizon on all sides, the flat plain stretching as far as the eye can reach,

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with here an irrigation ditch, here a patch of cultivation, or a group of tents, insignificant in themselves, but breaking the eternal desolation and barrenness. Chaldæans of an age later than that of the foundation of the ziggurat must have studied the stars from its summit, and from its top watchers could see the approach of enemy hordes from the north. There is no chamber within the core of the pile, it is solid brick throughout, and around it lay some forgotten city, once thought to have been Akkad, though this theory has long been discarded by archæologists. Arabs who at night scan the silver spaces of the moonlit desert for vanishing forms and vague, immense shapes, would tell you that jinns inhabit the place still, housing with bats and jackals in its holes and crevices.

Fragments of pottery and coins bearing Parthian and Latin inscriptions are to be picked up in plenty after rain, the latter showing that men lived here well into the Christian era. I myself found a few in the rubble of the mounds, eaten with verdigris, and Père Anastase of the Carmelite Fathers of Baghdad, who accompanied me on the day I visited the mound, afterwards sent me a number of such coins in fairly good preservation, which he had gathered together at the site.

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IV.—*Ur of the Chaldees*

[*Acknowledgments are due for information received from the excavating party and to the trustees of the British Museum and Pennsylvania University.*]

In the earlier days, the railway authorities so arranged that, either coming or going to Basrah by train, twenty minutes were spent at Ur junction for a meal. From the station the reddish heap of bricks, which is the city ziggurat, is plainly seen. Though the mound looks so close, however, the time allotted was not enough to enable the traveller, even if he sacrificed his chance of food, to reach it and get back before the train starts, for it would have taken him twenty minutes to walk to the ruined city. Nor, up to the present year,

would a closer view have rewarded him much, for little was to be seen beyond the great ziggurat itself. The excavations of Mr. Taylor in 1854 had long been obliterated, and their meaning could not be elucidated by any record. In 1919 Dr. Hall, of the British Museum, began to open up the Temple of the Moon God, but his time was short, and he had other digging operations elsewhere, so that he was unable to do much more than establish the certainty that there was a great deal to reward excavation in this most ancient of the buried cities of 'Iraq.

In the winter of 1922 a party was sent under the auspices of the British Museum and the Pennsylvania University. This party, consisting of four experts, built itself a house, and in a short four months succeeded in revealing a number of buildings, in tracing the plan of the inner city, and in adding enormously to our knowledge of history. They were successful early in their stay in striking the great temenos wall, a double wall, enclosing the whole area of the sacred inner city. The enclosure was called in Sumerian " E-Temen-ni-il," or " The House-of-the-Platform-He-Raised," and the tracing of this wall in a continuous line, with its principal gates, enabled the excavators to foretell where the various buildings within the enclosure would be found.

This buttressed wall was built by the King Ur-in-gur, the first great figure to emerge in the history of the city, though before him two dynasties of kings had gone their way and slept in dust; and a noble wall it was, measuring, with its wide space between the outer and inner thicknesses, about eleven yards in width, ten feet in height, and about one thousand two hundred yards in circumference. It enclosed the chief treasure of Ur, its ancient shrines of the moon-god and his spouse the moon-goddess, celebrated throughout the land of Shinar. It enclosed the great ziggurat, or " high-place," which rose high above the plain, and it probably enclosed Ur-in-gur's own palace, for the heap which still lies untouched awaiting the excavator's spade another year, is surmised to be the palace of the kings.

Abraham and his story come late in the history of Ur. When Abraham and Terah, with their tents and cattle, moved in caravan across the plains of Mesopotamia to the richer pastures of the north, Ur of the Chaldees was already a venerable city. The wall which enclosed its sacred places stood high and firm, the cult of the moon-god and goddess was old in the land and the people which dwelt there were familiar with the arts and luxuries of civilisation ; for, though Elamite hordes from the north had begun to harry and despoil the land, making it expedient for wealthy sheikhs like Abraham to fare forth into distant and more prosperous regions, the people of Sumer, or Shinar, with Ur as the leading city, had known a long period of peace and prosperity. Many generations of pilgrims had been wont to come from great distances to give their offerings to the priests of the famous temples. Agriculture and commerce had flourished, as the many tablets found bearing records of the sale of land, sheepskins, dates, corn, and other merchandise testify.

In short, in Ur of the Chaldees the well-to-do of the place enjoyed their life much in the same fashion as the well-to-do 'Iraqi townsman enjoys it to-day. Women combed their hair with combs exactly like those sold in the bazaars of any modern 'Iraqi city. They adorned themselves with beads of cornelian, agate and gold as they do to-day. They wore earrings and nose-rings of patterns similar to those in present use, and understood the spinning and weaving of silk, cotton, and wool. The reed matting used then was identical in pattern with that of to-day, and most probably was then, as now, plaited by the people of the marshes near by. Pick-axes, mace-heads, and other instruments, models of which were placed in the temples as ex-votos, show little variance from the pattern of implements forged in the twentieth century.

If civilisation was old in Abraham's day, the famous temples whose worship he scorned, were older still. Indeed, the shrine of Nin-Makh, the moon-goddess, harem-quarter of the moon-god's temple, has kept to its original plan longer than any known building in the world, from its foundation

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before history begins to its destruction a few hundred years before the Christian era. Its outer wall is, in itself, an epitome of the history of the place, for the lowest courses, of the half-dried mud-brick still used by the people of 'Iraq and called "green brick," belongs to the long, dim period before history has any very definite record or illustrious name to present. It would puzzle any but the expert to tell this "green brick" from the surrounding mud of the soil. Then come the sun-dried bricks of Ur-in-gur, and his son Dungi who, about two thousand three hundred years before Christ, finished the building operations of his father. Dungi's name often appears on the many tablets of commerce, for he lived longer than his father, and under him Ur became paramount city of the Sumerian plains. Layer on layer, the pious building of this or that king is traceable, and, among them, the great king Nebuchadnezzar the Second of Babylon, laid his courses of good burnt brick, inscribed with his august name. Lastly came Cyrus the Persian, king of kings, who rebuilt the wall above the work of his predecessors.

It is possible to trace a distinct evolution in the cult of the deity. In the earlier period, up to the time of Ur-in-gur, and his successors, for many hundreds of years, the moon-goddess's temple was designed, not for the worship of the people, but for the cult of the goddess in her house by the priests, her servants. The temple was the "harem" of Nanna, the moon-god, and the reserve and secrecy of the harem was observed in the cult of his female counterpart. The dwellings of the priests clustered about the shrine in the temple precincts, and the altar and image of the goddess within her sanctuary were enwrapped in the mystery of inaccessibility. There was no public viewing of the goddess except once a year, when she was borne out of the shrine and beyond towards the sanctuary.

A broad step, plated with metal laid in bitumen, led to the table of offerings, which, with the altar behind it, were also overlaid with metal, possibly gold. Behind the altar, again, the high priest stood or knelt, whilst behind him, in the dark

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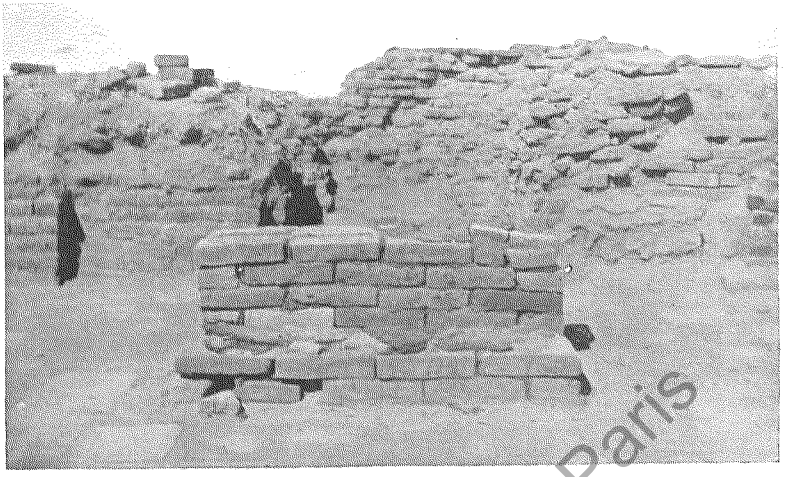
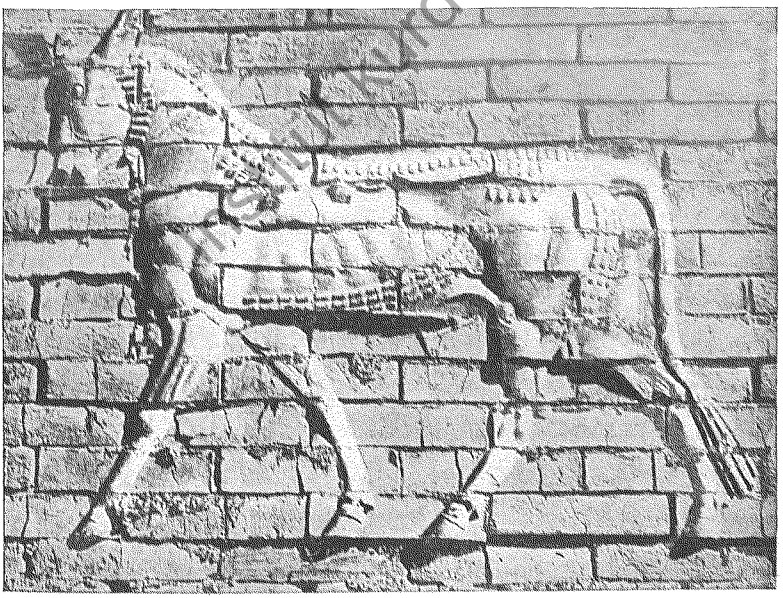


THE ALTAR OF THE MOON-GODDESS: UR OF THE CHALDEES.
(*See page* 118.)



A BAS-RELIEF ON THE ISHTAR GATE: BABYLON.
(*See page* 109.)

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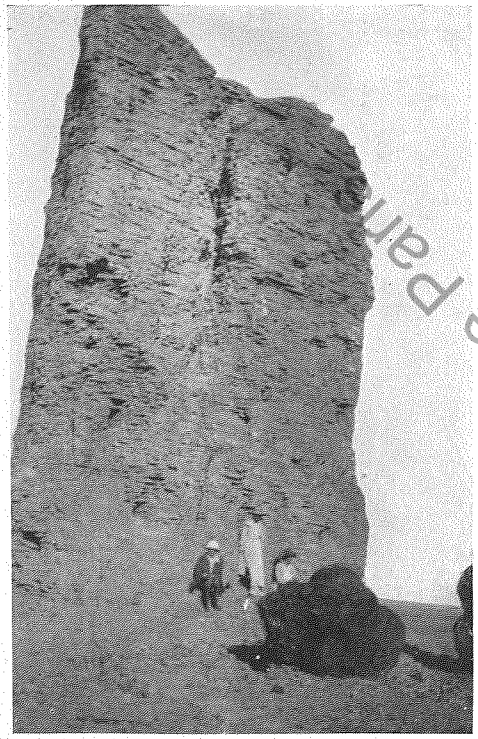
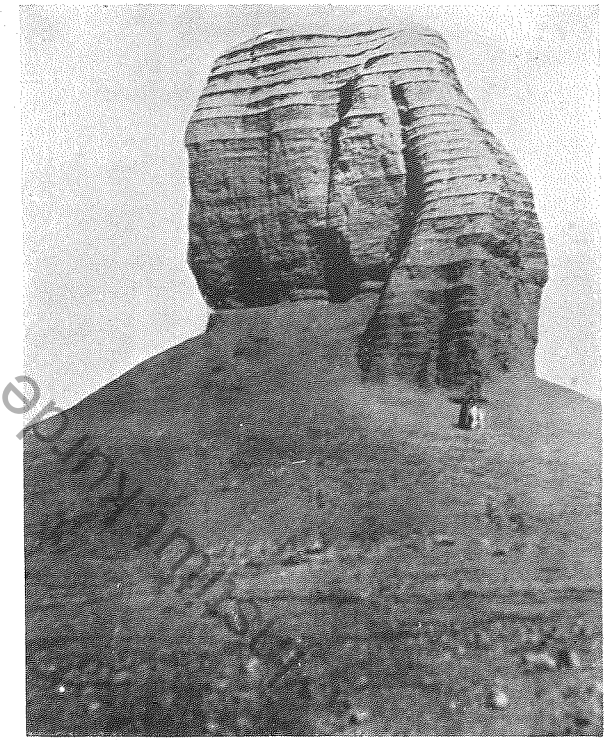


THE ZIGGURAT : BIRS NIMRUD.



THE ZIGGURAT : AKERKUF.

(*See page* 114.)

recesses of the sanctuary, built in the small proportions and primitive fashion of an earlier age, stood the image of the moon-goddess, the Lady, lit with many oil-lamps which brought her figure out of the gloom. How that image was fashioned we cannot say. The favourite image picked up among the *débris* of the city is that of a standing female figure crowned by a tiara, her hands supporting her lifegiving breasts. Another is a primitive image of the mother and child—a sitting figure suckling a young child which lies on her knees.

Pavement, walls, shrine, altars, all have been carefully uncovered by the excavators. So neatly and scientifically have they done their work that it is difficult to believe that it is not a building in process of construction. Not a brick which was *in situ* has been unnecessarily disturbed. Its bones have been dissected with such knowledge that the Arabs who dig under Mr. Woolley's direction are inclined to believe that he is in communication with the devil. How else could he know that at such and such a spot a figure would be found, and in such and such a corner a cylinder or inscribed stone?

When we stood on the summit of the ziggurat, the immense heap of brickwork seen from the station, and viewed the whole scene of operations beneath, the temple looked much as it must have looked to the original builders, when the men of Ur bore their hods of unburnt brick and laboured at the building of a house for their patroness, raising course on course until they reached the roof. How was the temple roofed? It is thought that the roofing was much the same as that used by Arab builders in modern houses; namely, beams of palms, or, possibly, more valuable woods, laid across from wall to wall, with cross-beams over them, matting spread above, and the whole then covered with a thick layer of mud to shut out the heat and rain.

The inner sanctuary, the plan of which was respected by successive dynasties, including the Persian, has small chambers leading off the shrine in which stood the image of the goddess. Although these little rooms were rebuilt at a higher level, the plan of the first design was most scrupulously adhered to, and

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the altars and tables for offerings which they contained were built up on the exact sites they had always occupied. One of the side chambers was found to be paved with a mosaic of sea-shells, and a number of shells, large and small, were found in the temple. These were probably offerings to the moon-goddess, for it may be that even in those remote times, men realised some mystic affinity between the moon and the sea, enabling her to sway the tides, and brought the treasures of the deep for her acceptance.

I have already said that Cyrus, monotheist though he is said to have been, rebuilt the temple of the moon-goddess, bricks bearing his name being found above the work of Nebuchadnezzar. He is also responsible for a drain in the outer courtyard which at first puzzled the excavators, as it was a short drain leading from the pavement into the earth beneath, unlikely to have been useful for carrying off rain-water or sewage, until a passage in Herodotus describing a temple in Babylon which he had seen, caused them to jump at its significance, namely, that it was a drain to carry away blood shed at sacrifices, and that an altar for public sacrifice probably stood where the drain begins. The blood, soaking into the earth, would thus sanctify the whole area.

There could have been little beauty of architecture about these Sumerian temples. Barbaric decoration, precious metals beaten into rude shapes, hangings of costly stuffs, adornments of precious stones, an image of the goddess decked out with gauds and gold, these could not rival the gracious colonnade and lovely statuary of the Greeks of a later age. The 'Iraqi was never artistic. Of all the jewels and gold ornaments found by the expedition, the majority show heaviness of execution and lack of taste. Only a very few reveal the touch of an artist, among the few being an exquisite necklace of lapis beads interspersed with single leaves in beaten gold, and a bunch of grapes as a pendant in the centre, delicate of execution and fine of workmanship.

A number of women's ornaments were found in a corner of a chamber of the sanctuary of Nin-Makh, placed there,

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perhaps, for safety in some time of stress and trouble. Among them was a gold pin, or dagger, for thrusting through the hair, the hilt of which was formed by an image of a goddess; gold hair-ring, and many beads of gold, cornelian, agate, obsidian, chalcedony, and other precious stones; earrings and rings.

Beads have been found in quantities during the course of operations, both of precious or semi-precious stones, and of glass. Some amber-coloured glass beads, which you would swear to be straight from a penny bazaar, so new and common do they look, were discovered, amazingly enough, with remains of a very early period. Tiny glass beads, of various colours, proved to be as bright as on the day they were made, after the dirt had been washed away. A favourite ornament was the head of a hideous little demon called Puzu, worn as an amulet against disease.

The second temple, dedicated to Nanna, consort of Nin-Makh, stands at a short distance to the south-west. Its excavation was begun in 1919 by Dr. Hall, and, like the shrine of the goddess, this temple bears plain evidences of its re-building at different periods. It has a curious well, or cistern, lined with terra-cotta, and between the temple-wall and the temenos is another well, thirty-six feet deep, in which a number of inscribed cones were found. Near this well is a long, well-constructed drain, built by King Dungi.

In the south-west corner of the enclosure is the palace mound, as yet unbroached, its secrets inviolate until the excavators begin another season's work. The work of this season had to be brought to a premature conclusion owing to lack of funds, just on the brink of most interesting operations on the ziggurat itself. To the north-west side of the ziggurat a gateway of the time of Nabonidus, last of the Babylonian kings, was discovered, and it was thought that this gateway must lead into a courtyard covered by the tremendous mass of brickwork fallen from the ziggurat.

Here, too, the excavators made a most interesting and valuable find, that of a stone statue, headless, and wearing a

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single garment which probably represents sheepskin, though the sculpture is very primitive. The shoulders of the figure are bare, as are the feet which show beneath the garment. The hands are clasped in front. This is a statue of a very early period from Lagash, and though it may have been brought to Ur as a spoil of victory, it had also possibly another and more interesting cause for being in Ur. Nabonidus, a curiously modern figure with his predilection for monotheism and his taste for archæology, had a habit of collecting old images of gods. He professed himself as anxious to restore honour to neglected gods, but signs are not wanting that his interest in them was not wholly religious, though the priests of the prevailing cults suspected him of trying to discredit the worship of his contemporaries. He was undoubtedly a scholar and a man of antiquarian tastes. In rebuilding the temple of Shamash, the sun-god, at Sippar, for instance, he took the trouble to record on a baked cylinder describing his building operations, that he found there an old foundation-stone bearing the name of Naram-Sin, son of Sargon I., which had not seen light for 3,200 years.

It may have been he who found, and set up on the ziggurat at Ur, this ancient figure from Lagash, and if he so set up one antiquarian treasure, may he not have set up others? Mr. Woolley, head of the expedition, has a great hope that he did, and a little more money at the disposition of the party would have enabled him to prove or disprove this fascinating theory. What a treasure may lie beneath the tumbled bricks of the old ziggurat.

There is, apparently, no chamber within the ziggurat itself. This was, on its lower courses at any rate, faced with blue-glazed tiles, and must have looked a noble monument as it glittered high above the mound on which Ur was built. For the buildings enclosed by the temenos can only represent a small part of the area of the city, which probably extended for some miles, for cities sprawled in those spacious days, and the surrounding villages were all described as being part of the city itself; indeed, they looked to the city for protection, and shared in its triumphs.

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The Arabs who work for the expedition are paid a rupee a day, and, in addition receive payment for every find which they make. While we were visiting the camp, a tatterdemalion Arab brought up a number of " antikas " which he had found in some mound near by. The find consisted of some pieces of broken pottery and some roughly-shaped animals in terra-cotta. Some were of little value, and these were returned to the finder, a selection being made of one or two small objects, including the head of a horse, which had been painted in stripes with some black pigment. For these he was rewarded with a rupee, which he accepted with no demur, nor is a bargain ever attempted. All the finds are divided with the 'Iraq Government, which hopes some day to have a museum of its own, but objects of interest will first of all be taken to Europe for examination and study there. For the present the 'Iraq Government cannot spare the money to build a museum, nor is it likely that the slender revenues of the country will, for a long time to come, be able to provide for the cost of upkeep and properly paid curators.

We examined some of the treasures of the expedition ranged along the shelves of a little room. Exposure and time have often rendered them very perishable, and like the objects recently found in Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb, they must be treated chemically in order to preserve them. When an inscribed tablet is found, it looks to an unskilled observer, exactly like a lump of clay, with little to distinguish it from other clods of 'Iraq earth. But the expert has recognised it as a possible treasure and sets to work upon it.

First of all it is baked, after which it is carefully brushed, much of the loose earth covering the inscription coming away. Then it is treated with acids, and with a solution of celluloid to preserve it. Lastly, it is handed to the member of the party whose special task is the deciphering of tablets, and it is ready to be packed and laid away. Vases, ivory objects, pottery, and all the other multifarious objects which are laid bare day by day are subjected to similar tests and treatment. Beads and precious stones often look new when the members

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of the expedition have done with them, and are strung together and laid in beds of cotton-wool.

Not only are the objects themselves preserved, but a pictorial record is made by pencil and brush by the artist member of the party. Lovely fragments are reconstructed by him into the shapes of which they originally took, and much can be guessed from a fragment. A foot, and the rung of a ladder on a piece of pottery, is part of a representation of a siege; a head and two ears with four feet below pre-supposes a double-headed deity or demon, and so on. Duck-weights, or weights in the form of ducks with their heads laid round on their backs, have been found here as in other buried cities of Lower 'Iraq, and human relics of all kinds enable one to guess a little of the domestic and daily life of a long-dead people. Who knows how much more of their life, religion, history, and destiny may not be revealed by next year's digging? This ancient land has not yet imparted one tithe of her secrets, and the cradle of the world's civilisation has yet much to teach the youngest of her heirs. All lies waiting in the rich soil of 'Iraq.

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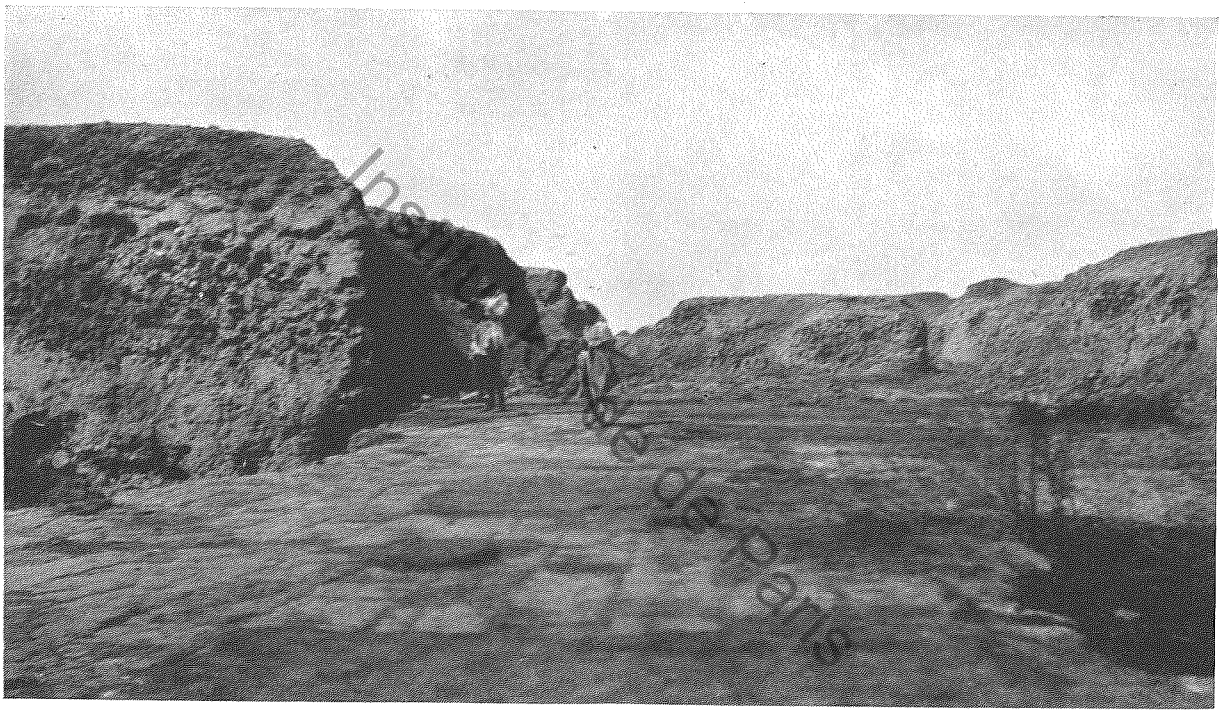
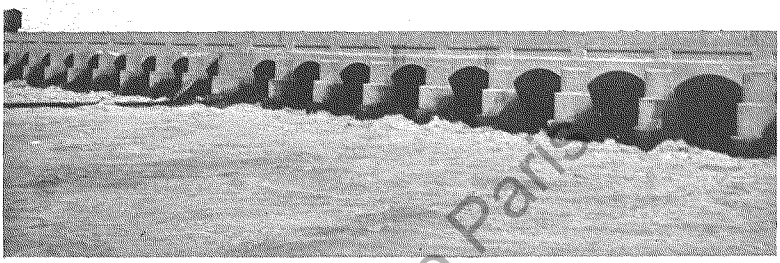


THE SACRED WAY: BABYLON.

(*See page* 110.)



HINDIYAH BARRAGE.



BAGHDAD: FROM THE SERAI.

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PART III

SECULAR CITIES

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CHAPTER XI

THE CAPITAL CITY OF 'IRAQ AND ITS PEOPLE

THERE have been many Baghdads and many rulers of Baghdad since the Caliph Mansur built his round city on the west bank of the Tigris, a city designed like a fort, in the heart of which lay the Imperial palace of the Abbasids. Before the death of its founder the city had overflowed the limits of the original walls and soon spread on either side of the river, embracing the suburbs of Mu'adhem and of Kadhimein; a fair city of palace, mosque, and public place, a city worthy of comparison with any capital then existent in the two hemispheres. It suffered the obliterations and changes which take place during times of growth and stress, but it was never completely destroyed until the advent of Hulagu the Tartar, who, in the middle of the thirteenth century, took the town, burnt and sacked its palaces, looted and razed its public buildings, destroyed its libraries, hurling priceless manuscripts into the Tigris; and, greatest injury of all, tore down the barrages and dykes which had existed for thousands of years, thus turning the green and fruitful land, with its rich cornfields and well-watered gardens, into barren desert and malarious swamp.

Utter as this first destruction was, the town raised its bruised head, and a second and poorer Baghdad arose. Another Mongol invasion under Timur the Lame swept over Mesopotamia at the end of the fourteenth century, and again Baghdad lay in ruins. Shah Ismail the Persian destroyed the town a third time in 1524, and so did Shah Abbas at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Turkish Sultan, Murad IV., took the town from the Persians in 1638, and after the usual

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scenes of bloodshed and destruction, Baghdad was rebuilt once more.

Nor were conquering armies the only destructive agents. Baghdad has suffered many times from flood, when the river has risen and spread over the entire area, sometimes causing great devastation. The wonder is, not that so little of ancient Baghdad remains, but that any remains at all.

In another chapter I have written of that ancient minaret in the Souk el Ghazl which stands derelict, having survived all the many destructions of Baghdad, and something of the mediæval mosques and schools. Mr. Le Strange, in his book, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, gives a wonderful account of the earlier Baghdad, drawing upon Arab geographers and contemporary documents, and M. Massignon has made a scholarly examination of the remains which still exist.

The mediæval walls on the south and east of the city, along the line of which one can walk to-day, received irreparable damage from Midhat Pasha, he who is known as the " Father of the Turkish Constitution," and was in 1860 governor of Baghdad. He was a great man, but an incurable busybody, and when the treasury was exhausted by his reforming schemes, he destroyed the ancient walls and sold the bricks for building. He left, however, the gates untouched, and two of these, the Bab el Wastani and the Bab et Tilism (Talisman Gate), were in fairly good repair until the late war. The Bab et Tilism was bricked up when Sultan Murad IV. made his triumphant entry into Baghdad, and the superstition was that one day a new deliverer should ride beneath the archway into the town.

It was not allowed to play a part in the entry of British troops into Baghdad, for the Turks, who had used it as an arsenal, blew it up before they left, the explosion shaking the whole city and destroying some houses. The gate is to-day a heap of dust. The deep moats and line of the walls stand now in the desert, so capricious is the outline of the town, and towards the South Gate, near the building converted into the English garrison church, a village of Assyrian refugees has

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sprung into being, the hutments and tents lying within the shelter of the rampart mound.

Of the secular buildings of Baghdad of the Abbasids little remains. The Khan Aortmah, at the entrance to the souks, once used as an inn for travellers, is part of the property from which the Mirjaniyah Mosque derives its revenue, and an inscription over the gateway records this. It is a fine building, and it has been suggested that it might be utilised by the Government, for now it is merely a storehouse for cotton and piece-goods, where bales and skins lie stacked until they are sold to retailers. This beautiful, solidly-built, twelfth-century hall would make a noble council chamber or municipal building, and perhaps some day, when the Government exchequer is less perilously near bankruptcy, it may be put to higher uses.

At the north end of the town the citadel, before which stands an old cannon credited with miraculous powers, contains another stately relic of the past in the ruined palace of the Caliph Mamun, son of Harun er Rashid. This building was used as an arsenal by the Turks, and for a time as offices during the British occupation, but now that the 'Iraq army have taken possession of the citadel, the rooms and vaults of the palace are left empty. The lofty halls, high vaulted passages, and sirdabs are built of the smooth, well-cut brick of the Abbasids, and resemble in general design the existing part of the Mustanseriyah.[1] Here and there is an arch or lintel, a roof or a doorway, adorned with the decorative fancies which the builders of the day loved to chisel upon the hard surface of the burnt brick, and the whole remains a noble example of the best period of architecture in Baghdad.

It is sad that it has fallen into such decay and malodorous neglect, and that no effort is being made to stay the process of disintegration, but the Government of 'Iraq has no money to spare and cannot afford to spend the large sum which would be needed to repair and restore this ancient monument.

But if the buildings of Baghdad of the Caliphs have

[1] The old religious college now utilised as a Customhouse. (*See* p. 63.)

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vanished, the modern town still holds much that make the stories told by Sheherazade to her sleepless spouse seem possible even yet, in these days when sleek effendis in European clothes sit in the coffee-houses and discuss the relative virtues or discomforts of English or Turkish rule, when the cinema signs shed garish light at night, and such innovations as electric light, telephones, and the Ford car have become a part of daily life. What matters it that the gaudy posters proclaim that Eddie Polo, or some other cinema star, will be presented by such and such in a thrilling film, when only a stone's-throw away, in the narrow alleys of the covered souks, green-turbaned Seyyids sell silk and spices, and a dwarf, who surely stepped straight from a tale by the Caliph's consort, has a shop as tiny as himself, a mere slit in the wall about four feet high, in which he gravely dispenses nuts. I should never be surprised to see the Fair Persian chaffering for a handful of pistachios with him, or see him carried off by an eunuch for some frolic in a Vizier's harem.

Of the realm of fairy-tale, too, are other bazaar characters such as the singing blind beggar, or the tall negro, six feet high and as black as coal, whom Allah has robbed of his reason. He wears nothing but sackcloth; old sacking is wound round his head for turban, his feet are bound about with the same, and he often waves a sceptre of straw. Little boys who haunt the souks with their basket, hoping to pick up a few annas by carrying parcels, mock him, but never unkindly, for the eccentric are half-holy, madness being akin to saintliness.

Here, in the half-light, sit slipper-makers, their booths hung with gay slippers and strips of leather dyed scarlet, sulphur, and green, their heads bent over their lasts. In another aisle are the saddle-makers, embroidering dyed leather with intricate designs, and close by the harness-makers. Fringes of scarlet and blue, woollen tassels in bright colours, applications of cowries and beads go to the adorning of favourite mare and cab-hack alike, for, though it may go half-fed, no horseflesh goes soberly clad in Baghdad. Black-

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clad Moslem women sit on the step of the cotton-merchant's booth, and bargain for Manchester prints, or at a neighbouring shop choose from the silks which the merchant unrolls in shimmering cascades to catch their fancy. Silk, as the Englishwoman in Baghdad has discovered, is a good deal cheaper in the souks than it is at home, even European-manufactured silk, while the seduction of the hand-woven silk, which is the speciality of Baghdad, and can be woven to order in any colour she likes to order, brings her often to the souk in which the makers of abas and izars sit, their shelves piled with wonderful silken robes of every hue, stiff with gold and silver thread, plain, or woven in varying designs and stripings.

Another byway belongs to the belt-makers. Here, with an instrument like a sharpened crochet-hook, the belt-maker embroiders the leather belts with which men gird in their garments at the waist. The belts are padded and stiff, and the skill of design and swiftness of hand of these *hazamjis* has often awakened my admiration. Just by the lovely-tiled entrance to the silver souk sit the vendors of silken tassels, their rainbow wares hung in rows like the tails of Mary's lambs.

The silver souk is a squalid souk within a souk—a narrow, crooked way around an inner courtyard, where bracelets, anklets, nose-rings, hair-ornaments, and other trinkets are made. Here silversmiths and goldsmiths, mostly Jews, ply their trade, small boys aiding them by pressing the sheepskin which acts as bellows and heats the furnace on the floor. The silversmiths prefer date-stones as fuel because they throw out a clear heat. Not only do the smiths make the heavy gold and silver anklets (*hijil*) worn by women, but also delightful little *khalkhal* for the chubby ankles of babies. These are circlets of silver bells, so that baby may make music wherever he goes and his mother may know whither he has strayed.

"*Balek! balek!*" (Your heed!) is heard as one pushes one's way through the main souk, and one draws back against a shop to avoid being crushed by a huge bale, borne by a Persian porter bent almost double by its weight; his black,

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bobbed hair stiff beneath his conical felt hat, his back padded for the bearing of burdens, his kilt-like garment stopping at the knee. These Persian and Kurdish porters look like their ancestors of the days of Darius. There are usually some twenty or thirty of them at the river end of Bank Street, sitting on the ground in friendly converse and sipping at small glasses of amber-coloured tea, which they hold delicately poised between one large finger and thumb. They are devout Shiahs, and in Moharram many of the porters one sees staggering under heavy burdens may have backs raw or breasts beaten to a pulp from nocturnal flagellations.

"Chink-chink-chink! chink-a-chink-chink-chink-chink!" The rhythmic noise comes from the money-changers, all Jews, seated cross-legged on the ground, as they rattle handfuls of rupees at the passers-by.

At the entrance of the souk sit letter-writers. There is a row of them in Hospital Street outside the Law Courts, squatting beside their wooden stools on which are the implements of their trade. Crouching beside the scribe and dictating to distant husband or son, you nearly always find a black-veiled woman, for Moslem women of the poorer class are rarely literate; or it may be a tribesman, his shaggy elf-locks hanging on either side of his swarthy face, or an aged man with trouble in his eyes. The fee for a letter varies according to the means of the client and the nature of the letter.

If you follow the street a little further, where the bank slopes down to the river, you may come across a sight at least as old as Babylon. It is a favourite spot in which to consult soothsayers, and on most afternoons a mysterious knot of women is to be found gathered around an old crone muttering spells and casting eggs or other small objects into the river.

"Hullo, sister! See Persian carpet!" It is the oily voice of the dealer, as you pass his door. You feel irritated by the familiarity, but this form of address obtained vogue in Baghdad when the only Englishwomen in the town were nursing sisters. Most of the dealers have picked up a little English, as have the small coolie boys.

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A good place to hunt for bargains is the street mysteriously named the "Thieves' Bazaar," so called because there the police have found many an article stolen by pilfering hands. It is a shabby place, but wonderful bargains are to be picked up by a patient seeker. Large Sheffield plate candelabra at a ridiculous figure, cut-glass decanters for the price of common moulded jugs, have been brought back in triumph by those who visit this bazaar of a shady reputation. It is the haunt of receivers of stolen property, it is also the Petticoat Lane of Baghdad, for nothing seems worthless enough not to have a price there, from mangy sheepskins to second-hand nails and tops of cigarette tins.

El Jadda, or New Street, is the long street cut across Baghdad by the Turks during the late war, and rents there are very high, as much as Rs. 600 a year being asked for an insignificant box-like booth. Near Exchange Square there are rows of carpenters, whose specialties are tables, coffins, and cradles, thus supplying the three chief needs of man. The cradles swing from a cross-bar, for "rock-a-bye, baby" has not yet been placed on the Index by Baghdad health specialists, and the coffins are rough deal shells, lidless, because the dead are not nailed down.

Cemeteries lie all round the town, cities of the dead encircling the city of the living. The other day I went for a walk in the spring sunshine, along the ramparts to the east of the city, and heard a strange chorus of chanting and sobbing. It was Thursday, a favourite day for women to visit the graves, and there were several hundreds of mourners. Some chanted and sobbed at once, others sobbed and moaned, yet others intoned melancholy dirges. Each woman, or group of women, was by the grave of her or their dead, for the mourners were mostly women, though here and there one saw a man crouching lonely by a mound. When Arabs weep they weep loudly like small children, without any effort to hide or restrain their grief; in fact, during Moharram, and other seasons when women mourn together, one comes to the conclusion that 'Iraqis, especially Shiahs, enjoy "the luxury of a good cry."

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Squalor and tawdriness are always next door to beauty in the city of Baghdad. If one is thrilled one moment by some combination of colour and form which could only be found in the East, one is moved the next by disgust or pity. Evil sights, evil smells, evil taste, one cannot escape from them. One rarely sees a healthy child, or even a thoroughly jolly child. One turns with surprised delight to hear a baby chuckling in the street, it is so rare. By far the greater proportion of the babies are wizened, old-looking, sickly; their eyes red and unsightly with running matter, their faces disfigured by sores. Every tenth person one meets is blind, or semi-blind, the result of dirt and neglect.

In the clothes, trades, handicrafts handed down to him by his forefathers, the taste of the Baghdadi is good, but take him out of his rut, and his leaning is to vulgarities, crude colours, cheap horrors, and shoddy stuff. He is picturesque, *malgré lui*. His ancestors, proceeding along lines of pure utility, produced pots of earthenware and copper which, because they are simple, are things of beauty and a joy to the eye, but on the whole the modern 'Iraqi prefers a petroleum tin, while a cheap and horrible German vase satisfies his æsthetic yearnings. Education does not cure him; in fact, it aggravates the disease, because in his mind progress and things European are inevitably associated.

The 'Iraqi is not creative. He makes nothing that his father did not make before him, and he makes it worse than his father did. He produces wonderful and beautiful things, but he produces them by rote, following the traditional routine, and from this routine he only departs disastrously. The Japanese is a born artist. He produces, creates, seeks fresh forms of self-expression, and the results are good. The 'Iraqi creates nothing. Outside the crafts which he has plied for centuries, such as the crafts of weaving and building, he is a bad workman, hopelessly incapable, incurably lazy, astonishingly uninventive. A crooked line is as good as a straight one to him. An instrument ill-tuned is as good as one accurately pitched. Eastern music has a great attraction for

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me, but nowhere, in the Near East, have I heard such poor music as in 'Iraq. In Tunis and Cairo one hears good singers —here never. I have listened enthralled in Damascus to a muezzin calling prayer; in Baghdad the call is a raucous shout. The bands of music which play at weddings and festivals are composed of instruments all at different pitches, and cats make better harmony.

In the souks one does not see a single *objet d'art* or delicate piece of workmanship produced in the country. All such treasures come from Persia, India, Syria, or Egypt. The Turk is accused of being inartistic and uninventive; I find him no worse than the 'Iraqi.

A friend of mine had a piece of silk which had been embroidered in Aleppo. She thought that she could get the embroidery copied in the Baghdad souks, as the pattern was simple. A friend, a native of Baghdad, found her an embroiderer, said to be skilful at his trade, and she left her piece with him, saying she would call in a fortnight. A fortnight passed, and it was not ready, and at the end of three months she found the craftsman still eyeing it dubiously, not a stitch set on the silk, and took it away, to his relief. He had never done any pattern but those usual in Baghdad, so did not wish to copy her embroidery. A Japanese, an Indian, a Persian, or even a Syrian would at least have produced a creditable attempt. The Baghdadi merely thought his client a foolish person for wishing to depart from precedent. For the Baghdadi is not aware of any shortcoming. He is perfectly self-content. He knows all that it is needful or desirable for him to know, and has no wish to learn anything from anybody. This fatuous attitude of complete self-approval blunts any kind of criticism.

In the fields of intellect it is the same. He has no mental curiosity, nor does his religion stimulate such curiosity. One of the local notables, a prominent Shiah, who for some time filled the post of Minister for Education, was with difficulty restrained from publishing a poem to prove that the earth was flat. Another dignitary had electric light put into his

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house. After some days he told a friend that it was very pleasant, of course, but that the light worried him when he wanted to get to sleep.

" But why don't you switch it off ? "

" How does one do that ? "

" It is perfectly simple," and his visitor lifted the switch.

" Allah ! I never knew that! The light has shone since the workmen left."

These tales are told of the notables of Baghdad, and it can be seen how limited is the number of those whose grasp of modern conditions fits them for the management of public affairs. Those who talk of giving 'Iraq immediate independence do not realise how few there are in 'Iraq with the necessary mental equipment for responsible posts. The Egyptian is more or less equipped, and so is the Syrian, but the 'Iraqi has much to learn before he can produce the right class of man and be independent of the guidance and help of the foreigner.

With the professional classes it is no different. For instance, Turkish law did not allow any but properly qualified dentists to practise, and before the war there were several Turkish dentists trained in Europe in the town. Now a number of unqualified men are practising, and must continue to practise, as they are better than none. The qualified doctors of the town are Syrian, or Armenian, or Jewish ; at the time of writing the Director of Health is a Syrian. But they are far too few and it is small wonder if quacks sell nostrums and set up as healers ; indeed, numbers of the people prefer to go to the quacks. Of native technical experts, such as engineers, there are none at all, and even as a mechanic the local labouring man fails. He cannot understand the importance of keeping the parts of an engine clean nor, as G. W. Steevens said of the Egyptian fitter, can he be persuaded that an eighth of an inch one way or the other is of consequence.

Bribery is in the very bones of the 'Iraqi ; it is a habit which it will take long to eradicate. Many of the higher

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officials are aware of the enormity of the offence of taking bribes and are prepared to deal hardly with any cases which come to their notice, but it may be suspected that many of them would pause for an instant if it came to the choice between refusing or accepting benefits offered to them by persons whose interest it was to propitiate them. The venality of Government officials is taken as a matter of course by the man in the street. At the finish of any important case in the Courts or the grant of any large Government contract there are plenty of people ready to say that the successful party or contractor paid out some large sum of money of which so much went to the other man's lawyer, to the judge, or to the officials concerned. They think no worse of anybody for it. Of what use is money if it cannot be a friend in need at such times ?

Unfortunately, the conduct of some Englishmen in Mesopotamia during the war and the Armistice did not induce a change of heart. Many a " wangle " came suspiciously near corruption, and a number of fraudulent transactions, some dragged to light by subsequent inquiries, resulted in the belief that the British, after all, were not more clean-handed than anyone else. Before the war our prestige was high in the land, now the 'Iraqi looks upon us as much the same clay as himself, nor does the cinema, with its dramas in which crooks and adventurers play thrilling parts, tend to enlighten him.

Secondary schools are badly needed in Baghdad and 'Iraq, for secondary schools alone will produce a better type of middle-class Baghdadi. The new college on the Mu'adhem Road will help ; and the Law School, School of Irrigation, and the technical schools which will arise in due course, will help too. For nowadays an ability to read the newspapers, a European coat and trousers, and a fez are too often the sole equipment of the effendi who sits in coffee-houses and discusses public events with utter incompetence. The stock-in-trade of a clerk is little more than an ability to read and write, and there are too many of him. The Ministry of Education will

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aim higher than the mere production of officials ; it will aim, if I read the signs aright, at the development of the character of the 'Iraqi and at creating in him the humility born of knowledge and the desire to learn. If only it had a little more money at its disposal ! But poverty is the trouble with most departments in 'Iraq, and only a period of prosperity, untroubled by the hectic political atmosphere which stunts all growth in these present unsettled times, will cure that disease.

Whatever may be said about his tendency to wobble politically, Faisal has the educational interests of his subjects at heart. He has taken as much interest in the building of the 'Iraq College and the discussion of its plans as in the erection of his own modest new palace to the north of Baghdad. His old palace was so small that he could not bring his family from the Hedjaz, and while that family remains away, his new subjects will look upon him as a man with one foot upon foreign territory.

For even the poorest boatman feels the impermanence and instability of the existing order of things, and asks philosophically, " What next ? " He has seen the Turk move with bag and baggage, and now hears people calmly debating whether he is to return. He has seen the British march into Baghdad, and hears talk of their marching out. He has heard *agents provocateurs* urging the people of ' Iraq in 1920 to chase the British from the country, and he has seen these same British, the rebellion of 1920 crushed, establishing some of their late enemies in positions of authority. He has seen a " foreigner," an Arab but not an 'Iraqi, placed upon the throne. He has heard that Faisal is pro-British and anti-British. He has heard that the British mean to stay, and that they are clamouring to go. He has heard that they are eagerly anxious to tap the wealth of the country, and that they regard it as a morass into which the money of the British taxpayer is thrown in vain.

Theories, rumours, alarms, *kalam* and again *kalam*, such is the daily fare in the coffeeshops and bazaars. The humbler folk shrug their shoulders, say " Min Allah ! " and go on with their everyday toil. Whether British, Faisal, Arab

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Republic or Turk govern, the life of cab-driver, boatman, porter, and such poor folk is like to be the same. Having no property to lose, they have few cares, and beyond a predilection in favour of the True Believer, one master is as good to them as another. "Min Allah!"

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CHAPTER XII

BASRAH : SINDBAD'S CITY

I FIND it difficult to write hard facts about Basrah, because my first impression dwells with me yet, and I shall always be haunted by the romance of it. For I saw it by night, when the palms in their lofty beauty lay, plumed and black, against the milky spaces of the Eastern night, and the great full moon barred the many waterways with shining ivory and silver. The houses, with their overhanging lattice windows, propped up by wooden struts, looked like illustrations to tales of Oriental adventure, and I was stirred by the gondola-like boats and high-prowed mahailas which lay moored to the dark banks. Here and there little fires kindled on shore or vessel sent ribbons of red across the water, here and there lamps shone in house or coffeeshop. The frogs kept up a loud, perpetual chorus on marshy bank or hidden creek, but except for their discordant music, all was magic and silence.

Basrah, like Venice, is wedded to the sea, and you can step from your house into a *bellum*, as the local gondola is called, and get the *bellumchi* propel his craft down from Basrah city to the shops at Ashar, underneath the bridges and down the length of the Strand, or up-stream into some quiet, hidden creek, where you can land and picnic. Creek picnics are a popular form of entertainment in Basrah, and in early spring, when you can push up into some palm-fringed waterway, where on the banks the young grass is green and the oleanders and almonds in blossom, a creek picnic is a delightful thing.

Everywhere is the date-palm, for Basrah, with its multitude of waterways, provides the right conditions for successful date-

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cultivation. The date-palm, says the hackneyed Arab proverb, must have its feet in water and its head in fire, and in Basrah, where even in winter the sun can strike hard, the date-palm flourishes and furnishes Basrah with her principal article of export. " Bless the date-trees, for they are your aunts," said the Prophet. If he had written in English, he would have said " fairy godmothers," for they produce almost every necessary of life. Food is their first use, and their fruit can be eaten ripe, unripe, dried, withered, crushed, and green. The juice, *dibis*, is a delicious form of syrup, and fermented it makes many different sorts of alcoholic drinks. The 'Iraq government has an experimental distillery at Basrah, which turns out cheap synthetic whisky, rum, gin, araq, crême-de-menthe, kummel, and other liqueurs, all from the adaptable date. Ropes and fabric are made from the fibre. The fronds are used for making brooms, baskets, and matting. The wood is put to many uses, as beams for building, beds, benches, bridges, cages, and fuel for fires. The three-cornered wedge at the base of the palm-frond, the *karab*, makes passable log-wood for winter fires.

And yet, as someone once said of it, it is a weary vegetable to live with, and those exiled in Basrah find their eyes aching sometimes for the sight of an elm standing in lush meadow-country, for a stately beach-tree, or a shady oak. A man who lay tossing in fever in Basrah one day, complained that the dancing shadow of the palm-fronds on the mud wall opposite was sending him mad. For they have an uncanny habit of throwing shadows, but never shade, and in the long days of heat, when green means so much, they are grey with dust, as is everything else.

When I came out in 1919 Basrah was still a great base camp, one of the most spacious and well-designed bases, and possibly one of the most expensive, which the war produced. In the desert a town had sprung up, miles of hutments, officers' houses, large canteens, Y.M.C.A. huts, cinemas, a costly officers' club-house, a civil and military club-house (Makina Club), and a vast Ordnance depôt where you could buy any-

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thing from a toothbrush to a roll-top desk, medical and civil stores, and other buildings. There were wonderful wharves, busy with shipping, furnished with the latest electric cranes, railways, and goods sheds. There were many hospitals, including an isolation hospital a little way down the river, a large hospital at Beit Naama, a few miles down-stream, and three large military hospitals in Makina and Margil. There was also a civil hospital and a civil nursing-home.

This big war-town was a populous city. British and Indian troops, Persian labour-corps with their felt hats and bobbed hair, army lorries, any quantity of Government Fords, ambulances, large cars in which staff-officers and generals sat in glory, all these made the roads busy, particularly that most expensive and excellent road which was the subject of questions in Parliament and is yet a cause of envy at Baghdad.

In those days most civil departments were allotted cars with a driver attached, and for a small monthly payment these could be used for private purposes; while as for the military, there was never the least difficulty in getting transport either by river or land. Those were still the golden days when things were very easy for the Englishwoman, and privileges were abundant. Government paid for this, that, and the other, one had free use of this and that, and Mesopotamia became, indeed, a blessed word—except to the taxpayer at home.

Before the rebellion in 1920 there was already a big change Everywhere there were reductions; the word "economy," which has been so much reiterated since, was continually in the mouth of the authorities; several of the hospitals closed down, and a very visible transformation was going on at the base, from which troops were gradually being shipped to India and Great Britain.

When I returned in the autumn of 1921, an enormous difference was seen. Where there had been busy life there was stillness and desolation. The ship that I had travelled upon was the only ship at the wharf, and the cranes were idle. The hutments were mostly empty. Cars were few upon the

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roads, gone were the generals and their staffs, vanished the days of "wangling"; the years of leanness were upon us, and privileges and free transport were no more. It was another and soberer Basrah.

Our house, with its big oriel windows, overhung the creek in Basrah city, and the little foot-bridge close to the house was a highway from villages outside into the markets, so that the traffic to and from the city was perpetual. Files of camels went past; brown sheep, whose shepherds walking before, gave odd throaty calls; weddings, funerals, processions; women going to and from their daily shopping; do-nothings who loafed and gossipped; little girls in gay abas and izars going to school; in fact, so varied was the life on our bridge that a book could be written about that alone.

A little higher up, where crazy houses, overgrown with bougainvillea, lean to the creek, and the rosy clusters of the oleanders are reflected in the muddy stream below, there was a delightful wooden bridge, with a coffeehouse beside it, where, in the shadow of the palms, grave idlers sipped at minute cups of coffee. This bridge led to a road called Dusty Lane, which ran along another creek, and this latter was flushed with oleanders in spring time, whilst the grass beneath the date-palms was that vivid, almost luminous, green which one sees after winter rains in Mesopotamia.

Another road, beside another creek, led through palm-gardens and a negro village out into the desert, and, branching off to follow a waterway to the left, one arrived at the old Turkish fortifications and walls. Walking through the palm-gardens, through which kingfishers flashed like blue fire, you were sure to meet the comely damsels of Khwat Razna, a village out in the desert, with their nose-rings of turquoise and pearls, their gleaming anklets and silver bracelets. Their black wimples and garments were sometimes relieved by a soiled scarlet skirt, or a glimpse of pink, and on their turbaned heads they usually bore burdens, a basket, or a copper pot, and if they came from town, perhaps a fish, held so that its tail trailed in the dust. These girls have ready smiles for the

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stranger, and work in the town as brick-porters, water-carriers, and so on. I employed one of them once to shift some rubbish, and she bore the filth away on her head, walking like a queen.

But their voices are not so harmonious as their appearance. At early dawn they meet on the banks of the creek and scream shrilly to one another. Jay-like they screech, hardly pausing for breath ; always quarrelling, it would seem to the stranger, though perhaps they are merely discussing the day's plans or the loss of an anna or two. Night is not the peaceful and silent time that one might expect. There is a lull until midnight, and after that one asks oneself if the inhabitants of Basrah ever sleep. At high tide, which may be at two in the morning or any hour during the night, tumult begins ; shoutings, curses, tornadoes of speech, yells, demoniac cries. The people of Basrah are simply incapable of speaking softly to each other, especially at night. At four the business of the day begins, with renewed noise. Full-throated, one man shouts to another, both yelling as if he who spake loudest won a point in the dispute. The women join in on a higher note until one is forced to believe that vociferation is their natural form of speech.

The casual listener comes to the conclusion that the Arab has only one subject of speech—money. The words " rupee " and " anna " come into every conversation that is overheard ; the boatmen scream rupee and anna at each other, the women talk rupees and annas over their water-fetching at the creeks. I heard a woman passing my window one day. She was sobbing and wailing, and I thought, sympathetically, that perhaps she had just lost some beloved relative. She paused on the bridge, and in the midst of her noisy weeping, confided to some passers-by what her trouble was. She had lost four annas !

Basrah is poor in ancient buildings. It was founded by the Caliph Omar seventeen years after the Flight, about the same time that Kufah and Wasit were built, and became one of the most flourishing cities of Mesopotamia. The city of Omar did not stand on the site of the present town, but some

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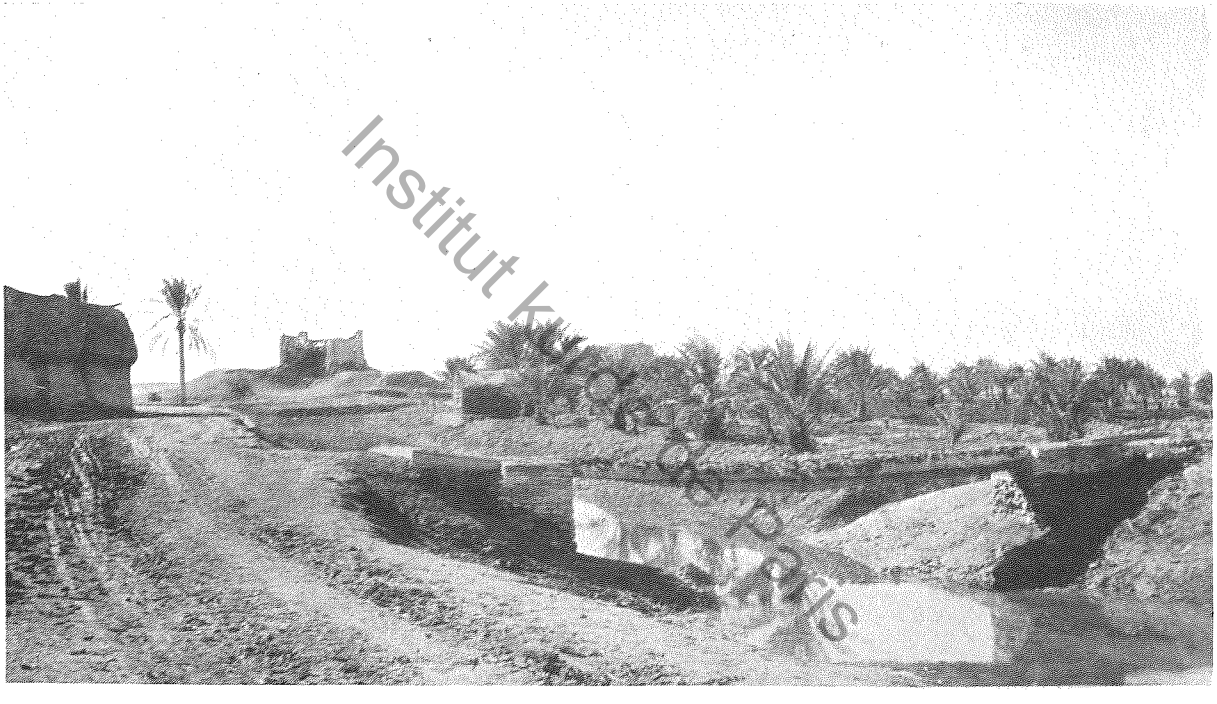

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OLD TURKISH FORTIFICATIONS: BASRAH.

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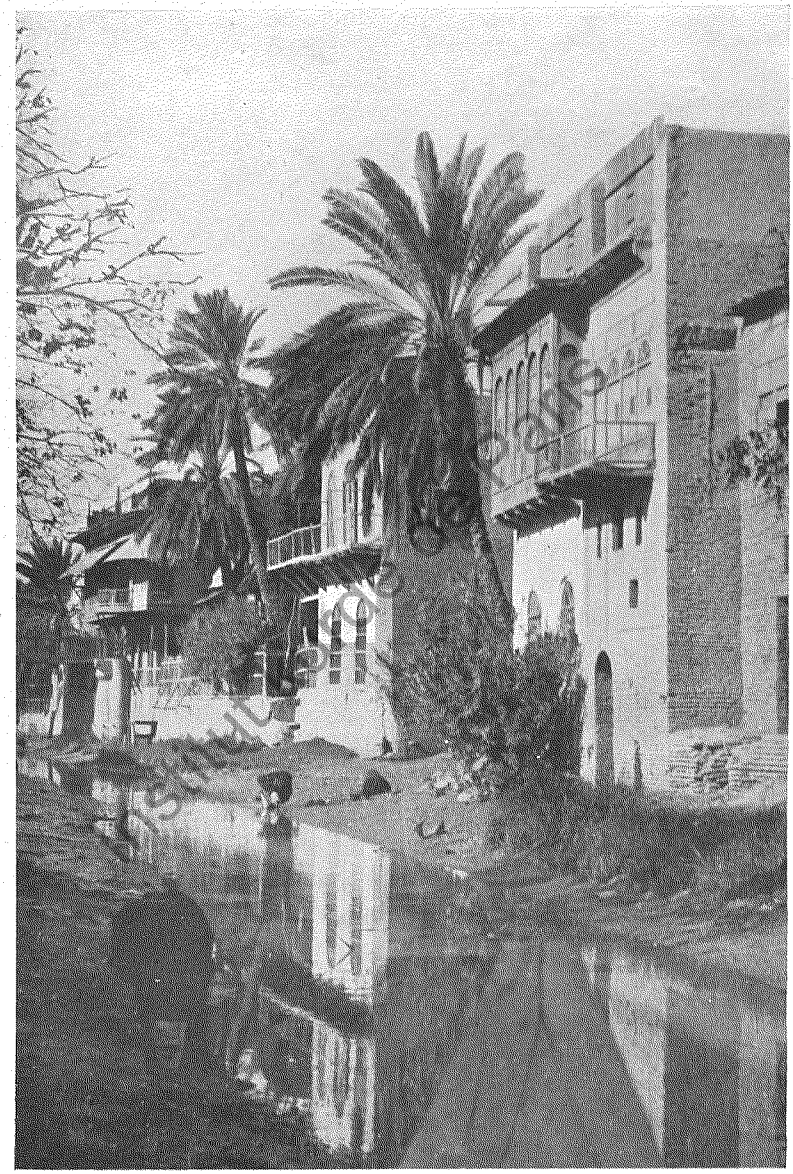

CREEK: BASRAH CITY.

miles to the west out in the desert, which was then covered by water. Zobeyr, named after the tomb of one of the Companions of the Prophet who was slain in the Battle of the Camel, stands upon the site of a quarter of old Basrah. Of the great mosque of Ali, "the largest in Islam," with its seven minarets, no trace remains, nor of any of the fine brick buildings of the days of the Abbasids. A tower, locally called "Sindbad's Tower," midway between Basrah and Zobeyr, is a vestige of the older city, but of its ancient glory nothing is left.

Zobeyr is a little desert town much frequented by nomads, who come in to purchase the necessaries of life. An outpost in the wild, it has a service of omnibuses from Basrah; crazy, springless, wooden vehicles which start from a little coffee-house at the margin of the desert, where travellers may refresh themselves at departure and arrival. The road, or track, meanders along a stretch of flat, alluvial soil, pale as sand, or as the sand-grouse which rise in startled coveys as one passes along. Often a sand-storm turns this ocean-like expanse of dun-colour into a whirling blur in which earth is mingled with sky. A sand-storm will pass with abruptness, leaving behind it an arresting clearness.

Zobeyr is seen in the distance as a small line of trees in the long solitude, and then as a low line of mud buildings, severe in outline, as becomes a town professing the Puritan faith of the Wahabi sect. For the town has adopted the stern creed of the men of Najd, and at prayer-times, five times a day, the mosques are full and the shops empty. Tobacco and coffee, so dear to the heart of the Arab, are banned to the Wahabi, as are silken attire and other luxuries. In Zobeyr there are no ornamental doorways or wanton lattices; nothing but plain, sun-baked walls concealing domestic life from the eye of the outsider. Cubes, rectangles, austere forms, blind surfaces, meet the gaze, with here and there a gleam of blue tile over gateway or mosque; and the men of Zobeyr, with their sober, dignified mien, match their dwellings.

You pass in to find camels snarling in the *maidan*, their

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knees bound to prevent them from rising, and with them a group of desert-men, small, brown, and wiry, who have travelled from some distant place across the waste, and walk with the free gait of men accustomed to spaces. The bazaars are attractive and clean, and sometimes—but not often—it is possible to pick up a good carpet or piece of old brass brought in by some casual wayfarer. There is any quantity of striped camel's-hair abas, such as the Bedawi wear ; of cheffiyehs, or head-handkerchiefs, and of the, agals or camel's-hair ropes with which they are bound to the head, as there is a ready sale for such commodities.

In 1919 the Sheikh of Zobeyr ruled the town, a feudal lord enjoying a certain measure of independence and free to follow the pursuits of his forebears, gazelle-hunting and hawking. One usually encountered one or two of his falconers in the market-places carrying hooded falcons on their gloved fists, or leaving them to brood captive and majestic on their blocks, while they lounged and gossipped. A fitting toy for desert men is the peregrine, with his clear, wild eyes, amber as trout-streams, and his hooked, cruel beak.

Things are changed now. The Sheikh abused his position, indulged in intrigue—always a tempting pastime to the Arab —and is now forced to live in Baghdad, leaving Zobeyr to be administered by the Mutasarrif of Basrah.

Shaibah, which was the scene of a battle in the spring of 1915 is a short distance from Zobeyr. Here Sir John Nixon gained a decisive victory over the Turkish general, Suleiman al 'Askari, who, wounded at a previous engagement, was carried into battle on a stretcher. When he saw that his troops had been defeated, Suleiman shot himself. The trenches are to be seen to-day, and the Turkish fort used as an officers' mess and a hospital, now deserted. Shaibah is a charming oasis, where the saltpetre gleams like snow through the sparse and airy green of the tamarisks.

To return to Basrah : the bazaars, or souks, are attractive, but not so large or varied as those of Baghdad. The cattle-market, with its sheep, goats, donkeys, and camels, is

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interesting, and contains a queer and heterogeneous assemblage of folk, among whom are old women seated on the ground with odds and ends, amber beads, pebbles, crystals, old clothes, pieces of brass, tintacks, and beads, spread on a cloth before them ; and near it is the dancing-girls' theatre, named Queen Mary's Theatre, in somewhat inappropriate compliment to Queen Mary. The Ashar quarter, too, in the streets of which stroll modern Sindbads of varied race, has attractive booths, where one can buy silk, cotton, strings of amber and cornelian, or odd little boxes of silver with lids of moss-agate.

Basrah has its cinemas like Baghdad, which are attended nightly by enthusiastic crowds. Lascars, Chinese, Arabs, Persians, Jews, and riff-raff of every nation follow raptly the drama on the screen, applauding with cheers and clapping when the heroine is rescued by the hero, and groaning audibly when wrong triumphs, as it invariably does until it is laid low in the final reel.

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CHAPTER XIII

MOSUL

THE fate of Mosul has long been the subject of discussion, and its future is, at the time I write, decided, inasmuch as the Allied Powers have declared firmly that it cannot be separated from Mesopotamia. The claim of the Turks at the Angora Conference caused much anxiety at Mosul. For the Mosuli it is not merely a question of belonging to one nation or another; it is a question of death or life. To return to the Turk would be to wither all shoots of prosperity which the city has begun to send out, to crush all hope of progress, and to return to the old methods of oppression and intolerance. For the Mosuli had begun to dream dreams of prosperity and security, of a time when a man's creed would not matter so much as his ability as a citizen, of an era when the ancient importance and wealth of Mosul would be revived.

The resurrection has begun already. If you open a book about Mesopotamia written before the war, you will find the city of Mosul described as squalid and dirty. It is time the stigma was removed, for now, thanks to the kindness with which it has taken to reform, the town is the cleanest and airiest in 'Iraq, recalling Southern Europe rather than the East. It has wide, well-kept streets, its buildings are of stone and marble. In fact, standing in Nineveh Street, bordered by solid, well-designed houses, their windows protected by grilles, their archways and facings of marble, it is easy to imagine oneself in Italy.

The squalor associated with the East is not visible at every corner as in Baghdad; at any rate, in the main streets, which are clean and illumined by electric light. A water system is

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in process of construction, more town improvements are being planned—in short, Mosul is in a fair way to become a civilised city as far as the conveniences of life go; and its growing prosperity is evident in its colourful markets, crowded with folk from far and wide. There you see Kurds with wide, many-folded sashes and display of knives and firearms; wild-looking Yazidis with peculiar dress and round-cut shirts; stalwart Assyrians from the mountains, looking like brigands; Chaldæans from neighbouring Christian villages in baggy trousers and gay waistcoats; Bedouins with tangled plaits and sunburnt faces; and others, men of many faiths and many tongues, intent on buying or selling before they journey back to their distant homes.

There is plenty everywhere. Meat is cheaper in Mosul than in any other town in 'Iraq, and the display of fruit and vegetables in the market is worth seeing. When I first arrived at Mosul I had the impression that every inhabitant was carrying a giant cucumber, and wondered why. It was just that they were so plentiful; indeed, all vegetables in the Mosul district run to size. I did not see the Giant Gooseberry there, but I have no doubt that it appears there in its season if there is a gooseberry at all in 'Iraq.

In one thing, however, Mosul is less fortunate than Baghdad and Basrah. It is isolated from the rest of the world by its lack of a railway. This is the stranger, because Mosul has always been a city of merchants and merchandise. Centre of a great industrial and corn-bearing district, midway between Syria and Baghdad on the ancient caravan road, it was one of the world-markets of the middle ages. Then there was no Suez Canal to enable sea-borne goods to reach the interior by way of the Red Sea; and the usual Asiatic trade route was through Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad to the further East beyond. In the days of the Abbasids, a fine cotton material, woven by the people of Mosul and called Mosulin, or muslin, was sold all over the world; and though the trade has long passed away from Mosul, the delicate fabric invented there still bears the name.

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Mosul is the heart of a wonderfully fertile district. The rolling plains are thick with corn in harvest-time, and break into a multitude of flowers even where they are stoniest, so rich and life-giving is the soil. Mosul is not as yet a great oil-bearing district, though the wells at Gayyara and elsewhere give hope that she may have undiscovered wealth in this respect, and the hills may hold valuable minerals in their folds which future enterprise may unearth. Even now they produce gall-nuts, wool, fur, oil, wine, and other things which make glad the heart of man.

Why, then, is Mosul without a railway?

Railway schemes in plenty have been broached, but so far nothing has come of them. The Germans talked of bringing the Berlin-Baghdad railway to Mosul, but their schemes did not materialise. In this matter of railways Mosul is like humanity in Pope's famous line, she "never is, but always to be blest." At the present time the nearest railhead is at Sherqat, sixty-five miles south of Mosul. The line at this point is an extension of the railway built by the Germans from Baghdad to Samarra immediately before the Great War. The latter was built, from all indications, for purely military purposes, as its fort-like stations show. Our extension, about a hundred miles in length, is merely a temporary line, without suitable bridges or alignment for a permanent railway, and was built to supply the British forces which occupied Mosul after the Armistice. Sherqat, the present terminus, is in a *cul-de-sac* from which there is no outlet to the north. To follow the route of the Baghdad-Constantinople line to Mosul it would be necessary to draw back ten miles, and lay the line across a waterless desert of greatly undulating plains, and the construction would be very costly and unremunerative, unless, carrying out the German suggestion, the line were carried on to Syria.

There is, however, another route proposed, and this is one which would follow the old trade road, used by both merchant and warrior in passing from Near East to Far East, from Syria and the North to Persia, India, and beyond. This road

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crosses the Tigris at Mosul, passing through Arbil, Altun, Kupri, Kirkuk and Kifri, skirting the foot-hills of the Kurdish highlands on the east side of the Tigris. The trade routes of Kurdistan debouch on this road and, were the railway built, mountain traders would come down from their fastnesses, with tobacco, oil, fur, and other products, as in the ancient days when merchant caravans tinkled by in stately progress to the south.

Already the railway from Baghdad has reached Kifri, and it seems merely a matter of time till it progresses through that great grain-growing country to the still greater granary north-east and west of Mosul, bringing with it regained prosperity and security and the peace born of them. Then Mosul will be linked to the rest of 'Iraq without a break of gauge, and the rich north brought once more into relationship with the marts of the south.

It is a picture ever before the eyes of the people of Mosul, and were Mosul given back to the Turks, a death-knell would sound over their hopes. It is certain that until the future of 'Iraq is settled, neither Government nor private enterprise will undertake any expenditure on such schemes, and there is much groaning on the perpetual putting off of the day of definite settlement with the Turk, which necessarily postpones schemes for the development and exploitation of the country and its riches.

The best time to visit Mosul is in the spring, when the downs and hills between Sherqat and Mosul are brilliant with scarlet anemones, borages, buttercups, and every kind of wild flower. Harvest treads hard upon the heels of the brief spring, and there are twelve weeks of great heat in summer, during which the whole countryside gradually bakes and withers in the parching winds, remaining brown and bleached until the rains of winter turn it once more into an earthly paradise.

The road from Sherqat, except for the last ten or twelve miles, is bad, and after rain all but impassable. After a long uneasy transit, Mosul is seen from a hilltop, edging the horizon of a valley beneath, through which flows the broad Tigris,

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with its ever-green belt of cultivation. In the distance, its minarets crazily slanting over its flat roofs and squat domes, Mosul looks a fair and gracious place. We saw it thus for the first time at the end of a summer : a grey city in a sun-bleached land, and, running the car downhill on the good road built by British money, followed the river until we were close under the three-tiered minaret of Nebi Shit.[1] We had to thread our way into the city through graveyards, which, like the walls, encircle the city, and are haunted by pariah dogs and policemen.

The walls lend Mosul a mediæval look in spite of its new-found modernity. They are not very old, as they were rebuilt in 1736, but as walls they have an honourable history, for midway through the eighteenth century they defied the invasion of Nadir Shah, the Persian invader, whose army encamped on the mounds of Nineveh and occupied the adjoining villages. He sat before the city six months, and then abandoned the siege. I hope that the hand of a city-improver will never pull down the walls, for they give pleasure to the eye, especially the broken fortification at the North Gate, near which is a group of interesting buildings and tombs.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century there lived in Mosul a sultan named Badreddin Lulu, of the family of Attar Beg, and he was a pious man and a builder. His palace on the river bank stood just within the northern wall, and a portion of it, the stucco ornament on the vaulting showing how fine a building it must have been, still remains. His tomb is hard by, beside the reputed tomb of the Sitt Fatima, in the Cemetery of the Seyyids, and may peace be with his bones, for he did much to enrich the town.

He built the tomb of the Imam Yahya which overhangs the river close to the palace, and a lovely shrine it is. It is a small building, surmounted by a squat octagonal spire instead of the usual dome. On the façade are inscriptions in Arabic and Cufic, one of them stating that the unworthy slave of

[1] This is said to have been built under compulsion by a Christian who took his revenge by making the minaret symbolic of the Trinity—three in one.

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Allah, Lulu, son of Abdallah, king of Mosul, caused the mosque to be built in order to benefit the faithful and obtain the favour of God. The date of the tomb as given on one inscription is 619 of the Hegira.

One descends into the tomb itself by steps, and finds oneself in a chamber about twenty-four feet by twenty-seven, roofed in by a slightly stalactite domed roof. In the centre of the building is the tomb, covered with a green cloth, to which an inscription has been stitched. Beneath is a wooden case, but this was not displayed to us. The brickwork of the roof is coloured with blue and red enamel, now almost disappearing. The builders of the period loved to chisel the hard brick as if it were wood, and here and there on the surface of the walls there are decorated niches, here and there panels of conventionalised design. An inscription runs round the interior of the building, about four feet from the ground, and beneath it a border of marble, deeply incised with a decorative design. There is also a mihrab in carved black marble bearing inscriptions, and standing before it a carved wooden box containing a very ancient copy of the Quran in forty volumes. This latter has been much restored, but much of the original parchment remains, the pages being finely illuminated and the script bold and decorative.

On the exterior, the tomb is buttressed heavily on the river side to prevent it from falling into the Tigris. The buttressing is of recent date. The river wall of the tomb is also chiselled with writing and decoration. Very human is the inscription, " Al Hamdulillah ! " (Thank God !), signifying, tradition says, the mason's joy at having reached that point in the construction of the walls.

Following the line of the northern rampart of the city, and passing the tomb of Sheikh Mahhommed abu el Wafa, a mediæval saint whose asceticism was proof against the wiles of a friend's wife—they will tell you the story at Mosul—another shrine is reached, sadly ruined and neglected, for Mosul is a Sunni city now, and does not attach much importance to the place where once Ali left the impression of his

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hand by merely placing it upon the rock. The rock is no longer there; it was taken to some Shiah shrine in the south as a relic, the Sunni who acted as my cicerone told me; but this tumbledown shrine, known as El Panja (after Ali's five fingers), covers the miraculous spot. The date of its erection was between the sixth and seventh centuries of the Hegira. The western wall of the interior, with its decorations and inscriptions, is still in fairly good preservation, the carved mihrab being all but uninjured. But the four winds penetrate it, and there are only fragments of an arch with interlocking arabesqued ornament so characteristic of the period. There is a " panj " or mark of Ali's hand, in Baghdad, as well as in other parts of 'Iraq.

Continuing to march along the line of the wall of the city, you come to an unpretentious tomb which is honoured by men of learning, for here, according to tradition, lies buried the great Arab historian, Ibn-al-Athir. At a little distance he has for neighbours the graves of some thousands of Turkish soldiers, victims of typhus during the Great War. Mosul was not a pleasant place to live in during the last phases of the war. It was devastated by typhus and racked by famine. There are tales of cannibalism during that nightmare time, and just before the British occupation of Mosul in 1918, people were tried for the crime of killing and eating human flesh, and a butcher who sold it openly in the market was hanged in the public square.

The loveliest and oldest of all the mosques of Mosul is the Jama Kabira in the heart of the town. Its fine brick minaret, with bands of chiselling, leans perilously, like the tower of Pisa; the reason being that when Mahommed flew over the city on his midnight visit to Jerusalem, the wind caused by his passage bent the minaret. An attempt to restore balance was made by placing the top of the minaret on at a reversed angle, thus giving it a kink at the top. The mosque is separated from the minaret by a big courtyard, which contains a carved mihrab, a place of ablution similarly decorated, and an interesting well.

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It is scarcely necessary to say that it is not contemporary with the Prophet, as the legend implies, for it was not built until the twelfth century A.D., by Nur-ad-Din esh Shahid, in whose army the great Saladin was once a subaltern. When the Arab historian, Ibn Batutah, passed through Mosul in the fourteenth century, he visited this mosque, which had in his day an octagonal marble basin with a fountain which threw water to a great height.

The roof of the mosalla is supported by columns of stone, the capitals of some being carved and coloured in the usual Mosul fashion. The mihrab bears a Cufic inscription, as does also a beautiful square window in a deep niche near the minbar. This window, with its intricate ornament, is an exquisite example of Moslem art of the period. The minbar, or pulpit, is only two hundred and forty years old. One misses in this mosque the soft colour of old carpets, for the floor is covered with bussats, or cotton rugs.

That indefatigable builder, the Sultan Badr-ud Din Lulu, built yet another mosque, that of the Imam Aun-ed-Din ibn Hassan ibn Ali. The sculptured marble above the door is painted and the doorway gilt, a tiny inscription on the door itself informing the beholder that one Omar ibn Hadhr Wali Seyyid Mahommed al Maliki al Badri made it, upon him be the mercy of Allah! The doorway is evidently a restoration, and its lintel is besmeared with henna, offerings from grateful women whose prayers at the shrine have been answered. The dome, with its stalactite ornament, is not so fine as that of the Imam Yahya, though there are many points of resemblance between the two tombs, notably the frieze of sculptured marble which runs round the interior and the mihrab of carved black marble, before which stands a sconce for votive candles. The body of the Imam is covered by a fine carved wooden case with a pious inscription.

The churches of Mosul, some of antiquity, have suffered from over-much restoration. Stone and marble are cheap, and it costs no more to rebuild than to repair, hence the loss of much that would interest posterity. A courteous Chaldæan

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priest volunteered to show us some of them. He had a seminary under his care, and he took pleasure in showing us the orderly class-rooms, dormitories, and refectories in which the boy students prepare for the consecrated life. His sisters, smiling, buxom women who wore silken izars, were introduced to us, and the black-eyed, black-robed students gazed at us as they filed past to prayers in the chapel.

The small fourteenth-century church of Mar Shimun, or Simon Peter, has more or less escaped the restorer and is well worth visiting. It is well below the level of the street, is reached by a flight of steps, and is extremely simple of design. As in so many of the churches of the district, the sanctuary is cut off from the rest of the church by a solid screen, in which arched openings give access to the chancel, and here, as in other churches, the screen is carved and coloured. A second stairway brings one up to ground level again, and one of these steps is made of a piece of curiously-carved stone evidently removed from some other place. The slab is decorated by arabesques in bas-relief with a lion's head in the centre, and our guide told us—with what truth I know not—that the stone was once part of the tomb of one Abd el Jelil, whose family is still existent in Baghdad. This Abd el Jelil was a Christian who turned Mahommedan, and his family have been Mahommedan—and prosperous—ever since.

The church of St. Miskinta was built, it is said, in the twelfth century, but this, again, has been rebuilt and repaired until there is nothing to be seen of the original building. St. Miskinta is a very popular Chaldæan saint, and it was her feast-day when I visited the church. The women's part of the church was gay with silken izars, and candles flickered on the altars. St. Miskinta was a native of Mosul, a widow with two children who met with martyrdom in the far-away days of the first proselytes to Christianity, and it is said that even yet she works miracles among those possessed of evil spirits.

The house of his Beatitude, the Chaldæan Patriarch of Babylon, is close to this church. This charming and venerable gentleman has been patriarch for many years, and is very much

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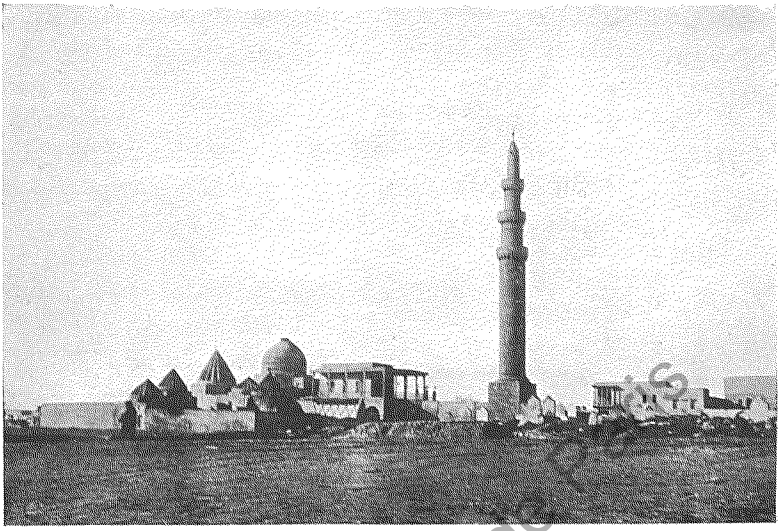
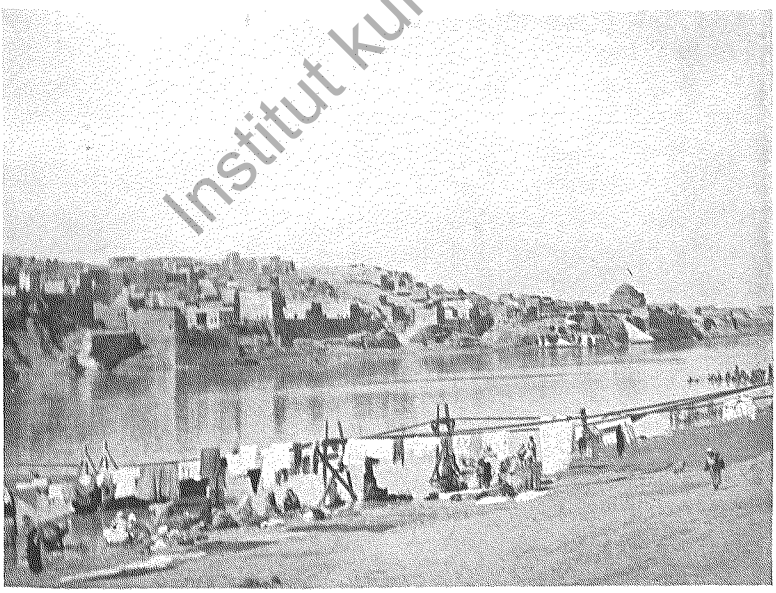


MOSUL: THE MOSQUE OF NEBI SHÎT.

(*See page* 152.)



MOSUL.

(It is always washing day by the Tigris at Mosul.)

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THE OLD BRIDGE: MOSUL.

loved by his people. He is a picturesque figure, with his wonderful robes of scarlet and puce, his crimson sash and skull-cap, his large amethyst cross, and his white beard. He has a pleasant house with a cool grey marble courtyard, where at our first call we drank coffee, and he was good enough to show us his apartments upstairs, his library, reception-room, bedroom, and so on. The *mejlis*, or reception-room, contained a handsome throne-chair, and the walls were decorated with portraits of former patriarchs, a painting of the present Patriarch hanging amongst those of his predecessors. Like Nahum the prophet, Monsignor Thomas was born at Al Kosh. He has been several times to Europe, and has visited both Monsieur Poincaré and Mr. Lloyd George. He loves to talk of his travels, and the friends he has made on his journeys. He showed us with pride a carpet woven for him by the girls of Mosul on the occasion of his jubilee. The subject of the carpet is the Nativity, and it hangs on the wall of his library.

Mosul is a great ecclesiastical centre. Not only does the Chaldæan Patriarch live there, but also the Syrian Archbishop, Monsignor Berré, Archbishop of Baghdad and Apostolic Delegate to Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, and Armenia Minor; the Archbishop of the Ancient Syrian (or Jacobite) Church; and the Patriarch of the Assyro-Chaldæans or Nestorians.

Here, as in Baghdad, Dominican sisters of the Presentation, devoted Frenchwomen, have long carried on their work of education and civilisation among the girls of the town. The building which they occupied before the war became much injured and spoilt during its occupation by the military authorities, and it is now being rebuilt gradually. The sisters were obliged to flee from Mosul towards the end of the war to shelter in France, but returned at the earliest moment possible. They are rosy-cheeked, kindly, sweet-faced women, with serge habits and flapping starched caps, and their big family of twenty war-orphans keeps them very busy, for not only do they clothe, mend, feed, and bring up these fatherless little ones, but they have a hundred day scholars as well.

The orphans are, for the most part, victims of the massacres,

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many of whom were brought in wounded, burnt, and half-demented by the frightful sights that they had seen. One child, now a bonny-looking little girl, lay two days with the dead bodies of her murdered parents and neighbours, was then found by looting Mahommedans, and taken by one kindlier than the rest to his home. She was later handed over to the sisters. Another, whose mother was killed in her presence, is still timid and fearful, and it will take long to efface the hunted expression from her great dark eyes. The bodies of many of these poor children show scars and marks of the suffering they went through. How frightful those sufferings were, none will ever know.

Monsignor Berré told us of some of the horrors which he himself had witnessed. In one Christian village, for instance, women and children were thrown alive into a pit, which was then covered in with soil. One can multiply the tale of cruelties, but it is not pleasant to think of such things. Is it to be wondered that the Christians of the Mosul district view with consternation any prospect of return to Turkish rule? They know too well the value of Turkish promises to respect their rights; they have lived too long in the sunshine of British protection to be able to face with equanimity the furtive, repressed existence that was theirs before the war, an existence always overshadowed by the menace of massacre and pillage.

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The school and orphanage are largely self-supporting. The girls make and sell embroideries, and make a speciality of the heavy gold embroidery on silk which is so much used at Moslem weddings. During the dark days of the war, all the sisters' furniture was looted, only one chair being returned by a Moslem friend. The chapel plate was hidden with the people of the town, and is now in its appointed place in the neat and pretty oratory of the convent.

PART IV

CULTS

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CHAPTER XIV

MOHARRAM AND ITS PASSION-PLAY IN BAGHDAD

MOHARRAM is just over—" without incident." This is always a matter of congratulation for the police, upon whom the business devolves of keeping order among the excited and fanatical crowds brought together by Moharram, and tactfully and cleverly they perform their duties. A Persian flagellant dead of his austerities; an indiscreet Jew mauled a little—these were the only casualties this year. The Turks in their day allowed no Moharram processions or ceremonies in Baghdad and restricted all observances to Kadhimein. And at Kadhimein, with its golden-domed shrine, the observance of the ten days of Moharram culminates on the tenth day, when all Shiah Baghdad streams out at sunrise to the shrine suburb four miles away. Only in the precincts of the great Kadhimein mosque may devotees wound themselves with swords, and even the number of cuts is restricted by the police to three on the head! A phlegmatic policeman stands at the big gate of the shrine and collects the swords from the hands of the bloodstained and excited fanatics as they rush one by one into the street, as coolly as a ticket-collector takes tickets at a railway station.

Night after night in Moharram the drums sound and the processions gather together; night after night one may watch from the roof the glow of torches in the narrow streets; night after night devotees beat their breasts and flog their bare backs with chains. But the demonstrations gain in fervour as Moharram wears on, and the last three days are an orgy of religious fervour and devotion, culminating in the passion-

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play in Baghdad on the ninth afternoon, and the processions and passion-play (a repetition of that in Baghdad) on the tenth day in Kadhimein.

Those who have visited Moslem India and Arab countries of course know that the first ten days of Moharram are devoted to the memory of the tragedy of Karbala, when Hoseyn, drawn from Mecca by the entreaties of the Kufans and their promise to support him if he would make an effort to wrest the Caliphate from the usurper Yezid, came across the desert with his family and a few adherents to find that the fickle people of Kufah had lost heart and were ranked with his enemies. Hopelessly outnumbered and cut off from the river so that they were unable to assuage their thirst, the hapless Hoseyn and his adherents were slaughtered on the field of Karbala, which has ever since been a place of mourning. To the Sunni this was merely a "regrettable incident," but the Shiah, devoted to Ali and his house, works himself into a frenzy of grief when he remembers the cruel betrayal of Hoseyn, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet.

Shimr, to whom tradition ascribes the actual slaying of Hoseyn, is execrated bitterly, and with him those who led the forces of the Ommayad usurper against the martyrs. "Shimr," said a little Shiah maiden to me, "is the worst man in the world—except Shaitan there is no one as evil."

Some Sunnis courteously gave us permission to view the processions from the roof of a mosque which, situated in a roomy square into which a number of narrow streets from other quarters converge, gave us a good view of the various processions as they came up and passed through the square. The streets and coffeehouses were already crowded with spectators as we drove up, just before nine, and every roof was edged with black-veiled women gazing below.

The frequenters—or, as we should say, "congregation"—of each mosque get up a procession for themselves, so that one may see as many as six or seven separate processions in one quarter in a night. There is, naturally, rivalry, and thus the maximum of effort is produced by each band of devotees.

There is little collaboration between the processions, with the result that one may have to wait in a side street while another is passing through the square, and it is possible, as we did, to witness several processions at once from a vantage point such as the flat roof of our mosque—flagellants chanting and scourging themselves beneath in one street ; half-naked breast-beaters in another, their arms moving upward like flails in the torchlight and coming down on their bare breasts with a savage thud, and in a third the solemn splendour of Hoseyn and his horsemen with sacred banners, green and gold, and tall standards of wrought metal. But all eventually pass through the square and it is better to sit on the strip of roof which dominates it.

The smoky glare of the torches and petroleum flares, the fitful thunder of the drums, the chanting, the strident noise of the brass instruments and, above all, the long, shrill wails of the women on the housetops, make it easy to believe one is witnessing a scene from Dante's Inferno. Some of these souls in torment, however, on this seventh night are merely feigning torment. The chainmen do not flay their backs with great vigour, and the breast-beaters' chests, though bruised, are not broken and bleeding as on the two last days. They are reserving their greatest efforts till then. Occasionally a devotee will pause and light a cigarette or fall out to take a cup of coffee as it is offered from the crowd.

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The order of the procession varies, but is roughly as follows. First of all come torchbearers, then the *mash-al,* a wooden crossbar mounted on a pole, some fifteen feet across, to which are affixed some twenty tin sockets. Into these rags soaked in petroleum are stuffed, and are fed with oil from a can while still alight. Showers of sparks and burning pieces fall on the crowd perpetually, and setting some unfortunate person a-smoulder, or the *mash-al*-holder himself, whose garments and turban are permanently charred. There are usually people suffering from burns in hospital after Moharram, and houses often catch fire in the narrow streets. Sometimes the *mash-al*-bearer dances and whirls the flaming thing round, sending

down showers of fire. The torches are made of oil-rag flares on long poles. The kerosene is carried in skins on a donkey or in tins in a push-cart, so that the flares are never suffered to die down. Drums precede the procession, and each section has its own drums. The flagellants scourge themselves to the beat of the drums; as it quickens, their blows rain faster.

Next come led horses, heavily caparisoned and draped with embroideries, and often bearing steel helmets transfixed by arrows. Later on in Moharram Hoseyn's steed is covered by a blood-stained sheet transfixed by numerous darts. Then come Hoseyn, his brother Abbas, his family and his followers, riding on more caparisoned horses. Hoseyn and Abbas wear splendid armour, usually old Persian armour inlaid with gold and silver, borrowed from curio-dealers, or kept in store from one year to the next, some of it extremely fine. All the followers of Hoseyn are clothed in green. Qasim, Hoseyn's cousin, is usually played by a handsome youth, for his wedding was to have been held on the day of battle in which he was slain, and his bridal-bed, decorated with silken hangings and lamps and a gay, lit model of the bridal chamber (El Gubba), are borne in this part of the procession. A cradle in pink represents the suckling Abdullah, and there is a child or two on led horses (one tiny boy sprawled fast asleep on the neck of his).

A section of breast-beaters or chain-flagellants follows, and then Shimr and his following on horseback. Red is their colour, and their armour is as fine as Hoseyn's. Breast-beaters are men of finer physique than the chain-man, and are naked to the waist. They are mostly men of low class, boatmen, porters, labourers and the like. They do not beat themselves continually, but at intervals their leader turns and faces them, calls a halt and in a wild, rapid chant incites them to effort. Or they utter short exclamations such as "Ali! Ali!" or "Hoseyn! Hoseyn!" The pace gradually increases and becomes fiercer till suddenly, at a second signal, they stop and move on, often linking arms and chanting as they go.

On the eighth night I watched a crowd of some fifty Kurdish

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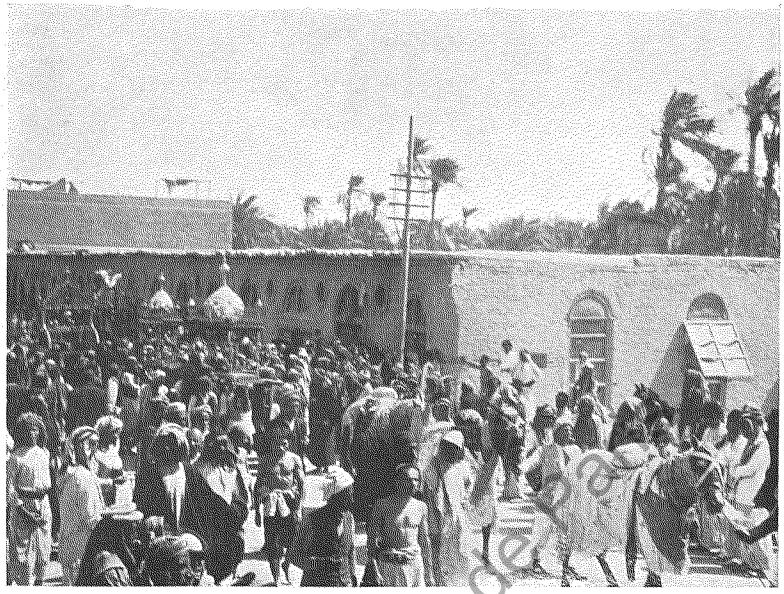

Photo by Victor.]

THE "GUBBA" AND HORSES IN A MOHARRAM PROCESSION.



Photo by Victor.]

CHAIN FLAGELLANTS.

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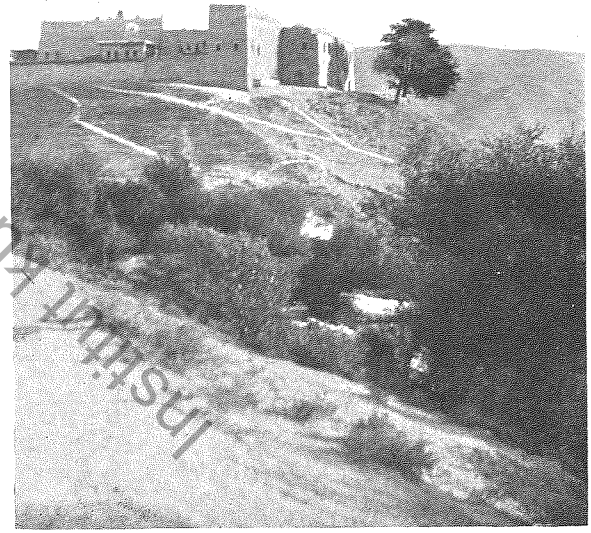
BUILDING A REED HUT.

(*See page* 250 *et seq.*)



THE MIR'S KASR: BA'IDHRI.

(*See page* 176.)

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breast-beaters. They kept up the beating for more than half an hour, and there was no half-heartedness about it. Their arms were tossed aloft and brought down with all their might, and the noise made one think instinctively of the gorilla in Africa who drums upon his mighty breasts at the approach of a foe. A few sympathisers hang about the ranks of the fanatics and slap themselves gently with one hand in token of fellow-feeling.

The evening terminates each night with a "Muharaba"—a mock battle of Karbala preceded by a short colloquy between the two parties.

The processions on the eighth night are more elaborate. The "corpses" of Hoseyn, Abbas, Abdullah and others are borne along and work the beholders to a frenzy of grief. The hands and feet of the "corpse" protrude from the blood-stained shroud, and where the body is headless a bloody stump, the actor's own head being covered by the sheet. The corpse of Hoseyn is guarded by two tethered doves, their feathers dabbled in blood, and on his bier sits a little girl representing his daughter, her hair dishevelled and strewn with earth and grass, wailing and flinging her arms over the body.

Shimr is attended by walking acolytes dressed in scarlet, who blow heavenwards, like the priests of Jericho, enormous wooden trumpets with bell-shaped mouths. The trumpets only produce a little bleat of discordant sound, but Shimr is never seen without his trumpeters. Peacock feathers adorn the head-pieces of the villains of the piece. Yezid is not in armour, neither is the false Kufan Abdullah ibn Ziad under his scarlet umbrella, but they wear red from head to foot. Omar ibn Sad and the troops in scarlet uniform follow, the two children of Muslim dressed in green, tied by scarlet ropes and led by Harmala. Another heretic warrior leads bound together a number of captive children who carry triangular wooden halters and pretend to cry and shrink.

Lastly, among the Ommayads one sees the Frank, the Christian. There is a legend that a Christian in Kufah

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sympathised with Hoseyn, and eventually joined him and fought with him. The Christian wears a hat or a sun-helmet, a uniform, spectacles, and almost invariably bears a black umbrella and wears gloves. He rides on horseback. Last of all the train come the Bedouin horsemen. Mingling pell-mell with the crowd run little boys with high painted paper hats, representing Jinns and evil spirits.

More flags and squads of flagellants follow.

The " chain-men " wear a curious uniform of black cotton, the backs of which are entirely cut out from the top of the shoulder to the waist. They go bareheaded, and on the ninth and tenth days smear their heads and faces with clay, and wear shrouds which, often stained with their blood, become treasured possessions kept for the day of their own burial. The scourges are bunches of chains fixed into brass handles, and are manipulated with both hands, while the flagellant jerks each shoulder alternately forward to receive the blow. Boys have smaller scourges, and tiny boys are seen among the flagellants keeping perfect time with the others and joining in the monotonous chant.

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THE MIRACLE PLAY

On the ninth day Shiah Baghdad gives itself over entirely to Moharram. The drums and processions start early in the morning and continue all day. I went soon after midday to the house of a Turkish friend so that we might witness together the miracle-play which takes place in the afternoon. It was thought wiser for me to don Moslem dress, so, veiled completely in black, we got into a " bellum," were rowed up the Tigris, and landed at the water-steps of the house of a prominent Shiah, in whose big courtyard the representation was to take place. The adjacent roofs were covered with women in their billowing black abas, with here and there a gay note of orange, scarlet, pink, or turquoise blue. The courtyard, too, was full of spectators, and small boys scrambled to the fragile top of

a wooden pergola so that they could see above the heads of their elders.

The son of the house, a youth of about fourteen, took us up to his mother's apartments, and we were pushed through the chattering crowd into a small upper room, one side of which was panelled with glass, giving us an excellent view of the courtyard. Women crowded thickly at this window, those behind sitting on chairs, those in the first and second rows cross-legged or squatting. I was in the first row, and could see well. The noise was indescribable—"like the *hammam* on women's day." A small stage was erected below, also a tent which had been soaked with paraffin ready for the last act of the play. A small room off the courtyard served as a green-room for the actors.

We waited for an hour, and then the procession began to stream into and move round the courtyard. Hoseyn's bier, with its doves, its corpse beneath a bloody sheet, and its child mourner, was laid down while the flagellants, white shrouds above their penitential black, flogged themselves mercilessly with their chains. I noticed that a small boy who got out of time was seriously reproved by the leader of the flagellants. There was no cigarette-smoking amongst them on this day, and backs here and there were macerated. The breast-beaters, too, were red and swollen from their blows. At the order of the master of the house, aba-lengths of silk were draped round the necks of the leaders of the breast-beaters and chain-men, as a mark of appreciation; these leaders, however, merely incited their fellows and did no flagellation themselves.

I have already described the personages of the procession, but the setting was more gorgeous than any I had yet seen, and in the bright sunlight I could examine more carefully the details of armour, maces, axes, inlaid shields and Persian embroideries. Flags were embroidered, some with gold, and many had been provided by our host and his family, and were the work of his womenfolk. He had also given other properties, the wedding-chamber, cradles, shawls on the horses, and so on. Much of the armour, as I have said, is

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borrowed from dealers, as are the beautiful standards (*alams*) of steel inlaid with gold on which are conventionalised peacocks, doves, and dragons ; with sconces for candles, incense and plumes, " hands of Abbas," and inscriptions.

In the battle of Karbala the hand of Abbas is said to have been struck off, and an open hand is a favourite Shiah symbol. As a matter of fact, it is nothing to do with Islam, but is borrowed from the older worship of the sun and moon—Baal and Ashtoreth. It is seen on Phœnician monuments, and the Carthaginians knew it as the " Hand of Tanith, the Female Countenance of Baal." In Egypt and Tunisia it is called " Fatma's hand." The bloody bier of Abbas, from which a headless stump showed, had a large severed hand laid upon it—a red cloth dummy, but the effect was marred because the man who played the corpse had thrust both his hands through the sheet, thus giving Abbas *three* hands !

One steel standard known as Shimr's Tongue, had strips of cloth hanging from it. Whoso pulls one of these and makes a wish is certain to have his wish gratified.

The " corpses " were horribly realistic with their blood-stained sheets and feet emerging at one end, and whenever one passed the women keened their long shrill cry of mourning, the flagellants redoubling their efforts and the drums beating more furiously.

A whistle sounds ! A partial silence is secured, Shimr and Ibn Ziad, the arch-villains of the piece, mount the stage, and the play begins. Shimr is a good actor and plays his part with vigour. Both are dressed in the devil's livery—scarlet, just as the saintly Hoseyn and all his following wear the same sacred green. Ibn Ziad, whose voice is inaudible, seems to be inclined to clemency, but Shimr urges him with impassioned gestures to crush Hoseyn utterly unless he submits. He offers a plan of campaign, waves his sword, takes a cup of water several times, drinks it, and throws it away to show how he would deprive Hoseyn of it.

After his long speech there is an interruption. Two silken aba-lengths are presented to the actor and somewhat

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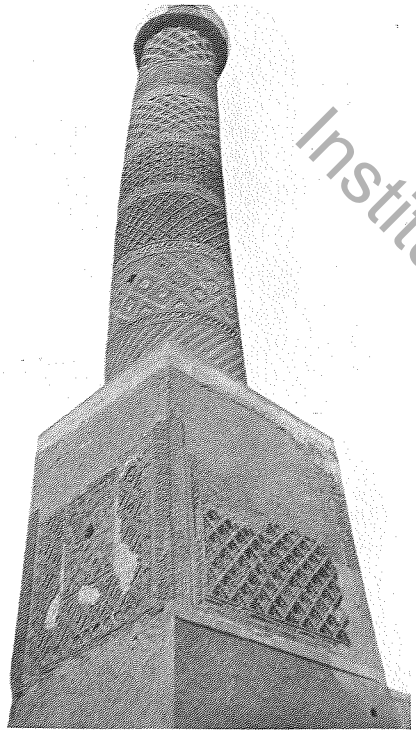
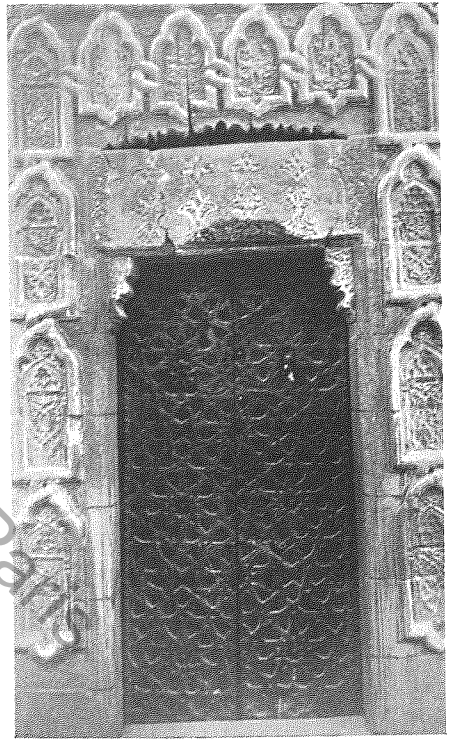


MINARET OF THE JAMA KABIRA : MOSUL.

(*See page* 154.)



DOOR TO MOSQUE OF IMAM AUN-ED-DIN : MOSUL.

(*See page* 155.)

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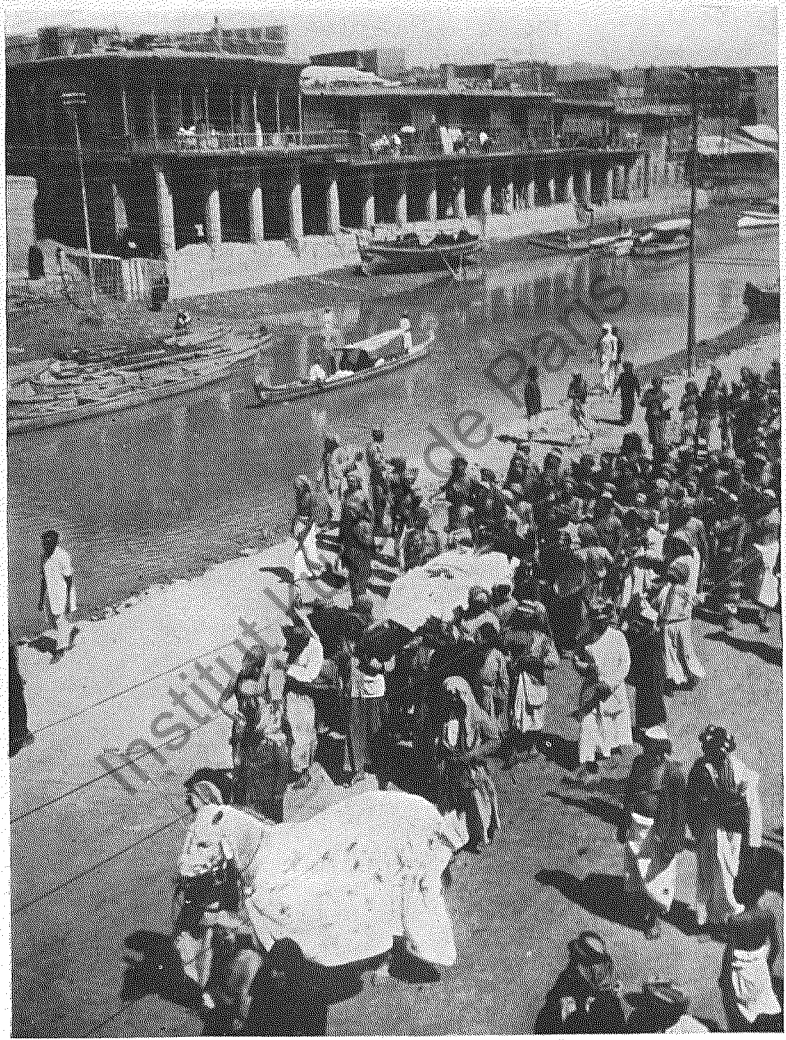

Photo by Vicior.]

ONE OF THE "CORPSES" IN A MOHARRAM PROCESSION.

incongruously wound about his neck. The play continues. A coat of chain-mail, a helmet, shield, and sword are brought, and Shimr girds himself for war (the presentation silk still draped about his neck). His long white sleeves, which fall to the ground when unrolled, are shaken out and retied round his wrists, his head-piece donned, and he is ready. The scarlet trumpeters blow heavenwards their absurd trumpets, the soldiers collect the troops, wave their naked swords, the Bedouin horsemen caracole.

The stage is then cleared of scarlet, and Abbas and Hoseyn mount the stage. They make dramatic speeches to each other, and after they, too, have been draped by rolls of silk, Shimr appears, bowing low, and with honeyed words urges submission to Yezid and the renunciation of all rights to the Caliphate. Abbas rises, and with fiery indignation refuses, while the guilty Shimr, cowering beneath his shield, slinks off the stage.

More colloquies between the Hoseyn faction follow, and the stage is crowded with the followers of Hoseyn, including the two sons of Muslim, and the handsome bridegroom, Qasim. Hoseyn addresses them and tells them that they are hopelessly outnumbered, and that death and paradise must be their portion. They embrace, and there is an affecting scene in which Hoseyn gives them all shrouds, which they put on over their armour in token that they accept death gladly. Suddenly the Frank, the Christian, appears on the stage. He explains that his sympathies have been won by the injustice and treachery shown to Hoseyn, and throws in his lot with theirs. In order to show that he embraces the true faith, he throws his Homburg hat on the stage and stamps on it, discards his umbrella and gloves, and when all kneel in prayer, Hoseyn leading, he takes his place in the ranks of the devout, while the stern warrior Abbas stands to guard the praying throng, amongst whom darts are falling fast from the attacking army.

At this point the audience is utterly overcome. A woman beside me sobs, another pretty girl of fourteen has great tears

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in her black eyes, which roll silently down her face. The women keen on the roofs, and there are groans and sighs from the spectators.

While the prayers are being recited, a red-clad warrior approaches the party stealthily. But Abbas is on guard: he seizes the intruder, overcomes him and pretends to cut off his head. Then the whole party rise, mount their horses, and set off to battle. There is only one more stage scene, that in which Shimr, having captured the sons of Muslim, taunts and bullies them. They refuse to abandon their allegiance, and after embraces and prayers the two youths are felled and slain by Shimr, who places his foot on their bodies. This scene, too, rouses the passions of the audience, and one can understand that the part of Shimr has resulted more than once in the death of the actor at the hands of the infuriated audience.

The Battle of Karbala now takes place. Amid flying arrows (which are caught and politely returned), the contending parties gallop round and round the square, fencing and parrying with their swords and uttering war-cries. One by one Hoseyn's party disappear into the green room, to reappear with blood on their shrouds and red-stained bandages round their heads—even the Frank, having acquitted himself valiantly, wears a bandage.

Then comes the last act. Hoseyn and Abbas are slain: the "corpses" appear, and a dismal procession files round the courtyard, the Ommayads victorious, the vanquished companions of Hoseyn dying or dead. Some lie wounded on the necks of their horses, one camel and his rider are led in chains, the holy dead are borne on their biers. The tent, which represents the camp of Hoseyn, is burnt with a sudden rush of flame and smoke, symbolising the utter destruction of the little army. The mournful procession with its breast-beaters and flagellants, circles the courtyard again and leaves as it has come. The play is over. Men pour out into the street, the black hordes of women flutter, congregate, and disintegrate again, chattering like sparrows after a shower

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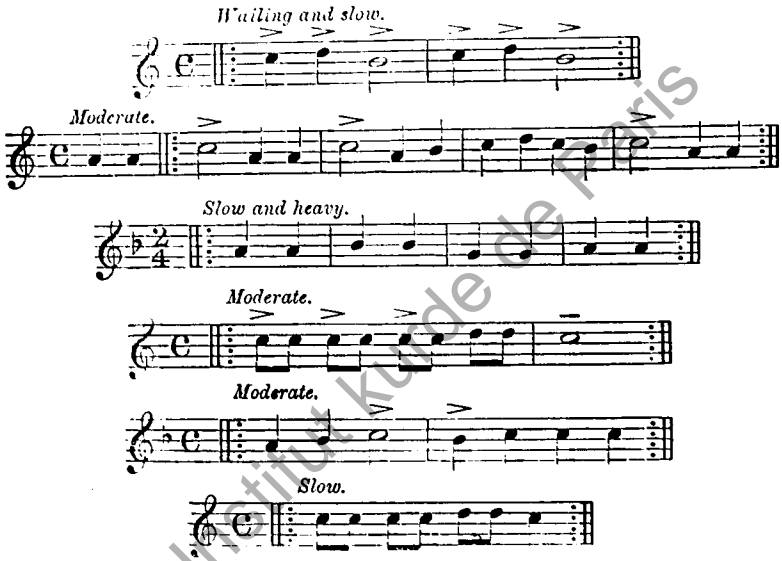
of rain. We wait a moment to give the crowd a chance to disperse, then make our farewells, touching heart, mouth, and brow in the courteous fashion of the country, and slip out to our bellum.

The chants which are sung by the processionists and flagellants are set to the simplest of tunes and the rhymed refrains, though poetic and full of grief, are in the local dialect. I scribbled down a few of the tunes as I heard them.



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The rhymed refrains may be roughly translated thus:

Rise sadly from the tomb,
O, Commander of the Faithful.

Woe for a body lying naked on the field of battle!
Men and jinns weep sorrowfully over it.

"Abbas! our protector!
Bring water and give us to drink."

O, tomb of Hoseyn! tell Hoseyn for us that we are captives,
And the driver has driven deep into our caravan.

Zeynab appeals to the people: "Oh, people behold us!
We are the Prophet's kin, for God's sake have pity!"

O, heart of Hoseyn! Who should go to Medina in one day and tell him.
O, Prophet! the enemy have slain thy beloved.

It befits us to spend our life in weeping over the calamity which befell the martyr Hoseyn.
He has been left alone among the enemy—Flow! tears from my eyes.

There was uproar in the Heavens when Ibn Haidar [1] fell.
Gabriel wept over that misfortune and in the seventh heaven cried that God is Great (kabbar, *i.e.*, said "Allah Akbar").

Accursed Ibn Muljam! [2] Thou hast killed the Appointed of God (lit., Titledeed of God).
O, Qasim the bridegroom! where is now thy wedding?

O, Qasim! To-night they bear him to the bride,
And this night they will stain him with henna.[3]

O, Hashim! Rise! get the horsemen ready.
Go thou to Karbala and save the young men.

Abbas abu Fadhil is in combat,
Blessed the day we see thee!

O, beloved ibn Mudhahir! Rise, take the banner and get ready.
O, my heart, break for the young men!

Qasim the bridegroom has been stained with henna this night.
Come, [4] Haider, come and behold him!

Ali, Commander of the Faithful,
Has upheld the faith by the sword.

"He announced to Shimr in the Persian language:
I come from the hermitage broken with drink (?),
And have abandoned my monkish robe and prayer carpet."

Woe, O, Abdallah! [5] They have slain thee on my bosom
While yet I saw the play of thine anklets.

Accursed ibn Muljam! Thou hast slain hujjet Allah—the Appointed of the Lord.

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[1] Hoseyn.
[2] Shimr.
[3] Henna used at weddings is red in colour, hence here henna is used symbolically for blood.
[4] Ali.
[5] The infant son of Hoseyn, killed by an arrow while in his father's arms.

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One more picture remains in my mind as I remember Moharram. The scene is a dirty byway, and the actors are six or seven small children aged about four or five. They have fixed a few rags to a pole, and are dancing round it, naked to the waist, singing Moharram chants and slapping their little breasts. But as they do so, they giggle delightedly. Childhood is the same all the world over!

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CHAPTER XV

A VISIT TO SATAN

In the autumn of 1922, when I was staying in Mosul, word came up from Baghdad that no women were to be allowed to go into Kurdistan, which was then in a disturbed state. I was disappointed, but an interview with the Divisional Adviser procured me at least permission to visit the foot-hills just beyond Al Kosh on the borders of the Kurdish country. This was exactly where I most wished to go, for I intended to make closer acquaintanceship with the Yazidis, or devil-worshippers, whose Mir, Said Beg, lives at Ba'idhri, some miles further than Al Kosh, and whose principal shrine, Sheikh Adi, is situated in the rugged folds of the hills beyond.

Accordingly, we made our way to Al Kosh, where the kindly monks entertained us, and early the following morning my two companions and I left in a car. I think our good hosts saw us go with a little misgiving. They are not children of a higher criticism, and to them the devil is still a very active personality. It said much for the wide-mindedness of Qas Emmanuel, the excellent Chaldæan priest, who, at the request of the Chaldæan patriarch of Babylon, made the third of our party, that he would go among such pagans. It is true that later on he obstinately refused to allow himself to be photographed with the worshippers of Satan, but his attitude was forbearing to our expedition, although contemptuous of its object.

The road was villainous, and looked presently as though it would defeat us altogether, for the car got bogged in a patch of irrigated ground just below an Assyrian mound,

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upon the side of which a Yazidi village had been built. The cotton soil which, up to this point, had been furrowed and seamed by cracks, so dry and hard was its surface after the summer, was here as sticky as glue, and push and pull as we would, the car would not budge from the mire. Our shouts brought a number of men and boys from the village, laughing and shouting as they ran down to our assistance. Each wore his peculiar Yazidi dress, a round-necked shirt with enormous sleeves surmounted by a loose tunic confined at the waist by a wide sash, and baggy trousers. They put their shoulders to our car with a will, and a few moments of their cheerful help set us again on dry land. We proffered money, but they refused. It was their pleasure to help, they said, and to take money for such service would be *'ayb* (shame).

From this village, Jerahiya, we descended again, fording a rocky stream and following the stony track until it brought us within sight of the Mir's house, or rather fortress, sharp-cut against the background of hills, itself on a lesser eminence. The village of Ba'idhri), meekly clustered about the foot of its lord's stronghold, was not visible until we were close upon it, and lay in a long, winding green valley, watered by a mountain stream, its flat roofs embowered in olives, almonds, mulberries, and other fruit-trees. At the approach to the village was a sacred tree, carefully walled in from profane touch by a wall of rough stones. The clear, running brook, which fed the village gardens, half encircled the precipitous mound on which the Mir's house was built, but we discovered later that he does not draw his drinking supply from the same stream as his people. A stream behind his house is reserved for him, and no common folk are allowed to use this water for any purpose whatsoever.

Sounds of fife and drum rose from the pleasant village as we left the car at the entrance to the Mir's *qasr*, for a wedding was being celebrated, and man and maid were dancing by the stream among the trees in honour of the event. We thought of the quaint dialogue between a Yazidi and his proselyte recorded by a Chaldæan priest, in which the proselyte is told :

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"Three centuries after Adam there was born a righteous man of our nation, and there being at that time discord between a husband and wife descended from Eve (*i.e.*, not Yazidis), they were brought before him for justice. First the man was asked if the woman were his wife and he replied, 'Yes'; but when the woman was asked if the man were her husband, she denied it. The patriarch reconciled them and sent them away. After this time the patriarch passed a law that whenever nuptials were celebrated, musical instruments should be sounded so that all persons should know of the marriage and there would be no scandal or question. So that when the drum goes 'Bom, bom, bom!' it means that such and such a man has taken such and such a woman to wife, and when the cymbals go 'Ting, ting, ting!' it means that such-and-such a woman has taken so-and-so for her husband."

The fortress, for fortress it certainly was, was built of undressed stone, and its big gate, surmounted by a pair of horns—a suggestive ornament!—led into an outer courtyard from which an inner courtyard was reached by a second doorway. The second courtyard contained the big guest-room, where we subsequently spent the night, and beneath it were chambers for servants and stabling for horses. In a corner of a stable that night I performed my ablutions in an effort to escape publicity, for we slept on the cushioned benches upon which we sat to talk and eat with our hosts.

From this courtyard, again, a third gate led into an inner quadrangle about which were grouped the Mir's own apartments and those of his womenfolk.

We had sent a policeman on ahead the day before to warn the Mir of our intended visit, and were received hospitably and taken directly to the guest-room, where coffee was served. From the windows we had a view of the village below with its dancing devil-worshippers, and when we learnt that the Mir was honouring the proceedings with his presence, we determined to join the merrymakers, too. So down the steep hillside we went, crossing the stream, and were soon in the thick of the innocent fun.

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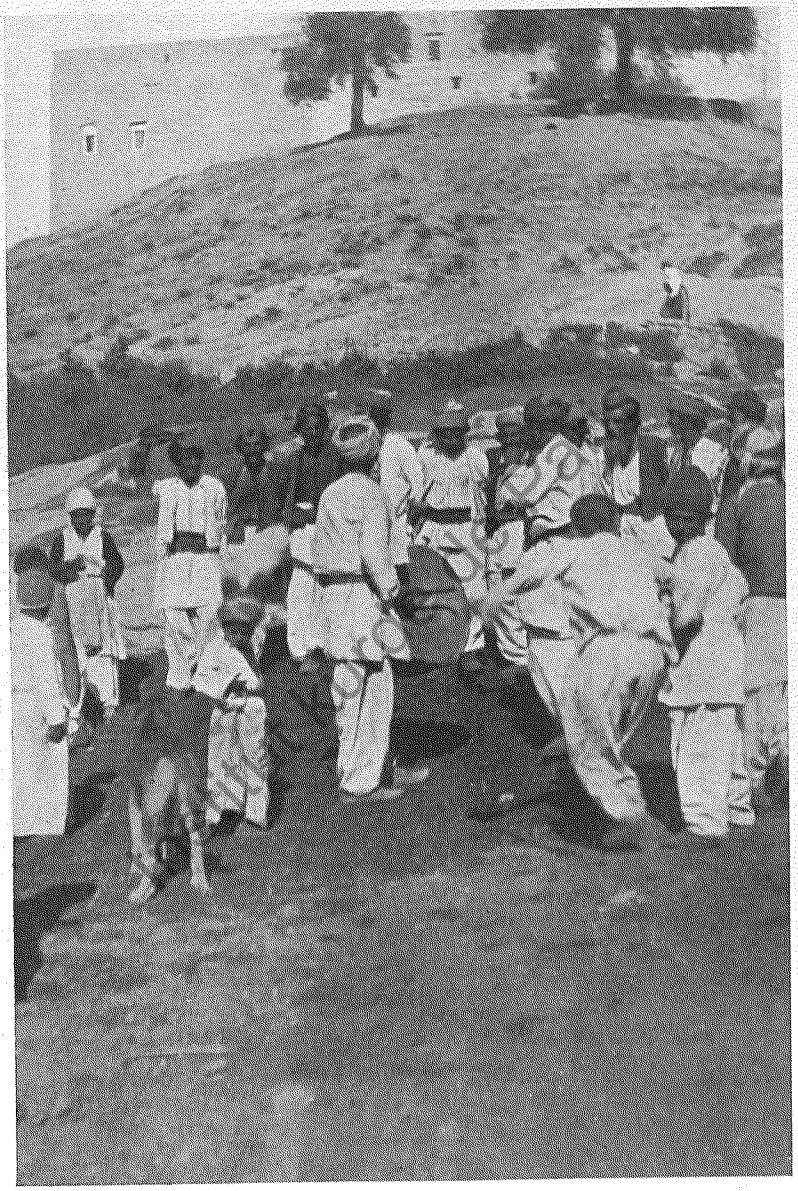
GIRL-DANCERS AT A YAZIDI WEDDING.
(*See page* 177.)



THE YAZIDI VILLAGE OF BA'IDHRI.
(*See pages* 175-178.)



DANCERS AT A YAZIDI WEDDING.
(Note the sacred tree walled in on the hill.)
(*See page* 176.)

A number of men and women were dancing in a broken circle, shifting their weight from one foot to the other and keeping their arms linked while they moved round and round to the music of a pipe and drum. The piper and drummer capered, too, the piper's cheeks inflated Boreas-like and his eyes twinkling with a kind of professional merriment.

The Mir, Said Beg, a good-looking, bearded man of sad countenance, walking amongst his people like a squire at a village treat, came forward to greet us and ask us to return to his house with him; but having seen so much of the proceedings, I wanted to see more, and went to pay a visit on the bride. She, poor little creature, was crouching in a corner in the upper room of a house near by, the light of day, which entered by the low door, being further obscured by a curtain drawn completely over the half of the room in which she sat, for custom orders that she shall sit thus modestly hidden from the eye of day for the first three days of her wedding. She was only twelve years old, whereas her husband, whom I photographed outside on his roof, must have been in the thirties. He was anxious for me to photograph his little bride, but in the darkness of her retreat this was impossible, and she dared not emerge.

A Yazidi may take four wives, but he may not, like the Moslems, divorce them. Nothing but death can dissolve a Yazidi marriage, and the woman who brings with her a substantial dowry is treated well. She does not veil, except during the first weeks after marriage, or live in seclusion, and her rights of property are respected. The Mir has the seigneur's right over his people and may take a woman if he wants her, incurring no responsibility or blame, but then the Mir, being a religious as well as a temporal chief, can do no wrong.[1]

There were comely maidens among these villagers, and their costumes were imposing. Red was the favourite colour, and they wore big stomachers of wrought silver and quantities of barbaric jewellery. It is said that a marriage is solemnised

[1] He also has the seigneur's right of "prima noctis," which, according to accounts, he exercises.

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by the breaking of a loaf between the two in the presence of their sheikh, but this ceremony, if there be such, I did not personally witness. It is the sheikh who leads the maiden to her husband's house, at the threshold of which she steps over the blood of a sheep whose throat is cut as she approaches. [1]

We returned to the Mir's house, where I visited his wife, and was introduced to some sheikhs who had been bidden to the wedding festivities. They were well armed, and carried handsome daggers in silver sheaths thrust into their wide sashes, and revolvers ready to hand. As we conversed politely, we drank tea from small Persian glasses. The Mir told us that he had sent word to Sheikh Adi of our coming so that we might find food prepared for us; he also advised us to take two armed men from his own household in addition to our own policeman, for there is always the chance of being attacked by robbers on the road. As the way was rough and uphill, he had provided us with mules, which were even then being saddled.

This was good hearing, and we took our leave and mounted our mules and set off towards the hills amongst which the sacred valley lay hidden. The animals moved at a leisurely pace over the dry country, which in spring must be carpeted with wild flowers and herbage, but in October was brown and parched. Half an hour of cross-country riding brought us into the well-worn pilgrim track, which climbed steadily uphill. By the wayside there were many small cairns of stones, left by pious pilgrims to commemorate their visit, and we constantly passed sacred trees, walled in like the tree we had first seen. Presently we came to a small domed shrine, the tomb of Sheikh Mushellah, which means " undressed sheikh." Whether this holy man was a Yazidi or not, I do not know,

[1] When a bride is being led to her husband's house, she must be careful to look at every person, sacred object (such as sacred tree) or Christian church that she may chance to pass on the road. When she enters her future home, the bridegroom throws a waterpot full of small bells at the wall above her head, and then breaks a loaf of bread on her head so that she may always show herself charitable to the hungry.

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nor how he came by so curious a nickname. Perhaps he was waylaid by robbers and stripped, no rare occurrence in this district.

The road we had followed on a previous day in the ravine of Rabban Hormuzd had been difficult, but compared to the path along the crests of these hills, it was an easy highway. We zigzagged along up and down stony paths which no horse could have negotiated, and our sure-footed mules, though slipping a little sometimes on the rocky surface and stumbling over loose boulders, picked their own way steadily enough, without guiding rein or encouraging hand.

As we reached higher ground we found hardy flowers growing on the hillsides, survivors of the summer's heat. Mountain-oaks, dwarfed at first, but getting larger as we went further, grew plentifully, and the mules tugged at the foliage as they plodded upwards. The bright sun and cool, exhilarating air stimulated our escort, and they burst into song—a song of battle, sudden death, and heroic deeds, which is the only alternative to a love-song in these parts. Our own policeman sang lustily; he was a handsome, fair-haired Chaldæan youth, slung over with bandoliers and most picturesquely attired. His wide striped trousers, embroidered with green wool and brilliantly patched with red, were a source of joy to us, and he was named Hormuzd after his national saint.

Crest after crest was mounted, and still Sheikh Adi hid from sight. On one hilltop we met a youth of modest appearance who exchanged greetings with our escort. He was Salman, a "kochek," or miracle-worker, among the Yazidis, whose fame as a prophet was bringing him in many rupees from the faithful. Poor lad, his days were numbered, for a short time after our return we heard that he had been murdered on his return from the big feast at Sheikh Adi.

After three hours we arrived at the summit of a hill, the thickly-wooded sides of which ran down sharply into a gorge. It was the sacred valley.

We followed a winding path under the oak-trees and soon saw the spires of the temple emerging from the trees below

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us. "Spires" conveys, perhaps, a false impression, for they were cone-shaped like sugar-loaves, fluted and whitewashed, and surmounted by brightly gilt balls. The devil, it seems loves whitewash, particularly on sepulchres, and all Yazidi tombs, shrines, and holy places are kept well coated with it. A square stone pillar on the downward way marked the spot at which pious pilgrims had to remove their shoes, and blackened patches on the rocks showed where oil and wicks had been placed, for on feast-nights the whole valley glimmers with lights, convenient crannies in rock or stone being turned into lamps for the time being. Besides, it is the guardian priest's duty to make a tour of the shrine every evening, bearing in his hand a bundle of wicks and a jar of olive-oil. Into each recess of hollowed stone about the temple and on its walls he places a little oil and wick, lights them, and leaves them to burn out.

Here and there on the hillside were small stone huts. These are used for the shelter of pilgrims at times of festival, and here and there are little oratories or shrines. It was as if we had descended into an enchanted abode of perpetual spring, so green was the valley which lay below us, with the temple at its head. Crocuses grew by the wayside, and the sound of running water made music everywhere. From the temple a long garden stretched down the gentle slope, in which grew almonds, peach-trees, mulberries, figs, olives, and other fruit-trees. In April the valley must be snow and rose with blossom. Wild rosebushes abound, and even now we saw a number of blossoming wild flowers, including English willow herb, hyacinths, oleanders, and rosemary. Brambles showed both blossom and blackberries, the latter being good eating.

The steep path ended abruptly at a tunnel of masonry, where we dismounted, and, passing through, found ourselves in the outer court of the temple, where the priest in charge, Hasan Faqir, stood ready to welcome us. He was a thick-set man of about fifty-five, with the peculiarly long, thick nose characteristic of the Yazidi, a grizzled beard, and a

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pleasant smile. He wore baggy white trousers, a black tunic (the mark of his order) and a grey vest, and smoked a Kurdish pipe. Shady mulberry-trees grew in the court, which was paved with stone, and water ran from stone spouts into three oblong stone basins. Deliciously cool, clear, and sparkling, it looked so good that we immediately bent to drink from it, scooping it up thirstily into our hands. The priest watched us benevolently, though we were drinking the holy water of the baptismal fonts, into which small Yazidi boys and girls are plunged as soon as they can walk.

The water passes through three chambers before it enters the basins, and when we looked into these we found that they contained more stone tanks. The water plays hide-and-seek all over the queer, hole-and-corner place. It dives underground only to reappear at a lower level, for the temple, being on the hillside, stands on a series of shelves. Here it runs along a stone channel, there it falls into a basin, here it dives underground, there it hurries along free to light and air. Its voice is never silent, and it never runs dry. It is supposed to travel miraculously from the distant well of Zemzem at Mekka, and is full of virtuous powers. Sheikh Adi earth worked into a paste with Sheikh Adi water and shaped into small cakes or tablets, is much used in Yazidi ceremonial. The breaking of one of these sacred tablets between bride and bridegroom, if the sheikh is not present, will consecrate a marriage. A tablet is placed between the lips of the dead at burial, and the faithful are summoned to attend feasts and solemnities by tablets sent them by their village sheikh or pir.

Our thirst quenched, we followed our host into another court, into the wall of which arched recesses were built. It is used during times of pilgrimage as a market, the recesses being converted into shops. We left the temple court unvisited until later, and passing downwards by steps and tunnels, came into another enclosure in which an arbour or pergola had been built, roofed over by a thick layer of boughs with their leaves still on them, making a pleasant shade in the noonday. Here sat three or four people, who greeted us

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with friendly words, among them a tall old woman, dressed all in white from her turban to her woollen aba, whose air of distinction and fine face aroused our interest. We learnt that she was the sister of the late Mir, Ali Beg. Her sons being dead and her brother murdered, she had come to end her troubled days in the peaceful precincts of the temple, where she had already spent many years. As she talked to us, her fingers were busy with distaff and spindle, for she was making wicks for the temple lamps in preparation for the Great Feast. I wanted to make a picture of her as she sat there, white and dignified, at her pious work, but she refused.

"I am a sad old woman," said she, "old and ugly; you cannot want my picture."

The paving beneath the arbour had been covered by grass mats, and cushions were brought so that we might rest at ease. Tea was brought as soon as we had seated ourselves, and a little later a great dish of *pilau*, in which a thick omelette took the place of the usual chicken, which is a forbidden dish to the Yazidi. Flat native loaves served as our plates, and we drank *shenina*, or curds and whey, from bowls provided with deep wooden ladles. For the rest, we helped ourselves with our fingers, which we washed at the end of the meal with Sheikh Adi water poured from a pitcher. Delicious coffee followed, and then the priest suggested that we should visit the temple buildings.

There are no secular dwellings at Sheikh Adi. The temple, subsidiary shrines, courtyards, rooms for the priest and his family, a guest-room, offices, granaries, and oil-stores, comprise the whole. The temple is orientated, the valley itself running east and west, and looks very much like a church. It has been rebuilt many times; in fact, the façade now looks totally different from the façade as drawn in Layard's book, while a photograph of the temple in Miss Bell's *Amurath to Amurath* shows a door which is unlike that which now admits one to the temple.

The courtyard before the entrance contains various small buildings, and mulberry-trees through which the sun casts

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chequered patterns on the façade. The door is to the extreme left of the wall, which is interesting on account of its curious magical signs cut in low relief on the stones, the principal being the great vertical snake, carefully black-leaded, to the right of the doorway. Pilgrims kiss this emblem of Satan, and we bent beside it to remove our shoes before we strode over the threshold, heedful not to touch the wide threshold stone at the entrance, for it is sacred.

Within, the temple is dark, dirty, and shabby. Water falls from a spout into a basin at the west end of the church, and beside it is a well at the corner of the south wall. The floor is greasy with drippings from the oil lamps, placed between the columns, although there are stone receptacles beneath each to receive any overflow. The lamps are of a curious design, being perfectly square iron receptacles, with a pinch at each corner, not unlike the dishes used by photographers. Pure olive oil is used, made from the olives of the valley, and hand-woven wicks, which merely float in the dish.

The building is sprung from two arches supported by six square columns, which divide it into two naves, one higher than the other by about a foot. Each column is decorated by a drapery, or flag, of three colours—yellow, green, and cherry-red.

On the north side of the temple a chapel, which they call Sheikh Hassan, contains an ark-shaped chest or tomb, entirely covered with draperies, and from this, again, a low door communicates with a second chapel in which is the tomb of Sheikh Adi himself. The latter is covered with dirty carpets and embroidered cloth, and seemed a dingy resting-place for so venerated a saint. The chapel is about twenty feet square, the tomb itself being seven feet long, four wide, and five high. It is dark, the only light entering through three small apertures beneath the dome, which is immediately beneath the fluted spire. They told us that an inscription ran round the interior of the dome, but the gloom was so great that I was unable to see it. If there is one, it is one of the only two inscriptions in the place, the other being a large marble tablet, slightly

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recessed into the wall of the higher half of the temple, upon which is an inscription in Arabic and symbols of the sun and moon.

Beyond the tomb of Sheikh Adi was a door leading into darkness. We were not allowed to penetrate here, the priest informing us that it merely contained stores and rubbish. We looked for the door which communicates with the cave beneath, described by Dr. Wigram, who visited it when the Yazidis had fled during a persecution. We found it in the first chapel, but were firmly discouraged from investigating what it concealed. There were serpents below, they told us. We knew from Dr. Wigram, however, that it is really a subterranean cavern containing more running water, and that the Yazidis, on account of its sanctity, are reluctant to let strangers enter it.

At a short distance from the courtyard of the temple, a little higher on the hillside, is a second shrine with a fluted spire, that of Sheikh Shems-ed-din. The slope is so steep that a scramble up the bank enabled me to walk round its spire, which rises from a flat roof. This is precisely what the white bull is made to do when it is sacrificed here once a year to the sun. It is led round the spire by chosen youths, then taken below, slaughtered, and eaten.

We were unlucky in that our visit was not ten days later, when the greatest of all the yearly feasts was to take place, the October or autumn feast, called by the Yazidis the "Feast of Assembly." All pious devil-worshippers who can travel are enjoined by their religion to celebrate it at Sheikh Adi. Layard was present at this feast, which he describes very graphically in his books, and, in more modern times, the late Lieut.-Col. Leachman attended it. There are feasts at all the four seasons—winter, spring, summer, and autumn.

That evening, as we sat at meat in the Mir's house at Ba'idhri, I had a long talk with a Chaldæan, who, having been many years in the service of Said Beg, said he could tell me anything I wished to know about the customs of the Yazidi. He was vague and inaccurate, however, and was very hazy

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when I asked him the exact dates of the yearly feasts, and the customs which attend them.

The spring feast in April is attended by customs which remind one of the pagan rites of ancient Europe, still surviving in May Day celebrations. On the eve preceding the spring feast, each Yazidi family kills a lamb or buys meat, in order to "give it to the dead," and at break of day youths and maidens set off over the hills to make nosegays of wild flowers. Each house is decorated with garlands. Then the women take the food they have prepared and visit the graves of their dead, accompanied by *kawwals* playing drums, pipes, and cymbals. The food, which is afterwards given to the poor, is placed on the graves, while the priests chant hymns, and the women do not forget to make the customary offerings to the priests. The visit to the cemetery over, the day is passed in merriment and feasting.

The Yazidis also observe certain feasts belonging to other religions. They borrow Christmas from the Christians—Christ being considered a great prophet; from the Moslems Big and Little Bairam, and the Id of Khidr Elias (or the Prophet Elijah), during which everyone named Elias must fast for three days.

Our way homeward lay through the valley, for we were taking an easier road back, but before taking our leave, we laid the customary offering of money on the threshold stone of the temple. Hasan Faqir, the guardian of the shrine, has held his post for twenty-two years, and pays the Mir Rs. 8,000 yearly for the privilege of collecting pilgrims' fees. The guardian of Shems-ed-Din pays Rs. 5,000, as his office is less lucrative. We proffered a request, which we knew was vain before we made it, that we should be allowed to see the *sanjak*, the image of Melak Taus, which is displayed to the faithful. It is a conventionalised cock or peacock in iron, mounted upon a stand, and there are several of these images in existence, one being kept at Sheikh Adi, one at the Sinjar, another in Syria, and so on. The right to display these *sanjaks* is put up to auction, the priest who outbids the others having

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the right to collect the fees of the faithful as he travels from village to village. The *sanjak* belonging to Russia was lost during the war ; both the image and its guardians disappeared, and have never been heard of.

The priest made the usual evasion. The *sanjak* was not in Sheikh Adi, he said, but in the Sinjar, and having been so courteously entertained, we did not press the demand, but made our farewells. Leaving the smiling priest with a few adherents, and the tall old woman, still twirling her distaff, at the threshold of the temple, we set off down the pleasant valley, following the running water, which led into a wider valley beyond where Kurdish men and women laboured among crops of tobacco and rice. But before we left the sacred gorge we turned for a parting glance at the white cones of the Devil's Temple and at the earthly paradise over which they presided.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE CULT OF THE PEACOCK ANGEL

(The Creeds and Customs of the Devil-worshippers in Mesopotamia.[1]*)*

In Basrah, in the spring of the year 1920, a visiting card was brought up to me one day with the information that the Mir of the Yazidis and his servant were below, and wished to give themselves the pleasure of staying with us. It appeared they had mistaken our house for the political guest-house, to which, after some polite conversation and coffee, we sent them. The card was printed in red ink, and above the Mir's name was delineated a mysterious fowl which might have been a cock or a dove. It was neither. The bird was a peacock, symbol of the Mir's master and lord—none other than Satan himself.

Not that the Mir would have used the name, for to utter the word "Shaitan," so miscalled by the folk of other religions, is a disrespect to the Prince of Darkness of which no Yazidi would be guilty. They speak of him as the "Peacock Angel," Melak Taus,[2] and though they worship God, they consider Him a remote First Cause, a Brahma above all, rather than

[1] Mosul Division contains a number of Yazidis—probably between eighteen to twenty thousand. There are also Yazidis in Syria and the Caucasus. Three-quarters of the Mesopotamian Yazidis are tribes, mostly sedentary, in the Jebel Sinjar, the remainder being scattered along the foot-hills from Jebel Maklub northwards in the Sheikhan district. They call themselves "Dassini," the term Yazidi being probably of later growth.

[2] Often mistakenly translated "Peacock King."

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the active Lord of this world. The master of this earth, all-powerful and all-present, is the angel whom we have named The Fallen, and they the Peacock Angel, and to him the Yazidis give their allegiance and devotion.

It is not that they have said, "Evil, be thou my good." On the contrary, they are a peaceful, industrious, charitable, clean, and harmless people who commit fewer crimes of violence than most of their neighbours. Nor is their dark deity accredited by them with dark purposes. He is not perpetually warring against heaven, for it is by the decree of God that he was given power over this world. He is not more vindictive and hard than the Jahweh of the Old Testament; those who serve him and worship him prosper; those who curse him suffer. Sickness and disease are sent by him, but so also are prosperity and health. He can be propitiated by prayers and offerings like other more respectable deities. He is more rational than most, for he sets limits to his strength by using the words, "conformably to the laws of time and space," [1] when speaking of his own powers over the material world. He is lord over no unholy revels, presides over no witches' sabbaths. Is it possible, as the Yazidis say, that we in the West have maligned the Devil? Have we made of him the scapegoat for our own shortcomings and invented the Tempter to excuse temptation?

But if his evil qualities are negative it must be confessed that his virtues are negative too. There are ceremonial rules in the religion of the Yazidi, there are no ethical precepts. There are commandments concerning cleanliness, but none concerning godliness. The Yazidi is told to obey and pay the priests, but not to love his neighbour.[2] Possibly he is so busy with his duties to his priests that he has no time or energy left over for sins against his neighbour, for never were

[1] In the *Jalweh* or Book of Revelation.

[2] Prayer is a superfluous observance according to the Yazidis. They say the spirit of prayer is in the heart, and do not teach children to pray. There is also no order of prayer or command to pray in their books.

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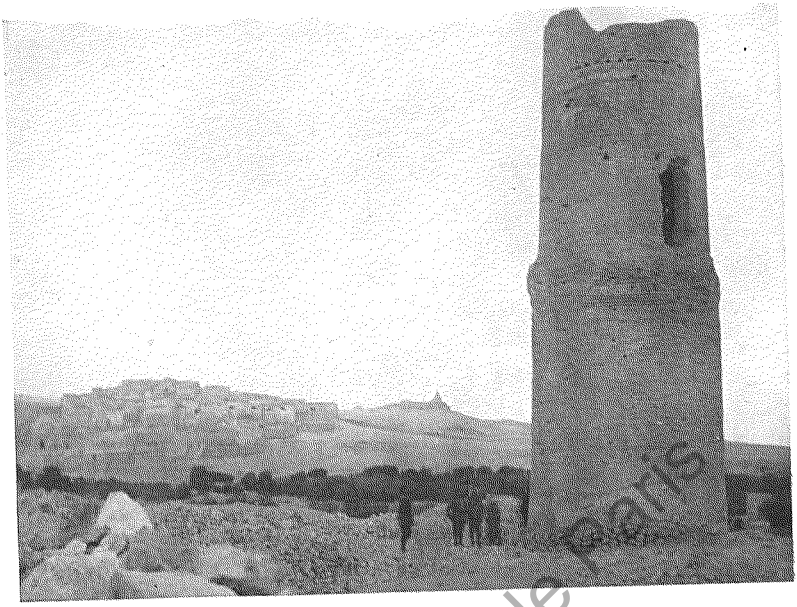
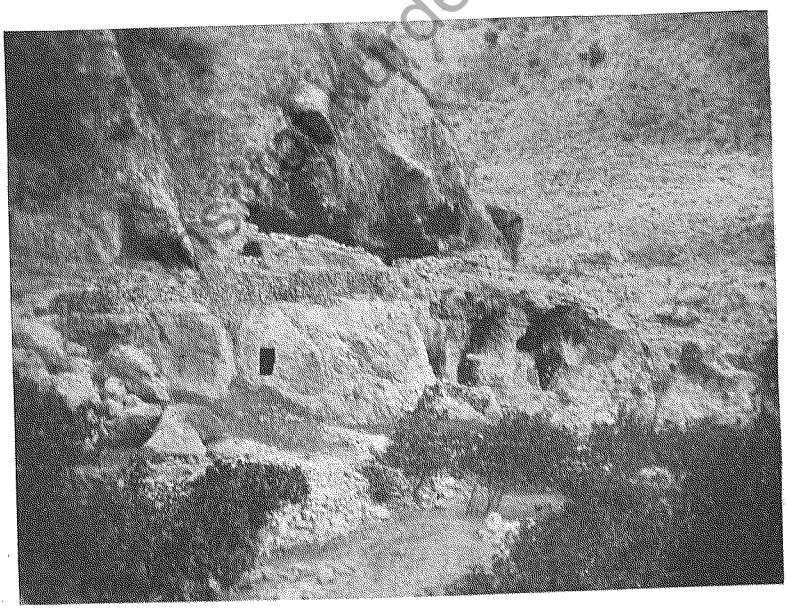
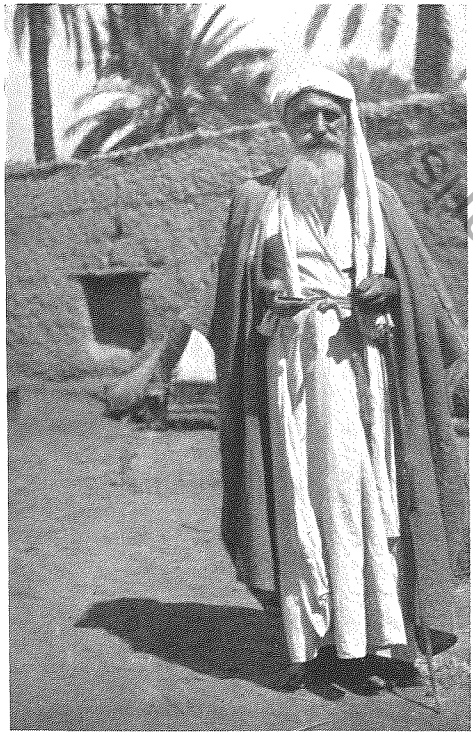


SINJAR.



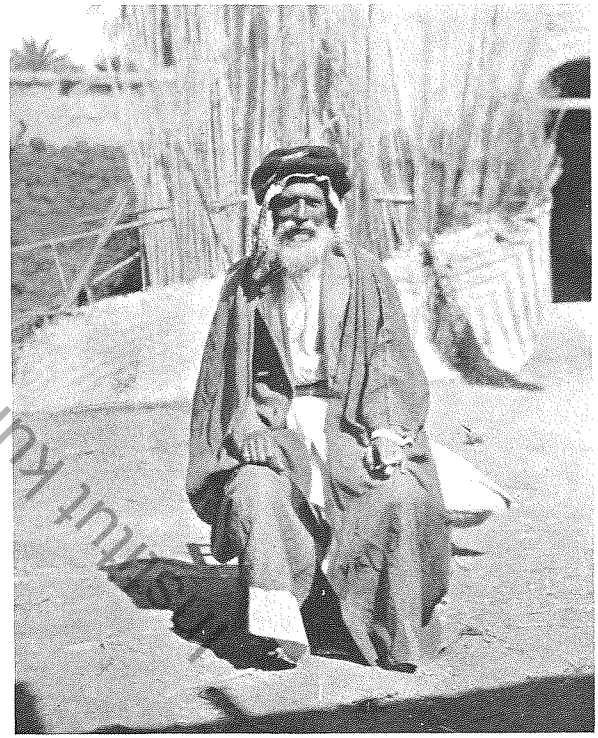
DEIR ASI.

Near this spot, it is rumoured, is a secret cleft in the rocks into which Yazidis have from time immemorial thrown offerings.



THE BISHOP CLOTHED IN THE "RASTA," OR FULL BAPTISMAL ROBES.

(*See page* 207.)



ONE OF THE CELEBRITIES OF 'IRAQ: ZAHRUN, THE BENVENUTO CELLINI OF THE SUBBI SMITHS.

(*See page* 205.)

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people of any race or religion more priest-ridden than the Yazidis.

The Christian is supposed to spend a tenth of his worldly goods upon the Church, but it is calculated that a Yazidi spends at least one-fourth of his income in fees, doles to the shrines, to the priests, and alms ; often more. The reputation of the devil-worshippers for charity stands high. Some Christians in Mosul told me that when, during the war, some four hundred refugees came to Hamu Sharu,[1] the Yazidi sheikh, who is paramount in the Jebel Sinjar, received and sheltered one hundred destitute families in his village alone. When the Christians first arrived, he called his people together and said, " These people have not begged from us from the time of Christ until now. We must feed them. If any man among you refuse to help, I curse him."

The temporal chief of the Yazidi, of which the Mir is head, are also their spiritual fathers,[2] and like other infallible hierarchs, can do no wrong. Dr. Wigram, late of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission, who has written so delightfully about his life in Kurdistan, told me the popular story of the death of a former Mir. The Mir's nephew and successor had been in foreign parts and when he came back he was received by his uncle in the presence of the people. The Mir had been presented with a sword of honour, and showed it to his nephew. " Is not the work fine ? " he asked. " Very fine," was the reply. " And the steel well-tempered ? " " Let me see ! " said the nephew, and the sword was given into his hand. " It is indeed keen," he observed, " and I will test it." With that he attacked his uncle and killed him. " Wherefore I am now your Mira ! " he added, turning to the frightened people.

[1] Hamu Sharu is of the *faqir* grade and is an old man. We appointed him Rais of the mountain with a monthly salary of Rs. 600 and a Wakil or agent at Balad with a salary of Rs. 300.

[2] The Mirs are said to descend from Yazid. Said Beg is of the family of Chol Beg. His cousin, Ismail, was useful to us during the war, and three of the sacred sanjaks or peacocks were allotted to him and three to Said Bey. This allocation was unpopular, and Ismail Bey proved untrustworthy, so he was sent to Baghdad, where the official eye could be upon him. He has since returned to the Sinjar.

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" Yes, thou art Mira ! " they dutifully echoed. Few Mirs die in their beds !

The present Mir, Said Beg, may come by a similar end. His mother, Mangan, a strong-minded lady, is credited with conniving at the murder of his father, and it is said that she harbours designs against the life of his son. When I visited them in their stronghold at Ba'idhri this redoubtable dame was away, for which I was sorry, but Said Beg, a melancholy, gentle-looking man with fine eyes and a black beard, had the weak mouth and irresolute expression of one who is ruled rather than rules.

There is one strong man among the Yazidi at the present moment, the Hamu Sheru before mentioned, who lives in the Jebel Sinjar between Mosul and Tel Afar. He is a staunch friend of the British, and is a powerful personality in his district. He is unorthodox enough to be in favour of education, and has effected some reforms. Marriage was formerly a luxury in the Sinjar, as the maiden's dowry, provided by her future husband, was as much as three or four hundred pounds. The result was that there were many elopements and disputes in consequence, for if a man has run away with a girl her people can claim a doubled dowry for her. Hamu Sheru ordered that the highest dowry paid must not exceed 1,500 rupees, and other dowries fell as the marriage was lower in the social scale.

Every group of families has its own sheikh or priestly overlord to whom dues must be paid, and its own pir, or hereditary priest.[1] The pir receives half as much as the sheikh from the head of each family. Should a man fail to pay his dues, his sheikh curses him and he becomes outlaw and pariah. Fees are paid at a birth, a marriage, and a burial. Fees are paid to the shrines, fees are paid to the priests in time of trouble or misfortune, fees are paid as thanksgivings.

[1] He is also allowed to choose a sheikh to act as his advocate in the next world. This sheikh is known as his " heavenly brother," or brother in faith, and must be near him at the time of death. The brother-in-faith has many duties, among which are to allow his *protégé* to kiss his hand daily !

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There are grades in the priesthood. The Mira, Mir, or Emir is, as I have said, a prince-pope. Below him is the Ikhtiari Margahi, or Grand Sheikh, appointed by the Mir, the religious chief below the Mir. He should be a descendant of the saint Hassan el Basri, and is the only person who can issue a fatwah, or religious decree. The Pirs, next in rank, are hereditary religious dignitaries with few temporal duties. The sheikhs have both spiritual and temporal powers—in practice the temporal exceeding the spiritual. The Kawwals are priests, and nothing else. They "play drums and pipes and sing holy music." Faqirs have the charge of the holy places and an order akin to the Levites of the Jews.

But the Kocheks are the most interesting body. These are the seers and visionaries, the professional mediums and miracle-workers of the sect. The occult powers of a kochek are supposed to be hereditary, but may also be possessed by an outsider who becomes a kochek on the strength of his gifts. Kocheks fall into trances and see visions. They foam at the mouth and are delivered of oracles. Their power over the people may become unlimited, and a popular kochek may aspire to become Grand Sheikh, or chief priest of the Yazidis.

A young shepherd recently professed these supernatural faculties, and was hailed as an inspired kochek by all the people. He obtained ascendancy over Said Beg's mother, afore described, and was an aspirant for the Great Sheikh-hood, at present vacant. He was credited with being able to produce sugar from his mouth. He shook his big sleeves open and the marvelling people could see within one the pomegranates and green trees of Paradise, and within the other the flames of Purgatory.

So great was the stir that he made that the Divisional Adviser sent for him to come to Mosul, and reproved him for his pretensions. "The Turks would have hanged you," he said, "for less!" and accused him of being an impostor. The kochek insisted that his claim was genuine. During the discussion, "I see two serpents," he said, "one at each of your

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elbows and they tell me that your wife lies sick in a house here and that she will recover!" This was a bad shot, for the lady was in England, but the kochek did not lose prestige by his visit. From the moment that he crossed the bridge over the Tigris a high wind blew, carrying sand over the city. When he recrossed the bridge over the Tigris the wind fell as suddenly as it had risen, and his followers did not fail to recognise in this a sign of his miraculous powers.

It was left to an old Chaldæan priest of Tel Uskof, if what he told us was true, to shake the reputation of the youth. This priest was invited by Said Beg to Ba'idhri, the people assembled, the kochek was summoned and begged to perform a miracle. "I have heard of your powers," said the priest. "Now here is Said Beg's mother ill up yonder at his house; why have you not cured her?" The kochek was abashed. "Ah, well, I will think of something easier. Here is a blind man, can you restore his sight?" The kochek had to confess that this was beyond his arts. "Here is a hungry man," the priest continued, "can you not produce food from your sleeve? A mere loaf?" But the kochek, unprepared, was unable to do this. Then the priest of Tel Uskof professed himself disappointed, "Even the smallest miracle I have asked for you have been unable to perform," said he, and the people were impressed. Since then, the priest said, the kochek's power declined, and with it his offerings, for he received many thousands of rupees from the faithful.

It was this same youth that we met as we rode up over the hills near Ba'idhri. He was very young, and had a gentle, unassuming aspect which accorded ill with his claims; and, so easily credulous are the people, that had he not been assassinated shortly after we met him, I have no doubt that he would soon have lived down the priest of Tel Uskof!

Kocheks wear black and are not circumcised like other Yazidis. Like sheikhs and faqirs, they may only marry within their own caste. The faqirs, too, wear black, and such is their prestige, that a faqir's black coat hung up on a tree will stop a brawl. The cloth is dyed with a special dye made

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from the leaves of the *chinar*, which are boiled for twelve hours to ensure a lasting colour.

It is to the kochek that mourners turn in time of death for reassurance as to the future existence of their dear one. The dead man, washed by his sheikh or pir in pure water—if no running water is available hot water may be used—is prepared for the tomb by having a tablet of Sheikh Adi earth inserted between his lips. He is then placed on a bier and borne to the burying-ground to the sounds of drums and chantings. There he is removed from the bier, laid in the open grave, dug so that the corpse shall lie in an eastward position, the shroud is lifted from the face, which is sprinkled with Sheikh Adi earth, then the grave is filled in. Mourning, accompanied by feasting and drinking, as at an Irish wake, goes on for the three days following the funeral. Women wail and pour dust on their heads; much arak is drunk to the memory of the deceased.

The kocheks who accompanied the body to the tomb are asked by the mourners to place offerings on the tombs of holy men, but are more especially entreated to reassure them as to the rebirth of the dead man's soul. To find this out, the kochek places himself in a room apart beneath the bier, so that he may pray to Sheikh Adi, Yazid, Mahommed Rashan, and other Yazidi saints. He then appears to fall into an epileptic fit, foaming at the mouth as if possessed with the spirit of prophecy. While in this state he is supposed to have communication with the other world. When the fit has passed the kochek sleeps quietly until the anxious relatives dare to disturb him with food and drink.

If the dead man has borne a good character and the offerings of the relatives have been satisfactory, the kochek reveals the glad tidings that the liberated soul is even then reborn into the body of a man-child of their own race. But if the dead man was a notorious sinner and the family not in the favour of the priests, he tells them that the man's soul has passed into the body of a dog, ass, horse, or other animal. The evil expiated, he may be reincarnated as a man again, but to help

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that end the relatives must make offerings to the shrines and to their religious chiefs. Whatever his rebirth, the dead man's clothes, and his daily food for a year, must be given to the sheikh, and every new moon a feast must be made for the poor in the name of the deceased.

These worshippers of the devil do not believe in hell. The fires of hell, they say, were extinguished years ago by a child called Abrik Shautha. He was sore afflicted, and had diseases of the eyes, nose, ears, hands, and feet. Six years he bewailed his hard lot, and the tears which he shed fell into a yellow jar. At the end of the seventh year the jar was full and the child poured its contents, as a libation to the gods, over the fires of hell, which since then no longer torment mankind. "For this," says a Syriac document from which I get this tale, "the seven gods thanked him much."

A Mosuli who had spent many years with the Yazidis in the Jebel Sinjar told me many of their legends and customs, and among them the following story:

"The Yazidis say that there were seventy-two Adams. Each of these populated the world, his seed remaining on the earth for ten thousand years. Between the creation of each Adam ten thousand years elapsed, during which time the earth was uninhabited. Each Adam was more perfectly constructed than his predecessors. The Yazidis are the children of the seventy-second Adam, but not of Eve, and I will tell you how.

"Adam and Eve lived together, but failed to produce children. The powers of heaven discussed this, and agreed Adam must have another wife. So they sent a heavenly damsel from Paradise itself, escorted by Jinnis, to be Adam's second wife.

"Eve was busy washing Adam's clothes in the river when she saw the Jinnis approaching with this damsel, whose name was Huriya. She asked them their errand and was told their purpose.

"'Do not go yet,' said Eve. 'Let me go before you to warn Adam and prepare the house for the reception of a bride.'

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"She hurried home, found Adam, and made him swear by all that is sacred that he would have nothing to do with the bride which had been sent him. Then the heavenly damsel brought by the Jinnis was duly installed, though a bride in name only.

"But two women and a man rarely live in peace beneath the same roof. There were constant quarrels between Eve and her husband, and during one of these she taunted him by declaring that she alone had the power of producing living beings, and that Adam had nothing to do with it. To settle the dispute, Adam took vital juices from Eve and himself and placed them into cone-shaped jars, two for himself, two for Eve. The four vessels were sealed, placed in the warmth of a dung-heap for nine months, and then opened. In Eve's two jars were found nothing but worms and corruption, while in Adam's were found a fine little boy and girl. These children were suckled by Adam, and from them sprang the race of the Yazidis. Later on, Eve bore Cain and Abel, from whom in due course the other nations of the world proceeded."

"But what of the Flood?" I asked.

"The Yazidis claim descent from Noah, whom they call Malik Miran (King of Emirs), while other nations are born of Shem, who reviled his father."

After this it is hardly to be wondered at when one hears that the language spoken in Paradise is the Kurdish dialect spoken by the Yazidis. For though there is no hell, there is a paradise to which the souls of those who are freed from re-incarnation have access. The past and future are an open book to them, and they are the helpers and counsellors of those still struggling in the mesh of birth and rebirth. Hence the Yazidi adoration of saints and holy men.

The shrine and holy place most reverenced by them is at Sheikh Adi, and to this they make pilgrimage yearly for the great feast in October and at other seasons of the year. Sheikh Adi is about thirty miles north-east of Mosul as the crow flies, and lies among the foot-hills which rise from the plain and skirt the highlands of Kurdistan. To this shrine come Yazidis

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from the villages around, from the Jebel Sinjar (their chief stronghold), from Syria, and even from Tiflis, where there is a number of adherents to this strange faith.

Who was Sheikh Adi, whose tomb is thus reverenced and whose name has such power among them? It is doubtful. Some say he was a Syrian Magian who, in the tenth century, took refuge with the Yazidis, gave them religious instruction and wrote their holy books for them. Some declare that the shrine of Sheikh Adi was once the Christian church of Mar Yuhannan and Mar Yshoh Sabran, and that in the twelfth century a flourishing Christian monastery existed in the well-watered valley now known as Sheikh Adi.

The monks, they say, employed one Adi ibn Musafir, a Kurd who had grown up in the shadow of the monastery and learnt to read and write within its walls, as an agent or bailiff to collect their rents and tithes. This Adi became powerful and taking advantage of the Superior's absence on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he conspired with those of his own tribe, the Beni Omayah, and men of the tribe of Zednaya, to overpower the monks and seize the convent. This done he, together with his sons, Sharaf-ed-din, Mahommed Fakhr-ed-din and Shams-ed-din, took up their residence in the monastery.

Adi and his sons had taken Mogul brides, and he and his tribe were Terhaya Kurds, Moslems by profession, but in reality adherents to paganism. The principal deity honoured by them was Yazid, and their religion was an old one. Sheikh Adi, says the Syriac document, became a prophet amongst his people. They believed all that he told them, even when he claimed divine descent. He forbade his followers to read or write, and established chiefs who were to act as religious guides and collect dues.

He was taken prisoner by the Amir Genghis Khan, sent to Persia, and executed at Maragha. His sons remained for some time at Sheikh Adi, but being ordered to surrender the convent by the Tartar chiefs, they fled, Sharaf-ed-din being killed. Shams-ed-din, his wife, and followers, went to Syria, Fakhr-de-din took refuge in the Sinjar. The monastery fell

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into disrepair, but later on the grandsons of Sheikh Adi petitioned the Sultan of the Tartars for its possession. Their prayer was granted and the convent has remained in their possession ever since.

The Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir of this somewhat apocryphal story, which is interesting, nevertheless, on account of the grains of truth it contains, was a Sufi saint and mystic born at Beyt Qar, near Baalbek—the famous City of the Sun, in Syria, in the twelfth century after Christ. He became the pupil of various saintly philosophers and travelled far and wide in search of enlightenment. Monsieur Huart writes, in his admirable book on Arab literature :

" He retired later to the hills west of Mosul in the midst of the ruins of a Christian convent, where he established his *zawia* where he died in 1163, having founded the religious order of the 'Adawiya. The Yazidis, who at that time probably inhabited the Sinjar hills, took him for their protector, crediting him with a cult which has little Mahommedan about it, and he has remained to this very day their great saint, and his tomb a place of pilgrimage."

This Sheikh Adi ben Musafir el-Hakkari was the author of mystical works and poems still extant, one of which, a catechism entitled *Beliefs of the Sunni*, is in the Berlin Library.

It seems clear that, whoever Sheikh Adi [1] may have been,

[1] There are many legends about Sheikh Adi among the Yazidis. On the Day of Judgment, they say, he will carry the souls of the Yazidis into Paradise on a large tray placed on his head without any question or examination. Sheikh Adi was a pupil of the great Sufi saint, Abdul Kader Gilani. The Yazidis declare that he used to hear the speeches of Abdul Kader in Baghdad when in the mountains of Lalshi. If a religious person wished to share this miraculous power, Sheikh Adi drew a circle on the ground and made the inquirer stand in it : then he could hear Abdul Kader speaking. This seems to have been a forestalling of broadcasting ! Sheikh Adi once accompanied Sheikh Abdul Kader Gilani on a pilgrimage to Mekka. He was away for four years, and during his absence Melak Taus impersonated him so successfully that when he returned he was treated with great contumely as an impostor. He died, and Melak Taus appeared to verify the identity of the saint, bidding all men honour his memory. So they raised a shrine above his tomb, and pilgrimage to that shrine is more meritorious than a pilgrimage to Mekka. There is another delightful legend about

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he was a late accretion, another stone added to the coat of odds and ends in which this caddis-worm faith encloses itself. In the Kurdish highlands paganism would die but slowly. The worship of sun, moon,and morning star, and of the elements of earth, fire, air, and water seems to speak of a Nature-worship as old, perhaps, as the human race in these regions. As other faiths came and went, there were additions and modifications, possibly for reasons of self-preservation. The sun became Sheikh Shems-ed-din, and the spring at Sheikh Adi assigned a miraculous underground connection with the well Zemzem at Mekka.

The god Yazid, the tutelary deity of the Tarhoya Kurds, may be identical with the Yazid mentioned by Assemani, the idol overthrown by one Elias who, having been elected bishop of Mogham, a city of Persia on the borders of the Caspian sea, and finding it given over to superstition and idolatry, determined to root them out. He discovered that the god was identified with a mighty tree in a sacred grove, the branches of which cast a deep and unholy shade. Undaunted by the horror of his flock, he rushed upon the tree with a hatchet and succeeded, not only in laying it low, but in felling the other trees of the grove.

May not something of this tree-worship linger in the excessive reverence paid by Yazidis to trees? Again and again in Yazidi districts one comes upon trees around which a wall of stones has been built, thus showing their sacred character, and going to Sheikh Adi there are many such trees by the wayside.[1]

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Sheikh Adi, in which Kurdish simplicity peeps out. One day Sheikh Adi and his disciples were invited as guests into the presence of God in heaven, but when they got there they found that in heaven no straw for their horses was to be found. Sheikh Adi ordered that straw should be transported to heaven from his threshing-floor in this world. While the straw was on its celestial journey, some was spilt, and one can see it at night trailing across the sky (the Milky Way).

[1] A sick Yazidi will make a vow to "Sitt Hafisa," a mulberry-tree in the village of Baasheikha. Another sacred mulberry is "Abdi Rash," in the village of Kabbara, and another at Bahzani is called "Sheikh Baleko." Near the latter is a spring. A person suffering

If this disposes of Yazid and the worship of natural objects, how about the worship of Satan? This is undoubtedly an offshoot of the dualism peculiar to Manichæism. Manes, who lived in the reign of Shapur or Sapor, borrowed dualism—the recognition of the warring principles of Good and Evil—from the Magians. As Manichæism had its origin in Mesopotamia and flourished about the time when Christianity had obtained an ascendency in the land, it might quite well be that the Yazidis foisted Manichæan beliefs on to Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, whose refinements of philosophy were probably beyond them; it is also possible that he ousted a Christian community from the valley now known by his name. But the sacred spring of Sheikh Adi, with its hidden sanctuary beneath the temple, must have been hallowed long before the coming of Christ, Mahommed, or Sheikh Adi. The worship of springs of water is co-eval with the worship of trees, and it is quite probable that the cult, even in the days of Christian possession, was not forgotten.

Mention has been made of the holy books of the Yazidis, and in these it might be thought there would be some internal evidence as to the origin and age of the faith. The existence of these books was no secret, but so jealous was the care with which they were guarded that their names were for a long while unknown. A Yazidi who revealed the names to those outside the sect was punished with death, and it was his duty to confuse an inquirer about them by giving false information. For a long time it was believed, and still is believed by many, that the Mashaf Rash, or Black Book, for instance, was merely a Quran in which all impolite mentions of Satan had been blacked out. A good many Arabic translations of these sacred books exist. In fact, when Ismail Beg (self-styled Mir of the Yazidis) visited us in 1920 he offered to let us copy

from fever must tie a rag to the tree and feed the fish in the spring. A curse falls on the person who is impious enough to remove a rag from the tree. Tree-worship and the worship of running water go together with the Yazidis. At Bahzain there is a sacred spring dedicated to Sheikh Mand. Sheikh Mand is a popular saint with the Yazidis, and his descendants are said to be able to pick up poisonous snakes.

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out as much as we wished from the Black Book he had with him, provided no Moslem saw it.

It was left to Père Anastase Marie, a Carmelite father of Baghdad and a keen antiquarian, to make the most valuable contribution to our knowledge of these sacred books. In 1898 a handsome young Yazidi named Habib came to him for instruction in the Christian faith. He had had, he said, a vision in which he had seen Christ in a garden, and thought he had been commanded by Him to seek baptism. Both before his reception into the Christian faith and afterwards, he proved his *bonâ fides* by revealing the secrets of his former religion; but so great was his habit of reverence for the holy books he had been taught to venerate from childhood, that it was seven full months before he brought himself to reveal the names and speak about the contents of the Ktebi Jalweh (Book of Revelation) and Mashaf Rash (Black Book).

Not even Yazidis themselves know of the whereabouts of these books except at the special seasons when they are exhibited. Together with others in Chaldæan, Latin, Syrian, Arabic, Greek, and Persian, said by Habib to have formed once part of the library of a Christian church, they are in the care of a librarian and kept in hiding in the Sinjar district.

The two sacred manuscripts are kept in a wooden box, decorated with silver plaques, and its three keys are in the possession of the Mir, the principal sheikh, and the librarian. The box is hidden in a cave, the mouth of which is concealed with a stone. No Yazidi, except those who are appointed readers in public, may read these books; indeed, reading and writing are at all times forbidden arts. Those who understand Arabic can, however, listen to extracts from them in that language, their own language being, of course, a dialect of Kurdish. On the box is the image of the Peacock, the symbol of the Peacock-Angel. To the right of the peacock is the sun, to the left the moon, and above it a star—probably the star of the morning. Other silver symbols affixed to the box represent the four elements.

On a journey to Sinjar Père Anastase succeeded in

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supplementing the knowledge already gained from his convert, who had since died. He found and got to know the librarian mentioned by Habib, who, alas for Yazidi tradition! proved unable to resist the hope of gain. The learned father offered him twenty francs a page if he would copy exactly each page of the two documents, the whole, with forty francs backshish, representing five hundred francs. The bribe, representing more money than the poor Yazidi had ever seen in his life, was irresistible, and he promised to make tracings page by page of the holy manuscripts provided he might take his time, for he was only allowed access to the documents a few times yearly. As a matter of fact, the transcribing, which was faithful in every particular, took two years.

The Ktebi Jalweh consists of pieces of very fine gazelle-skin parchment. There are sixteen lines of writing to each page, the leaves of pieces of parchment being separate, loose, and bearing no number. They are roughly shaped so as to form such figures as a crescent moon, the earth, the sun, two rivers, a man's head with two ears or horns, a three-tongued flame of fire, and so on. At the foot of each page is the word with which the next begins. The Mashaf Rash is one roll of parchment, bearing one hundred and fifty-two lines of rather large writing.

Both documents are written in a Kurdish dialect like that spoken by the Yazidis to-day but more archaic, and special characters, evidently invented for purposes of secrecy, are employed. In deciphering this peculiar script and the dialect which it concealed, Père Anastase was considerably helped by the Arabic versions of which in the meantime he had been able to secure copies, but the manuscripts as a whole still await decipherment. Of the two the Ktebi Jalweh is the more revered but less read by the Yazidis, being almost entirely reserved for the higher priesthood. It is a Satanic manifesto, a grandiose declaration of the power of the Peacock-Angel, who speaks throughout in the first person, demanding worship, promising reward to those who reverence him and disaster to those who revile him. There is no ethical precept

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in the book, no indication as to how man should behave to man, unless it is in the order to obey " my ministers."

This book, Père Anastase thinks, is the older of the two. It bears every mark of unity, of having been composed and written at one time and by a person strongly imbued by Manichæan ideas. The Mashaf Rash, on the contrary, is very disjointed. It repeats itself, contradicts itself, and redoubles on itself. It reads like strings of oral traditions written down haphazard, tribal taboos jotted down without reason.

The various legends of the creation of man given in the Mashaf Rash vary considerably from the oral tradition of the people. Mentions of Christ and of the Mahommedans show that it was penned some time after Mahommed. The contradictions are glaring. In one place it states that God broke the great pearl that was the origin of the universe by giving it an impatient kick ; in another that it was the angel Fakhr-ed-din who broke it with a cry. In one passage God is credited with the creation of the heavens ; in another Gabriel makes them from a portion of the big pearl ; in a third the first of the six created gods produces the firmament. Similarly with the creation of man. Fakhr-ed-din is represented as the creator of man after the breaking of the pearl in the earlier portions of the book, and later on it is stated that God Himself created him from earth, air, fire and water brought by Gabriel.

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What emerges from this childish olla-podrida of tales ? That at some time the Yazidi, probably centuries before the Mashaf Rash was penned, believed in a Supreme Being, which Being from His own essence produced seven gods or angels, of which the principal was Melak Taus, identified with the power of Evil or the Tempter, since even in the Mashaf Rash he is represented as tempting man to disobey the commands of God (but always with the permission of God, just as Satan had permission to tempt Job in the Book of Job). Another of these seven spirits seems to be identified with the sun, another with the moon, and the rest with other elements.

The seven gods created and control the visible universe, the most active and powerful among them being Melak Taus.

Does not this recall the great temple ziggurats, upon whose sites Yazidi villages are to be found to-day, platformed towers built by the Babylonians and Assyrians in honour of their gods, their seven tiers enamelled in different colours, each dedicated to different luminaries—the sun, moon, and five planets ?

The whole faith is a veritable museum of legend and faith, a magpie-nest of religions living and dead. For instance, the fact that a white bull is yearly sacrificed at Sheikh Adi to Shems-ed-din, or the sun, is surely an identification of Shems-ed-din with the god Mithra.[1]

To return to the Mashaf Rash once more : the taboos there given are interesting. Some are merely concerned with the honour of Satan ; others, such as the forbidding of the colour blue, so universal an antidote throughout Mesopotamia against the evil eye, seems to infer that against the evil eye the Yazidi, devotee of the Lord of Evil, is proof. Other taboos are sanitary and ceremonial, the prohibition of the use of a public bath in this land of skin diseases being noteworthy.

Much is to be learnt about the Yazidis, and a stay in the Sinjar by one well acquainted with their dialect might prove valuable to students of folk-lore and to those who would like light cast on the history of religion in this remote corner of the world. The Yazidi is certainly one of the most picturesque figures in this land of ancient faiths and forgotten beginnings, and is worthy of study.

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[1] The Yazidis adore both sun and moon at their rising and setting, and kiss the ground in the direction of west and east.

CHAPTER XVII

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

A MAN bends over his work in the narrow space of a little shop, a charcoal fire on the floor beside him, set aglow from time to time by the ministrations of a small boy, who squeezes a goatskin bellows. His black beard is long and silky, and the eyes which he raises to yours are black too; black, soft, and distant. His features are fine and regular, his skin very white. He lifts a silver coffee-pot from the little stool-table upon which he exhibits his wares, and holds it out for inspection. It is curiously inlaid with antimony, and bears pictures in outline on its surface. Here is a mosque, there a mahaila in full sail, here sheep, there camels and palm-trees. There is the artist touch about these little scenes: the mahailas sail, the camels move, the river flows. Moreover, the craftsmanship is good and careful. You ask the price and he answers you in a modulated voice, for he has been taught from infancy up that low speaking is a virtue.

A black board hangs beside the shop, on which is painted, "ZT JOHN BAPTIZ ZILVER ZMITH OF AMARA." Shops on either side of him bear not dissimilar legends, and contain men of like grave and handsome appearance.

Groups of such shops are found in many of the towns of 'Iraq, and few people leave the country without taking away some specimen of the silver work of these strange and mysterious craftsmen. Who are they?

The Arabs call them "Subbi"; they themselves say that they are "Mandai," or "Gnostics." They have secured a measure of immunity from persecution in the past because

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the Moslems consider them to be the " Sabæans " mentioned in the Quran, " people of the Book," and therefore worshippers of the true God. They claim spiritual relationship with Christians, and are called by some " Christians of St. John," though there is little that is Christian about their doctrines and curious philosophy. They live apart, have their own language and their own script, and rarely intermarry with those of alien faith or race. If cleanliness is next to godliness, then the Subbis are close neighbours to heaven, for much of their lives is spent in meticulous washings and purifications. For ever are they at their " priest-like task of pure ablution," and where there is no river or running water, no Subba will make his dwelling.

I had long been interested in this strange people, and made up my mind that before I left Mesopotamia I would find out something about them at first hand. It is said that they guard jealously the secrets of their religion and rites, and the Subbis I had questioned in Baghdad were not communicative. When, however, I was enabled to go to Amara, I got into much closer touch with them, and had several talks with Sheikh Joda, their bishop, one of the gentlest, finest old men it has been my lot to encounter in 'Iraq. There was none of my numerous questions that he was not willing to answer, and had my time not been so short, I could have been able to get as much information as I needed. It is a rule of the Subba priesthood that no taint of disease or blemish of body must be found on the person of a priest, and as Sheikh Joda's forebears have been priests from father to son for many generations, he is a fine figure of a man though over sixty ; and his kindly, gentle presence made me think of the patriarchs, for any one of whom he might have sat as model to a painter.

His house is next door to that of Zahrun, the most famous of all the Subba smiths, whose clever work in silver and gold has gone into far countries. Zahrun is a man of about fifty, and his signature on a piece of work doubles and trebles its value. On the occasion of the Prince of Wales' return from India, he sent him a cigarette-case, decorated on one side by

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a scene in 'Iraq and on the other by a portrait of his Royal Highness himself. Rumour says that this artist, like other great men before him, likes to look upon the wine when it is red. He once presented some of his work to the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, and when Sir Percy inquired what gift would be acceptable in return, he was told, " A case of port." Zahrun is a fine, upstanding man, with an open face and humorous smile, and is now a person of property, only working when he has the fancy and employing a number of craftsmen and apprentices who produce work under his eye and inspiration.

Sheikh Joda, the Ganzowro,[1] or bishop, has no temptation to intemperance, for alcohol, sugar, tea, coffee, and tobacco are all forbidden to him, as to all priests. Priests may marry and have children, but there are certain things, such as their bread, which their wives are not permitted to make or touch, and occasions on which their wives may not come into contact with them. For the religion is above all a religion of purity, and not only purity of body, but purity of action and thought. The scrupulous ablutions, sanctifications, and baptisms which make up the ritual have also an ethical and mystical signification, and a good Subba must be a man of self-control and purity of life.

The worthy bishop is to be found on most days sitting in the shelter of the wooden balcony of his little house, cross-legged on the reed matting, his stool-table furnished with writing materials before him, and a box containing the sacred books at hand. His pastoral staff, not crooked, is propped up against the mud wall behind him, and some of the sacred vessels and utensils are stowed away haphazard in the corner. The small courtyard before the house is inhabited by a variety of living beings. In one corner there is an open cowshed, in which a cow placidly chews the cud and watches the bishop at his books or prayers. A long-haired sheep wanders about at will, and fowls scratch and cluck meditatively. A couple of geese with cold blue eyes stare the visitor out of countenance,

[1] Sometimes Ganzivro.

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and a cat licks herself in the shelter of the balcony beside her master.

An outdoor kitchen, its mud wall plastered with dung-cakes, drying for fuel, occupies another corner, and in a third a rough tent of shawls is rigged up for a female visitor. Various members of the household stroll about the yard and past the old man, and discuss domestic matters in audible tones, whether or not he is engaged in his devotions.

In fact, there is a homely, friendly note about this holy man's simple dwelling-house, and his women are ready with their smiles and their welcome. He is married, for the second time, to a young and comely woman, who has borne him a second family; but the real ruler of the household, I fancy, is his sister, a pleasant, tall, elderly woman who was always given a share in our conversations, helping her brother in his explanations of the various objects connected with their ritual of which I asked the meaning.

The principal of these is the "rasta." The rasta is the "garment of holiness" put on at baptism, marriage, or any other religious ceremony. Bride and bridegroom wear it during the wedding service, and it is the last garment of a dead man. Priests, deacons, and bishops wear it whilst officiating. Women must wear it, like men, for baptism, and on the other occasions on which it must be donned. I have said "garment," but it is properly a costume, including headgear, for it is made up of several pieces, and when it is put on, other garments are discarded, except sometimes the aba.

First is the *shalualo*, a wide pair of drawers made of cotton and drawn in at the waist by a cotton sash, one end of which must be left unsewn. Second comes the *sadro*, a long white cotton shirt. Third, upon the sadro, over the right breast, are sewn a couple of pieces of cotton material, each rather more than an inch long, known as the *deysh-sho*. Fourth comes a turban, which, when unrolled, measures about four and a half yards long. Part of this is left unwound, and falls over the left shoulder on to the breast. Fifth comes the *himiano*, or belt. This is woven of sixty strands of wool, and

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confines the sadro at the waist. Sixth comes a long strip of cotton like a bandage, worn, stole-like, round the neck, and called *gabu'a*, or *kinzala*. This is much used in ritual, and is usually drawn or looped through the belt.

When a Subba dies, he is clothed in his rasta, and the kinzala is placed on his head and sewn together under the chin. The entire rasta must be white, but, as a matter of fact, the rastas I saw in actual use were not snowy white owing to their constant immersion in the river, which is always cloudy with yellow silt. However, they are ceremonially clean, which is the main point.

The bishop also used in ritual a piece of coarse-woven tape, about an inch and a half wide and half a yard long, joined together so as to form a ring, which he placed under his turban. This is known as the *tagha*. He also wore an inscribed gold ring on the little finger of his right hand (the *isakhto*), and when officiating invariably carried his pastoral staff, or *margno*.

A Subba is not only baptised at birth, he is baptised every Sunday, and every time he incurs a pollution or infringes the code of purity. If he eats meat not killed by the sacred slaughterer according to rite, he must be re-baptised. If he touches the corpse of a brother Subba (an unbeliever's corpse is like that of an animal, and does not contaminate because it is mere clay), he must be baptised, or if he has kissed his infant child before it is baptised. If he eats fruit or vegetables without washing them, if he has been into prison, if he has been bitten by a snake or scorpion, if he has eaten butter prepared by a Gentile, if he has indulged in too strong an emotion, anger, or fright, he must be baptised. If any part of the elaborate baptism ritual is forgotten or omitted, or if any contamination takes place during the ceremony, the whole long two-hours' business does not count, and must be begun all over again.

The saint whom they honour most is Yahya, or as Christians call him, St. John the Baptist. Subbis, they say, practised baptism from early times, so that John inculcated no new doctrine, but he came at a time when the Subbis were in

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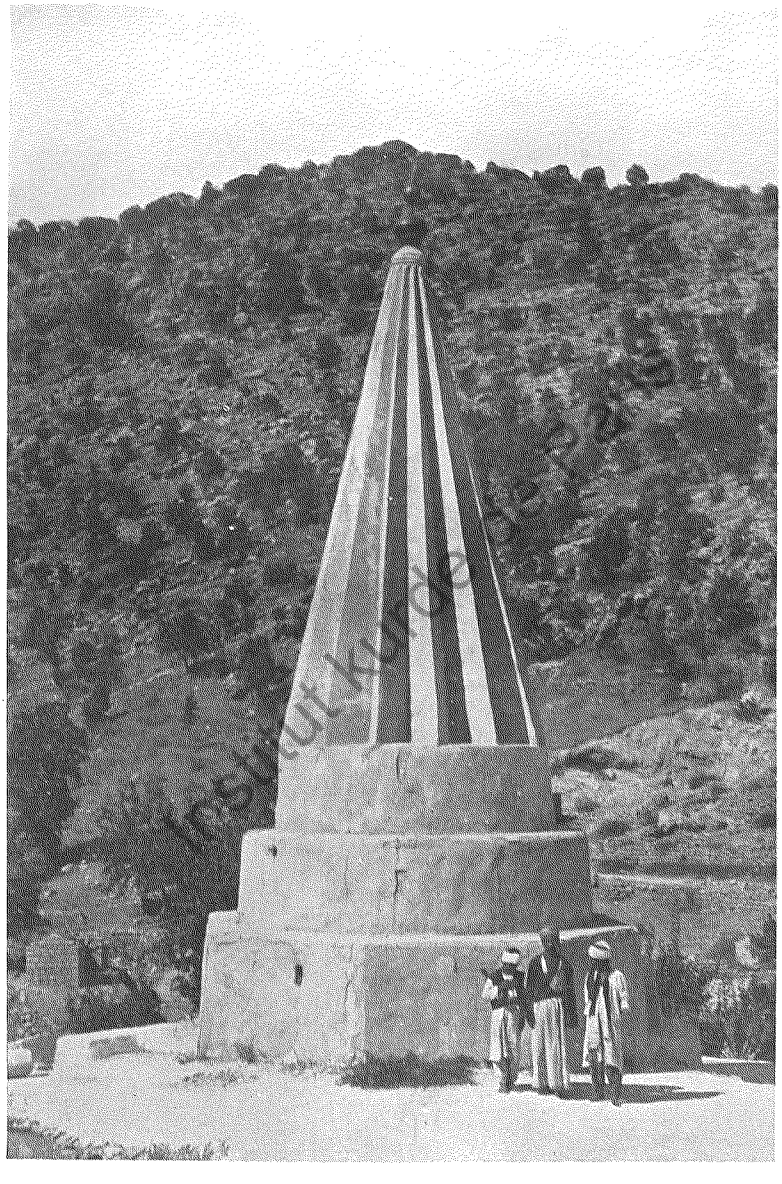

THE ROOF OF SHEIKH SHEMS-ED-DIN AT SHEIKH ADI.
Round this spire the sacrificial bull is driven.

(*See page* 203.)



SAID BEG: MIR OF THE YAZIDIS, WITH HIS WIFE.
(*See page* 174.)



HASAN FAQIR: GUARDIAN PRIEST OF SHEIKH ADI.
(*See page* 180.)

danger of being overpowered by the Jews, for at that time, Subba legend says, Subbis lived in Jerusalem. The life of John is told in one of their sacred books, called the Dravshod Yahya, from his miraculous birth and education in paradise, his re-descent and mission on earth, to his death and ascent to paradise with his heavenly father, Mando-Dhaiy, spirit of power in the realms of glory. During his mission on earth he baptised Christ (Yshu) at a command from heaven, though he hesitated to do so because, while an infant, Christ had commanded the Jews to abstain from marriage, which John thought was rebellion from God's ordinance. Yshu is honoured by the Subbis as a saint, but all their allegiance is given to John, whose baptism, that of immersion, they consider superior.

Like Christians and Moslems, the Subbis believe in and worship the one true God, whom they call in their tongue "Alaha." God, they say, is over all and above all, but he has deputed the powers of actual governance and control of the visible universe to his regents, spirits of power and purity, who sprang into existence as their names were pronounced by the Creator. Of these beings, or Melki, there are three hundred and sixty, and they abide in the realm of light, Olmi Danhuro. Though above human passions, they have consorts and children, and orders and ranks; moreover, their world is an eternal world which shall not pass away. They are not gods and they are not angels, but they have divine powers and gifts, and angels serve them. Like men, they pray to the Supreme God, and are subject to the commands of Alaha in all things.

The names of the three hundred and sixty Melki are known to the Subbis, but I do not know them all and would not give them here if I did. Among the most important are Moro-Eddarbutho, chiefest of all the Melki; Awather-Muzania, whose dwelling-place is behind the North star, and who judges the souls of men after they have passed through Purgatory, seeing whether they are purged enough to pass on into Paradise; Pthahil, ruler over the place of punishment and

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purification; and Hivel-Zivo, whose victorious return from distant and material regions with a celestial woman called Ruhaya is celebrated once a year at a feast known as Dehvo Hnino. This Ruhaya was to bear a colossal son named Ur, upon whose back the physical worlds were built, resting upon his broad shoulders until the Last Day. Evil souls after death must endure the torture of Ur's burning out-breath, and the icy inrush of air as he draws it into his vast lungs, and to be "eaten by Ur" is the worst threat that can be held out to an evil-doer.

["And I don't see how a small woman, like Ruhaya, could produce a son like Ur," put in Zahrun, at this point. "For he is big, enormous, khatun," and he paused for a fitting simile that I might understand. "You understand, they say he bears our world on his back!" and he gave a sceptical smile.

"Who knows?" said I, and turned to the bishop. "What do you think, Jenabak?"

The bishop was non-committal, but good-temperedly accepted my suggestion that it was an allegory, and the sceptic was silent.]

The help of the Melki is invoked in prayer, for it is supposed that they, being regents of God, are ready to hear the supplications of men and to grant them where it is possible.

Purgatory, or Mataratho, must be traversed by every soul, good or evil, after death, for no soul is pure enough to go straight into the realms of light. Saints pass through quickly, sinners must stay until they are purged of evil. At the end of their term they present themselves to Awather, who weighs their souls. If there is too much dross still left in the soul, it is sent back for re-purification. Finally sinner, like saint, reaches the abode of light, and at the end of all things, Mataratho will roll up like a scroll and disappear for ever.

But the most curious feature of the Subba cosmogony is their belief of a second, but invisible, semi-physical world, which, like our own, will come to an end at the Last Day. This world, they say, is co-existent with our earth, though

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invisible to our gross vision. It is an ideal world, like Augustine's City of God, or Plato's visionary State. As in Herrick's

> " Whiter island where
> Things are evermore sincere,"

there is perfect purity and perfect tranquillity in this other world, which they call Mshuni-Koshto. No man born of earthly mother could ever hope to attain the perfection of a being of Mshuni-Koshto. These strange, but yet semi-human beings, marry and have children, but are not moved by anger, fear, or base passions. They hold their property in common, buy and sell, pray and baptise, and, like Subbis, do not cut their hair. They dress in purest white, and never come near contamination or sullying things. When their time comes to go to Paradise, they pass quickly through Purgatory, for, being perfectly pure, there is no need for purification. Moreover, they do not die with tears, pain, and reluctance like men, but the angel of death comes to them in person with a summons. Thereupon the Mshuni-Koshti makes his ablutions, dons his rasta, leaves his already semi-spiritual body, and travels tranquilly with the angel to the appointed place.

I have just said that men die with tears, but when a really good Subba, particularly a priest, dies, his women are supposed to keep smiling faces and not to weep. Every tear shed by a mourner, says Subba legend, forms a wide river which the newly-escaped soul must pass over with difficulty. Indeed, part of the attraction of this religion is that the pious man is supposed also to be a cheerful man, and laughter is honoured as being a sign of a mind at ease and a conscience at rest. The greater the saint, the readier his smile.

There is a way, however, in which a Subba may reach a state of holiness akin to that of the dweller in Mshuni-Koshto, and this strange and unworldly people often resort to it. To achieve this state a man must renounce worldly desires and the delights of the flesh, but his path is harder than that of the Catholic monk in that he continues to live among men, a layman, and amongst his family without being able to

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partake of the joys of family life. In fact, after the ceremony of renunciation has taken place, the funeral service is read over him and he is, henceforth, no more than a living ghost.

He may carry on his trade of farmer, boat-builder, or silversmith as before ; but his personal life is one of renunciation, deprivation, and self-mortification. He may not smoke, drink wine, coffee, tea, or any drug. He may not give an order or express a desire. Should he need anything, he must procure it himself, or do without. His detachment from worldly things must be so complete that if a fire were to burn his house, destroy his goods, and suffocate his wife and children he must show or feel no trace of emotion.

M. Siouffi, writing in 1880, says of the "shalmono," as the ascetic is called :

" If on sitting down to eat he finds that bread and salt are missing, he must not ask for them or why they are not there, though he may rise to get or make some. If his wife asks him what she must cook for a meal, he is not allowed to designate any dish ; he should reply that she must cook what she pleases. He must be always dressed in white ; his bed, too, must be entirely white. A permanent gaiety must be shown on his face." [1]

The ceremony which separates the " shalmono " from the world of the living is called the " Massakhto." The applicant goes to the bishop, who questions him closely as to the seriousness of his intentions, and impresses upon him the irrevocable nature of the step he wishes to take. After seven days' preparation with the bishop, if the applicant's desire is unshaken, he spends seven days and seven nights in prayer in a church or place apart.

Every day the bishop and priests come to him, and for

[1] (*Études sur la Réligion des Soubbas.* M. N. Siouffi, Vice-Consul de France à Moussoul, Paris, Imprimérie Nationale, 1880.) This book seems a fairly accurate account of the belief of the Subbis, though, according to the bishop, there are inexactitudes, such as, for example, the account of the sacraments. M. Siouffi's terminology is also incorrect here and there. A German Orientalist, Petermann, has also written of the sect, but many years ago.

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food the postulant eats three tiny flat loaves of sacramental bread, about as large as an Osborne biscuit, daily; also part of the flesh of a dove,[1] which is previously washed and sanctified and is an emblem of Moro-Eddarbutho. The sacramental bread is ground, made, and baked in the church, sixty being consecrated daily, one by one; sixty being the number of the angels henceforth deputed to guard and help the shalmono. The loaves which are not eaten are buried in the earth of the church, their burial representing the burial of the earthly desires and carnal interests of the initiated man. Should the flesh fail, he is allowed to stay his hunger by a few dried raisins and nuts, but may consume nothing more solid.

At the end of the week a feast is prepared to which the new shalmono is invited, usually in the house of the bishop. At the end of the feast all the priests who have eaten arise, with a last mouthful of food in their hands. Solemnly, then, the Prayer for the Dead is recited for the shalmono, and, just as for a dead man, the last mouthful is eaten, the last mouthful which is supposed to stay the departed soul on its journey through purgatory.

I cannot help feeling sorry for the wife of such a man. True, she may rest assured that, even if he is killed without a possibility of securing funeral rites, his soul, being already emancipated, will pass straight through purgatory to paradise; but that is poor consolation to a woman wedded to a living corpse. Henceforth, though she may do what she can for him in the house in an unobtrusive way, she is wife to him in name only. Often the woman rebels, in spite of the priests, and if she is obstinate in her attempts to turn her husband from a disembodied soul into a living man, she is divorced, and a divorced wife does not often remarry. Hence she usually resigns herself to her fate.

The life of a shalmono is harder than that of a priest, for priests and priestesses may marry; indeed, marriage is obligatory. An aspirant to priesthood begins his training at

[1] The blood, the bishop assured me, is not consumed, as is erroneously stated in some books. Blood is forbidden at all times,

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a very early age, and is usually the son of a priest. He receives a special baptism at the age of seven years, and is ordained deacon before he is twenty. During this period he has assisted the priests, and learnt off many prayers by heart—no light task, for I cannot believe that there is another religion in the world with such verbose prayers. Always, while assisting at services, the deacon must wear the rasta.

Before he becomes a priest, generally a year after his ordination as a deacon, the assembled people are asked whether the deacon is worthy of being admitted into the priesthood, and none with a stain on his character, or aspersion on his morals, may hope to be admitted. Then follows a curious and symbolical ritual of initiation. Two huts, made of reeds, are erected a short distance apart. The candidate for priesthood spends a night in the first, keeping awake and praying all night. Then this hut is burnt to the ground, and he proceeds to the second, where he spends a further six days and nights in constant vigil and prayer.

The bishop assured me that the candidate for priesthood never slept during the entire week, and that he resorts to self-torture to induce the necessary wakefulness. For should the least contaminating circumstance arise, or should he fall asleep and dream, the whole ceremony must be started afresh. Each day a new rasta must be put on, and each day the candidate must give food and alms to the poor. The eighth day, which is a Sunday, funeral ceremonies are performed over the exhausted man, and he is taken to the river by four priests and baptised.

During the sixty days after baptism he must bathe thrice daily in the river, and, returning to his house in his wet clothes, must pray, not changing into dry garments until his prayers are over. He must be very careful to suffer no contamination during the sixty days. The chance visit of a person in a state of uncleanness to his house may render all his exertions useless, and the period must be begun all over again; in fact, it is rarely that a priest gets through his sixty days of purity in sixty days. His diet during the time is restricted

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to certain articles of food, and he must make his own bread, purifying it seven times before it is eaten.

At the end of the sixty days' purity, the priest receives baptism again, together with the women of his household. The next day he makes feast and distributes alms and clothing to the poor, for he is henceforth a full-fledged priest, able to administer baptism and to perform all rites of the Church except those of marriage, which are performed by the bishop alone.

At consecration a bishop has the "massakhto" read over him, but it does not turn him into a living ghost as it does a layman. He merely separates from his wife for two months, and has no difficult taboo laid upon him. There are other interesting ceremonies at the consecration of a bishop, but there is no space to enter into them here.

Nor have I room to describe a Subba wedding, with its elaborate ritual for purity; but I will describe a baptism which I actually witnessed from start to finish. Lest I bore my readers, I will put my full notes on the ritual in the Appendix, for such as are interested.

It was a Sunday (the Subbi, like ourselves, dedicate the first day of the week to the sun), and at the invitation of the bishop I went to his house just before midday, when the ceremony was to begin. As soon as I had come, the bishop went out quickly to put on his rasta and make some ablutions, and returning, garbed in white, took his pastoral staff in the crook of his left arm, and, standing on his matting with the sun behind him (hence facing the North Star), he began to pray. His sister, squatting beside him, rolled herself cigarettes and gazed at me benevolently, throwing in from time to time a word of explanation, or giving some information about the bishop's family without lowering her voice. The geese gabbled undisturbed by the chanting, and the fowls pecked and picked a few inches from his feet. Such was the *mise en scène.*

The properties were as follows: his books in a small bag on the ground; a small thick earthenware brazier, or bowl, placed in a kind of saucer with a lip at either end, which, again, stood on a round stand, also of earthenware, hollowed a little

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in the centre. (Wood had been brought in previously, and charcoal put over it when it was well alight.) In the lip of the saucer stood a small terra-cotta receptacle not unlike a square ink-pot. This contained powdered incense. A small brass bowl, a glass bottle, a little meal, and some sprigs of freshly-plucked myrtle lay also ready to hand, and the bishop's small son, an aspirant to the deaconate, stood close by to assist.

I do not think I have ever heard a man pray so volubly, continuously, or breathlessly as the bishop for the whole two hours that the baptism lasted. Except at certain parts of the service, he used no book, praying entirely by memory, and his voice never failed or faltered once.

He began by blessing each separate part of his rasta, and by casting incense into his brazier and performing much elaborate ritual; then, taking a little meal in his brass bowl, disappeared to make the peytho or sacramental bread. On his return he cooked it, and administered the sacrament to himself, while his sister proceeded to dress her small nephew in his rasta, the child looking at me smilingly all the time. He began to take part in the service, repeating a formula after the bishop in his childish treble, and then, picking up the sprigs of myrtle, while the bishop gathered up his brazier and other paraphernalia, all walked out, making a sign to me to follow. During the sacrament, the sister remarked in matter-of-fact tones, "All this must be repeated again to-morrow."

We walked along a short street until we came to the river, on the bank of which stood a house where the woman to be baptised awaited us. This was not the usual Sunday baptism, but the baptism customary after the birth of a child, a kind of Churching of Women. No matter how cold or swift the river, a woman must be baptised the fourth Sunday after she has brought a child into the world, and until she has been immersed she is unclean and may not be touched by anyone else. Cooking-pots and utensils are reserved for her use alone for the time being, and these must all be purified with her in the river at the time of her baptism.

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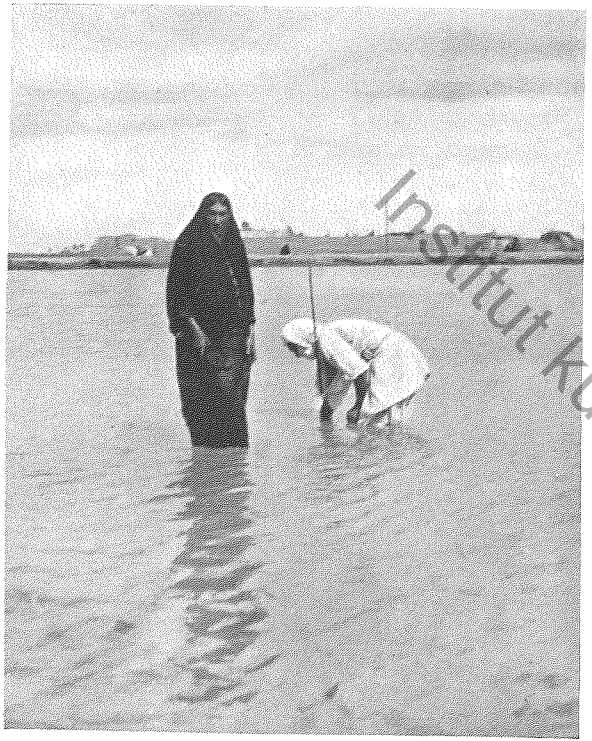

A Subba Baptism.
(1). The candidate for baptism wading out to the Bishop.
(Note the Bishop's covered mouth.)



A Subba Baptism.
(2). The Immersion.

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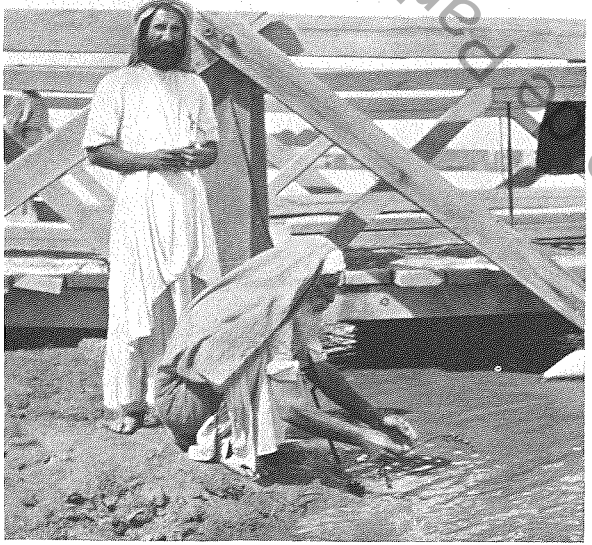
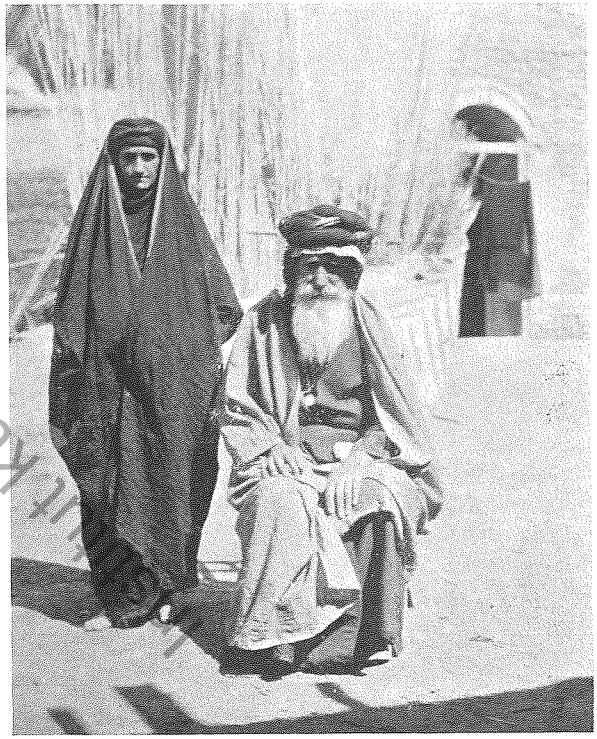


THE CEREMONIAL ABLUTION OF THE MYRTLE TWIGS.



THE SUBBA BISHOP: SHEIKH JODA AND HIS WIFE.

(*See page* 206.)

Library of the Louvre Paris

The house to which we went was a pleasant, clean house, with plants and trees growing in its small courtyard. Here a few priests, men and women, were waiting for us, and the public part of the service began. I need not go through it here, with its intricacy of ritual, its incense, sacrament, ablutions, twisting of the myrtle into rings, and so forth. Its most important part was the actual baptism. The woman, dressed in her rasta, with the addition of an aba, waited by the river's brink for us, for, being unclean, she could not enter the house. The bishop waded out, knee-deep, into the river, his pastoral staff in hand, and, after various rites, summoned the woman, who waded out to him. She dipped completely under the water three times, while he splashed water over her to ensure that she was thoroughly wet, and gave her water to drink from the river. Then, taking her head, he ducked her face under water several times.

The dripping creature then waded out, and children, each bearing a polluted pot, waded out to the bishop, who, taking each pot in turn, dipped it in the river, and returned it, never for a single instant ceasing his perpetual stream of prayer. All returned to the house, and the woman, soaking wet, placed herself before the bishop, received the sacrament, and, after certain further ceremonies, was permitted to go. Her child was to be baptised on a future occasion.

Constant baptism of this kind must make the Subbi a hardy race, for the river, fed as it is by melting snows in springtime, is often icy-cold, and a woman, weakened by child-bed, must be strong indeed to withstand the shock of immersion; and it is said that some, more delicate than the rest, die.

The entire service was conducted in the Mandai language, the ancient tongue which is spoken, read, and written by all Subbis, however fluent their Arabic may be. Arabic is often used in the home, but Mandaitic, which is a kind of Syriac, is learnt and spoken by all Subbi children.

The race is a dying one, and only a few thousands of this peculiar people now exist, in spite of their fine physique,

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honesty, and clean living. It is a matter of grief to them that many of their women marry Moslem neighbours, who fall in love with comely maidens and try to persuade their men-folk that marriage with a Moslem family may protect them against oppression and persecution some day. That day will, I hope, never come as long as we are responsible for law and order in Mesopotamia.

The bishop showed me their holy books. These have never been printed, but are written out in beautiful clear script by the priests for those who pay for them, and it is the work of many months to transcribe the holy writ. The principal book is the Ginza-Rabba, which is in two parts, one part being written upside down. Some people say that this is because the book is read by two priests who hold it over running water, but the bishop denied this, and said that the reversed part was the service for the dead.

Next there is the Dravshod Yahya, or life and doctrine of St. John; the Nian er Rahani, a book of prayers; the Kitab el Maswetta containing the baptism service; the Kitab el Qulesta, which contains the marriage service; and En-Nishethra, a collection of prayers, which contains the order of service for the Massakhto. I do not think that it would be a difficult matter to obtain copies of these books if one were prepared to pay for them. Writing the books is one of the sources of a priest's income; also fees for baptisms; and the fifth of a year's income which a good Subba is supposed to pay to his priests.

The Subbis of Amara, Nasiriyah, and Suq-esh-Shuyukh, have one trade which is almost exclusively theirs, that of building mash-hufs, as the light, shallow boats daubed with pitch, used in the marsh country, are called; and it must be a handicraft almost, if not quite, as old as that of gufa-building. There are many things about the Subbis which make one believe that they are a race with a long, long history, especially the names which they give to the planets, which are in several cases the names of the ancient gods of the land—Shumash, Sin, Serra, Livet, Niragh, Kywan, Enbo, and Bel. These undoubtedly

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belong to the age when yet the temple ziggurat raised its head above the plains.

From the Chaldæans, too, the Subbis must have borrowed their reverence for the North Star, behind which Awather sits to judge mankind; and their belief that the planets are really spirits, who have each a function in the visible world. Shamash, the ancient sun-god, rules the day; Serra (the moon) the night. Livet (Venus) inspires invention and directs human industry—the aeroplane and the telephone are the result of her workings upon men's minds. Niragh (Jupiter) brings wars and lightnings; Kywan, thunder; Enbo (Nebo ?) rain and clouds; while Bel, once worshipped as principal god of Babylon, governs the inanimate stars.

Subbis do not pray to these planet-spirits, but they believe that they influence men and events. Thus astrology is honoured amongst them, and few important adventures are undertaken without consulting the stars. When a child is born, his parents are careful to procure his horoscope—and lucky and unlucky days are put down to the magic of the stars. Are we much more enlightened, with our *Old Moore's Almanack*, our soothsayers, and our necromancers ?

Yet the Subbis are a mystical, rather than a superstitious, people, and their religion is an other-worldly religion, with ideals of conduct and spirituality. All the elaborate ritual and long prayers represent one thing, an intense desire for a clean heart and a pure spirit, so that they may become one with the company of heaven, and white of soul as the beings of the mysterious world of Mshuni-Koshto, their sinless fellows in the realm of temporal things.

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PART V

PEOPLE AND ASPECTS

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CHAPTER XVIII

MAGIC IN MESOPOTAMIA

In a country supposed, above others, to be the birthplace of magic, sorcery, and incantation, it is natural to expect a wealth of legend and folk-lore. Nor is one disappointed, though the rationalism of Islam has dispelled many of the darker beliefs. The native of 'Iraq is, on the whole, no practician of unholy rites like the negro with his voodoo mysteries; he is not enwrapped in a consciousness of the other world like the Irish peasant; he does not fear the dead like the people of the Pacific. His haunted houses are not peopled by the ghosts of the departed; they are inhabited by jinns, the children of fire, created like himself by Allah, and liker sprites than demons. But the author of *The Golden Bough* might write many volumes over the mass of observances which enter into the daily lives of the people of Mesopotamia; of the petty ceremonies with which they protect themselves against evil and ill-luck; and of the magical methods they use against disease.

The superstition that enters most into the life of the 'Iraqi, as into the life of the Italian, is the fear of the Evil Eye. What is the Evil Eye? It is the power possessed by certain persons, often against their will, of casting a blight or bringing misfortune. Unhappy is the lot of one known to have the evil eye. His neighbours dread and shun him; his family look upon him as an affliction; he is an unwelcome guest at any social festivity. With the tribes, a man sometimes divorces his wife because she is thought to have the evil eye.

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A man told me that he had known the owner of an evil eye to boast that before a ship then sailing down the river had reached a bend which would take her out of sight, he would, by the power of " el ain," break the mast. Bets were made, but those who had doubted the baleful eye lost their money, for the mast broke.

In England there is a saying that every bride must wear " something blue " on her wedding-day. The belief that blue is efficacious against the eye of envy is almost universal, I believe; for here, as in Italy and Sicily, children, horses, donkeys, and mules wear blue beads as a charm against the evil eye. Gufas, the round, basin-shaped basket-boats which one sees on the Tigris—are decorated with blue beads and cowries stuck into the bitumen which makes them water-tight. My chauffeur hangs a few blue beads on the switch when we go any distance. Pieces of blue pottery or beads are built into the masonry of the houses. Harness and saddles are gay with fringes and embroidery of blue beads and cowries. The cowrie, a phallic charm of great antiquity, is used here against the evil eye, as in South Europe. A Baghdad rhyme says :

" Wadda ou dehasha
Min ain el lasha."

" Cowrie and blue bead
Against the evil eye."

The *dehasha* of the rhyme is a five or seven-holed blue button-bead sold simply for sewing on to garments or caps as an amulet. One seldom sees a small child without several of these sewn to his clothing, and there is usually one between his shoulders at the back of his coat, for the evil eye can work from behind as well as before.

The celebrated abas, or silken mantles, woven in Najaf, are distinguished by the little patch of turquoise blue thread woven into one corner, and blue is the predominant colour of the beautiful glazed tiles with which every dome and minaret in Baghdad is covered. Not every shade of blue is lucky. It must be the bright turquoise, the sky-blue, the colour of the lupin and larkspur. A gall-nut is another charm against the

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eye, and one sees it sewn to babies' caps in conjunction with the cowrie and dehasha. An old shoe nailed to the door or window of a house is also a preventative. In New Street, Baghdad, there is such a shoe. When the Turks cut this street during the war, a certain man rebuilt his house. During operations, some workmen fell from the scaffolding and were injured, and not a man would proceed with the building until the shoe was nailed up.[1]

It is unlucky to admire without adding the protective formula, "Mashallah!" "What a pretty izar you are wearing," says one woman to another. "La tesibni bil ain!" (Do not draw the evil eye on me!) is the fearful response.

Women are careful to leave dirt on their babies' faces and dress them poorly lest their beauty may attract "el ain." Suppose a woman, some day of festival, succumbs to the temptation of seeing her darling at his best. With his little cap sewn with charms, a silken coat and silver anklets hung with bells, baby is carried out, perhaps in the hot sun and dust, to see the fun. On his return he is ailing and feverish. The mother is alarmed. The charms were not enough, some evil eye has fallen upon him. She will find out who it is—perhaps some neighbour envious of the child's good looks.

She takes a small ball of lead and goes to seven virgins in succession. She knows of several houses where there are unmarried girls, three here, two there, one next door, and so on. She goes to the houses in turn, and each of the seven girls, at her request, takes the leaden bullet into her mouth, and spits it out into the loose neck of her clothes, so that the bullet falls between her garments and her body to the ground.

The mother takes the bullet home, melts it in a metal spoon over the fire, and puts a cake of dried cow-dung, such as is used for fuel, upon the sick child's head. The melted lead is poured on the "patokh," or dung-cake, and she peers anxiously at the form which the melted lead takes as it congeals on

[1] An interlaced square of wheat is often put up "khatr el ain," especially on the lintel of coffeeshops.

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the cake. Neighbours, called in, look too. "It is an aba! The shape of a fat woman!" "I thought I saw a fat woman gazing at him yesterday near the Coppersmiths' Souk!" "No, see, it is clearly a saw!" All agree it is a saw. "Then it must be the carpenter just by Seyyid Hussein's house; he is known to have the evil eye!" General opinion is with her, and the mother is advised by her friends to have recourse to a wise man or woman for a charm which will counteract the baleful influence.

The wise man, direct descendant of the "asipu" of ancient Babylon, is called a *fattahfal*, or "opener" (if a woman, *fattahatfal*), because he opens his book of charms for such as seek advice. If a youth is in love with a woman who loves another, he has recourse to the fattahfal, and discloses his trouble. The wise man looks wise, writes out a potent charm on a scrap of paper, and gives it to the youth with a little incense (*bukhur*). He then places his book of charms (*kitab el fatah*) on his visitor's head, opens the book and begins to read. When he has consulted the oracle, he says, "On such and such a day, put the charm I have given you into water. Drink some of the water yourself, and cause, by some means or other, the woman you desire to drink of it. At sunset cense yourself with this incense, and she, beholding you, will love you and forget the other."

To return once more to the evil eye, I must mention a common custom. Boys are here, as all over the East, prized more highly than girls, and one often sees boys with long hair dressed as girls so that the evil eye shall not attack them. My washerwoman brought a child in girl's clothing to see me one day. "What is your little girl's name?" I asked, and she returned, "He is not a girl, but a boy," adding in explanation that he was her only son, her other three children being girls.

The unsuccessful lover does not always have recourse to the fattahfal. Recipes for unrequited love sickness and other maladies are kept, like successful recipes in a housekeeper's book, in the family.

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A friend of mine once saw a young man who, by his dress, was of the effendi, or educated class, go to the river's edge, and, stooping, wash his hands. Having washed them for some time, the young man, who did not know he was observed, took an egg from his pocket, and then a handkerchief. He washed his hands again, spread the handkerchief carefully on the ground, washed his hands, put the egg on the handkerchief, washed his hands, then, taking the egg up again he hurled it into the river, where it broke as it disappeared He marked the spot carefully, and renewed his ablutions, which took place between each fresh step of the operation. Then he selected a stone and placed it on the handkerchief, wrapped it up and threw it towards the spot at which the egg had disappeared. After a final washing of hands, he rose and went away.

Educated Arabs are shy of admitting that they know anything of these things, but my friend was able to find out from his clerk that what he had witnessed was a very ancient charm, and meant that the man would secure the affections of the woman he loved so that she could never give herself to another.

Eggs are much used in sorcery and incantation. I have described elsewhere the corner frequented by Jewish witches, and the mass of empty egg-shells which one finds floating close by. At this corner my husband, whose offices were close by, often saw an old woman performing charms with eggs. Children were brought to her, and she made passes round their faces with an egg which she drew from her bosom, muttering incantations all the while. Then the egg was crushed and the mass flung into the river, while the old woman washed her hands ready for another client. I do not know what charm she was performing. It is thought very unlucky to give away an egg after sunset ; by so doing you " give away a child." My informant said, " I have heard my mother say to a neighbour, who came after dark to beg an egg for an eye-salve, " Come to-morrow and I will give you a hundred—but to-night, not one ! "

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The 'Iraqis use what is termed, I believe, sympathetic magic. Here is a charm against fever and headache: A branch of a palm-tree is brought and set on fire. A woman is made to carry the burning branch away. When she has walked a little distance with it, they call out to her to stop; the fire is extinguished, and the fever in the same moment departs. A woman with child, fearing a miscarriage, has recourse to the "said el hayya," or serpent charm. A sparrow is caught and given to a serpent to swallow. As soon as the snake has swallowed the bird, he is killed and opened, and the sparrow taken out and sewn into a leather bag. This the woman girds to her back with a girdle. A cold in the chest is cured by branding on the chest; stomach-ache in children by branding with a cigarette all over the abdomen. If an adult has a pain in the stomach he is branded by a smouldering twist of blue cloth (native-dyed), which is applied freely to the aching part.

A Christian told me that when he was with some Bedouins a man with enlarged spleen was cured in the following manner. First they bound his arm high up; then they plunged his arm into hot water and opened a vein. With the blood so obtained, a cake was made, and as this dried, so the man was cured.

To cure a Baghdad boil, which has so far defeated science, a simple method is the following: Take a sparrow, kill it, and apply his body so that the fresh warm blood touches the sore. Then hang the sparrow up. As the body dries so will the boil dry up and disappear. Fever is also cured by sending two persons from the sick man's house to tie a thread across a street. The passer-by who breaks the thread will get fever and the sick man will recover.[1]

Similar to the "ain," or evil eye, is the "nefs," or evil breath. One who doubted this was shown a man who killed a dog merely by breathing and exclaiming, "What a fine dog!" The dog rolled over dead. A man with the "nefs," against his will blighted all his children so that they died in

[1] A "scapegoat" superstition.

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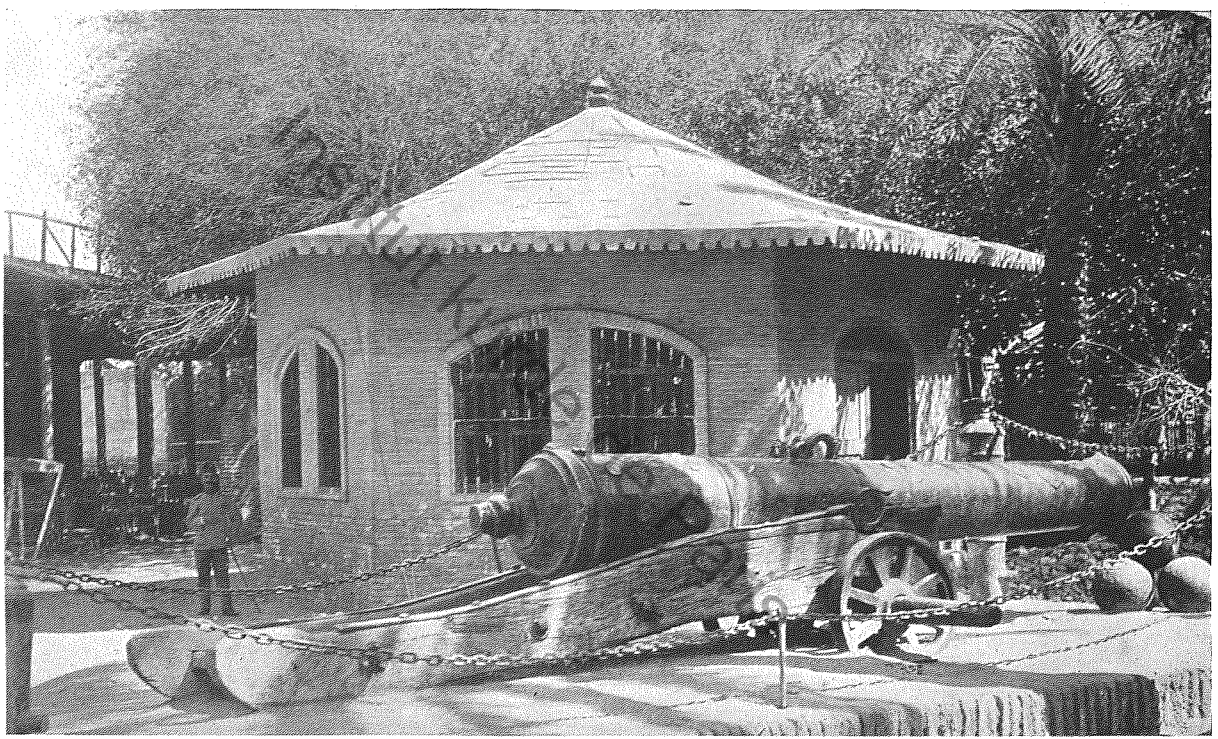
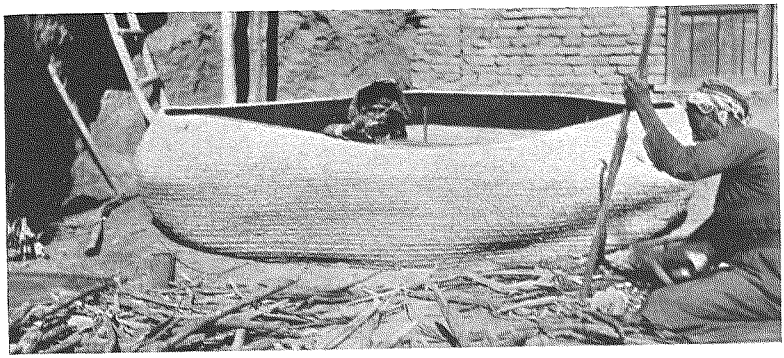


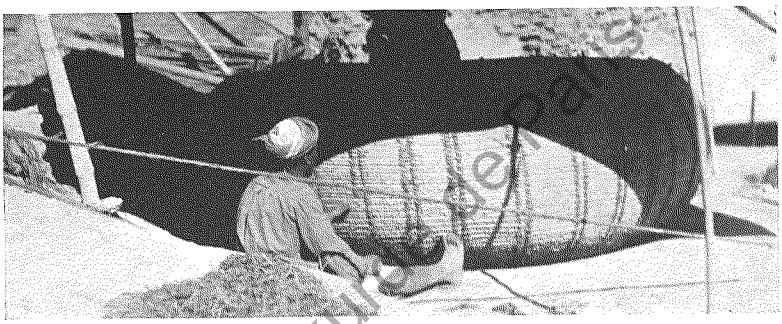
"Abu Khezama," the Cannon with Magic Properties.

p. 228

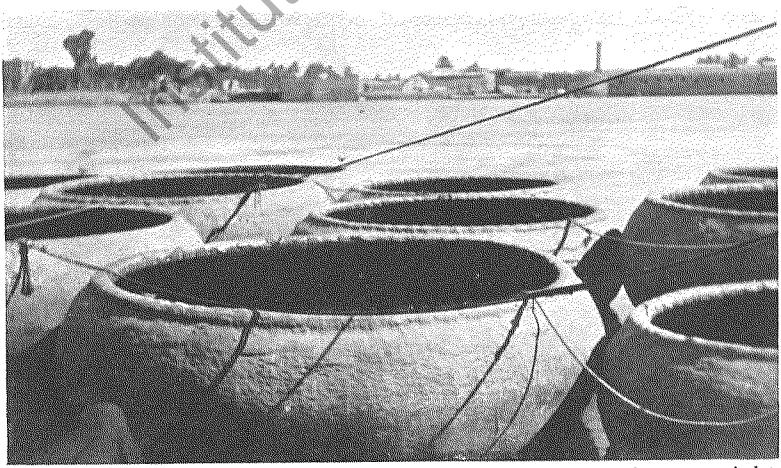


THREE STAGES OF A GUFA.

(1). Weaving the basket foundation.



(2). Adding the "ribs."



(3). The finished guta, daubed with bitumen to make it watertight.

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infancy. He had recourse to a Mullah, who advised him to abstain from circumcising them, although this is ordained by Moslem law. The man followed his advice, and reared a family of sons.

Before I leave the subject of cures, however, I must not forget the local cure for whooping-cough. The folk-names for this disease are "humeira" (little donkey), on account of the braying noise, and "khanezira" (little pig), both being animals which it is impolite to mention. The father of a child with whooping-cough will go with him to a slipper-seller—that is, a "khafaf," or maker of the red and lemon-coloured slippers worn only by Moslems and Jews—and say to him, "Ya kelb, sowwi li kelb, khatr el kelb, ibn el kelb." (Oh, dog, make a dog for him, for the sake of the dog, son of a dog.) To call a person "dog, son of a dog," is a fearful insult, but on this occasion the slipper-maker merely smiles, and cuts out a dog from a scrap of leather which is hung round the child's neck. Other cures are to drink water from which a dog or pig has drunk, or to go to a butcher, who takes a pig down to the river, and holding it beneath the river by its throat, strangles it. With the same hand he takes the little sufferer's throat and squeezes it gently, thus expelling the troublesome cough.

Curing certain diseases runs in families. A delightful old man I know who has, until recently, held Government office, has the hereditary power of curing fever. He writes on a peeled almond the opening verse of the Quran, and the sick man eats it. If the fever persists, he prepares a second almond, and no one has ever been known to need a third.

Many are the charms for women who desire children. One is for the woman to crawl between the legs of a standing camel. On Good Friday, Christian women without children creep beneath the miniature coffin filled with flowers which is carried round the church. Women of all creeds tie rags to the chains of an old cannon known as Abu Khezama Father of a Nose-Ring, at the gate of the Citadel in Baghdad. (This cannon, three hundred years old, has other magical

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properties. Mothers bring their newly-born children to it and put their heads into the mouth of the cannon for luck.)

Childless women often pay a visit to the Mosque of Sheikh Jonayd, a few miles outside Baghdad, outside Zobeydah's tomb. Behind this mosque, on the east side, there is a well, in the water of which Jonayd is said to have performed his ablutions. Here the woman must draw up water in the bucket three times and tip a little over her shoulder with the word, " Tehabbel ! " (Be fruitful !) and she will have her desire. This must be done on a Wednesday, and the Seyyid who guards the tomb must be paid a small sum. Similarly a woman who wants a son and has only daughters, may get her heart's wish at the sacred well. A stone kept within the mosque has healing virtues, and if it is rubbed with the hand and the hand placed on an ache or pain, the pain will immediately disappear. Still better is it to touch the afflicted part with the stone, or to carry the stone round the Imam's tomb.

But the favourite saint to whom to have recourse in time of trouble is Khidr Elias, or the Prophet Elijah The word " Khidr " has a meaning akin to " ever-green," showing his perpetual saintliness and power. He is honoured by Moslem, Christian, and Jew alike, and is a kindly, holy man with an ear for any suppliant, whether barren wife, lovelorn youth, or troubled mother. If one mentions his name, he is immediately present, so great is his interest in human affairs. Vows are made to him, candles are burnt in his honour, offerings are made in his name.

Another name for him in Baghdad is the Sheikh esh Shatt, the River Sheikh. It is a common sight on the Tigris to see small floats, made of the stem of a palm branch, plastered with mud and bearing three, five, seven, or more lighted candles, drifting down the stream. They are watched anxiously by those who launched them. If the frail argosy reaches a certain point in the river with at least one of its candles alight, it is certain that Khidr Elias has accepted their vow and will grant their request.

A fortnight before Lent a fast is observed, known as the

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Nineveh Fast (in memory of the destruction of Nineveh), or the Fast of Khidr Elias. This is a favourite time for making vows to the saint. A childless woman, fasting, will promise Khidr Elias that she will distribute a number of sweetmeats or cakes in his name to the poor, if he will ask Allah to give her a son. If the son is born, she makes a yearly donation of cakes on the anniversary of her vow all her life.

She may be curious to know if her vow is accepted, and if so, she makes ready a room in the house by placing in it a large tray, full of cakes, another tray full of lighted candles, a bowl of water, a comb, a brush, and some celery. She is careful to spread the cakes thickly with sugar and flour because the next morning, if her vow has been accepted, she will find the marks of El Khidr's staff on her cakes, or the impress left by the bridle chain of his mare. The celery is for the mare to eat, and the comb and brush are provided so that the saint may comb his long beard and make his toilet. The man who told me this, an educated person, assured me that marks of the saint's presence are often clearly visible. If there are no marks, however, the woman comforts herself by saying, "Never mind, perhaps he will call at our house next year!" It is said that El Khidr will return to earth at the reappearance of the thirteenth Imam and Christ.

The wife of a well-known merchant in Baghdad, of a very wealthy family, once made a vow when her son was sick that she would dress herself in rags and go barefoot to beg alms from seven poor houses. If she received any charity, it was a sign that her vow was accepted. She received a small sum, and her son did recover. She is now an old woman, but yearly the poor people of Baghdad receive her bounty on the anniversary of her vow.

Many also are the charms against the losing of weakly children. The fact that infant mortality in the towns is at the ratio of 70 per cent. gives tragic significance to these superstitions. A woman, however well-to-do, who has lost her children, on the birth of a new baby will sit in disguise by the roadside and beg from the passers-by with the words,

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" Min barrakatkum " (From your blessings). With the money so procured she must buy a small piece of gold or silver, scratch on it her name, and sew it on to her baby's coat or cap with the words, " Ya eysh ! " (Live !). Or she may go to a luckier mother, whose children are all living, and beg from her some baby's clothes to put on her own weakling. The Mahommed charm is also potent. She must go to seven boys with the name Mahommed, and get from each a piece of silver. These are melted into a single piece on which is inscribed, " Mahommed." This, hung round baby's neck, keeps him strong and well.

A Baghdad girl who is afraid that she will not get married, performs the " pilgrimage of forty Saturdays." She must rise early, go barefoot, or in her stockinged feet, not speak to a living soul on the road, and make her way to the mosque of the Imam Moussa el Kadhim (in Kadhimein, some miles away), or to that of Sheikh Ma'ruf el Karkhi, near Zobeydah's tomb. Arrived at the mosque, she goes within, and knocks loudly at the door of the tomb of the saint. " I have come to you; don't say I have not come ! " She must return to her house as she left it, and she is certain to get married before long. A similar visit to the tomb of Abu Hanifa, Imam el Adham, may be made for forty Sundays, or to Sheikh Abdul Kader el Gilani for forty-three.

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Just as girls in England put a piece of wedding-cake under their pillows in order to dream of their future husbands, Baghdad girls treasure the sweets (mulebbas) distributed at weddings, for to eat these means an early marriage.

There are lucky and unlucky days. The Shiahs consider the first days of Moharram and all the month of Saffer unfortunate, because the former marks the tragedy of Karbala and the death of Hoseyn, and the latter because it was in this month that Mahommed died. Thursday and Saturday, the Moslems think, are lucky days on which to begin an enterprise (perhaps the latter because there is no Jewish competition). It is unlucky for everyone if the moon should appear red during the month of Ramadan, which is kept as a fast by all

Moslems, who must not eat, drink, or smoke between early dawn and dark, until the month is over. This last Ramadan we were awakened by a hullabaloo, beating of tins, blowing of trumpets, shooting of guns, and other discordant noises; for it was thought that the red colour of the moon meant that the Hoot (whale) was near her and might swallow her, and if that happened Ramadan would continue for ever—a horrible contingency! So they did their best to frighten the whale away.

There are lucky and unlucky ways to perform the acts of everyday life. For instance, the proper way to cut one's finger-nails is laid down exactly. The nails of the right hand must be cut in the following order:

First, khunsur, or little finger
Second, wusta, or middle finger.
Third, ibham, or thumb.
Fourth, bunsur, or third finger.
Fifth, sebaba, or first finger.

The left hand must be cut thus:

First, thumb.
Second, middle finger
Third, little finger.
Fourth, third finger.
Fifth, forefinger

I mention this because it shows what a large part the ritual of superstition plays in the daily life of the people.

There are various superstitions connected with Seyyids, that is to say, the numerous so-called descendants of Mahommed and Ali. Seyyids wear a green turban as a mark of their sanctity (green is sacred to both Moslem and Yazidi, the latter considering it the colour of their tutelary "saint" Satan), and any Seyyid, however dirty and ill-behaved, is reverenced on account of his holy descent. Even Christians and Jews will sometimes have recourse to Seyyids for charms.

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A certain Seyyid at Baquba has a great reputation for expelling evil spirits. The relatives of one who has gone mad bring him to this Seyyid, and if the jinn, or evil spirit, refuses to obey exorcism and depart, the unfortunate lunatic is tied hand and foot and belaboured by the Seyyid, who cries "Itla!" (Go out!) as he lays on the blows. Unfortunate patients have been known to die under this treatment, but in this case, as the Seyyid points out, the evil spirit has certainly been driven out.

A friend of mine was asked one day by his washerwoman, a respectable young Jewess, for an advance of ten rupees. He inquired why she needed it, and was told that she wished to fee a Seyyid on the other side of the river, who was a seer. Her betrothed had been carried off by the Turks, and as she had heard nothing of him, she was anxious to know where he was to be found. As long as he lived she could marry no other man, for a betrothal ceremony among Mesopotamian Jews is as binding as marriage. My friend asked her what the Seyyid would do. "I must buy a piece of meat, and give it to him with ten rupees, and he will put the meat under his pillow. When he sleeps it will be revealed to him in a dream where my betrothed is, if he is alive."

A Seyyid was tried recently in Hillah for the murder of a boy. He caught him gathering firewood outside the city, killed him, and cut out his heart. The evidence against him was strengthened by the finding of a bloodstained razor in his possession. It was said of him that he had murdered other boys in the same fashion, and it appears that for a certain disease, a sure cure is to eat part of a young boy's heart, cut from his body by a Seyyid. Very high rewards are sometimes offered in secret to a Seyyid willing to commit the crime and secure the remedy. The victim must never have smoked tobacco. A servant in Baghdad told his mistress, who told me, that when a boy he narrowly escaped being assassinated by a Seyyid for this purpose.

Many charms are supposed to make the wearer invulnerable A political officer of my acquaintance was given such a

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charm by a Rabbi in Basrah. It was a small leathern packet, containing, among other things, five needles, five silken threads of different colours, the name of his mother, the date of her birthday, and the date of his own. Before he prepared it the Rabbi fasted for twenty-four hours. He assured my informant that this amulet would secure its wearer invulnerability to spear-thrust or bullet.

Another amulet to make the wearer proof against wounds is procured thus: Catch a lark, sound and perfect, and take him at full moon to a graveyard. Select a tomb, and upon it kindle a fire. Set a pot of water on the fire, but keep your back turned upon the tomb during the entire operation. Next, kill the lark behind your back, and—still behind your back—put him into the pot. There let him boil and boil until all is fluid except one little bone which will not boil away. The light of the moon will fall upon this and make it gleam white. Take this bone, put it in a leathern case, and wear it. It will prevent bullets from harming you.

A hoopooe may also be used in the same manner, but the bone is selected after boiling by putting all the bones into running water. The bone that floats *up-stream*, against the current, is the magic bone that must be secured. It is fatal to speak during the operation.

A dumb man sitting in a coffeehouse was pointed out to someone I know as an example of what happens if this rule is broken. He lost the use of his tongue thus: He had been performing the hoopooe charm, and while he was in the cemetery and the bird a-boiling, a jinn called his name, "Ahmed, where are you?" Forgetting, he called out, "I am here!" and was smitten with dumbness from that moment. A man breaking the spell thus is liable to be soundly drubbed by evil spirits.

Jinns may be kindly or mischievous. They like to use the underground chambers, or sirdabs, to which people retreat during the great heat of summer days, and sometimes make a great noise by night, singing, dancing, and shrieking. But they do no harm unless disturbed. In the house next my

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own, a jinn is said to inhabit a tree, and he knocks sometimes at the windows. A man told me his grandmother had her clothes borrowed one night by the jinns for a jinn wedding. "How did she know?" I asked, for all the clothes were there the next morning and the box locked as before. "There was henna on the clothes, so she knew the jinns had used them." A knife, a pin, a needle, or a bean called "habbat soda," placed among one's possessions will prevent the jinns from borrowing them. Some jinns are very mischievous and will burn or destroy things in the house, covering food with dust and dirt, and otherwise misbehaving themselves. Others are industrious, and, like Brownies, will do the work of the house before the good wife is astir, even to doing her marketing for her.

Jinns are susceptible to human beauty, and fall in love with human maidens. A pretty girl on waking in the morning, will sometimes find a piece of money on her pillow, and knows that a jinn lover has been visiting her. The jinns are not always content with passing visits. A girl, roused from her bed one night by a voice crying her name, went down to the sirdab or cellar-room. The mother woke and followed her, but found the sirdab door locked. She called her daughter, and a faint and distant voice answered, "I am here!" But when a way was forced into the sirdab, nothing was found but a hole in the ground.

Jinns do not harm children, or those accompanied by children, particularly little girls, and many a woman will not venture into a dark room without a little girl by her side. The Subbis believe that jinns steal food, and never cook anything or put food in their larders without pronouncing the name of God. Similarly, they eat in silence, for if a word is spoken, jinns seize and carry away morsels of food. Jinns love a practical joke. A Baghdadi told me that his grandfather saw a sheep walking about in the Christian quarter one night and brought it home. His wife bade him put it out, as she felt that there was something curious about the animal. He would not believe her, and the sheep was tied up in the courtyard. Next morning the corpse of a stranger lay in

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the courtyard. Horrified, the couple dragged it out into the street, when it turned into a sheep and trotted off.

There are other supernatural beings. The Saloua is a mermaiden with long green hair who haunts the Tigris, and may be seen combing her tresses. A European who lives in the marsh-country near Amara tells me that certain diseases can only be cured by charms worked by certain people reputed to be the fruit of unions between these river-maidens and human lovers, whom they drag down to the river-bed and afterwards release. Turkish law solemnly declares that marriages between a human man and "water-people," or mermaids, are illegal.

Another male being who haunts the Tigris is known as the Ferij Lagrua (or Ferish al Aqra). He is a strange, half-human creature with weak legs and a hairless head, and it sometimes happens that fishermen draw him up in their nets. He begs pitifully to be put back, promising pearls, jewels, and all manner of treasure as the price of his release, but when the fishermen comply, he swims away without performing his promise, and as he disappears mocks and insults his deliverers.

The native paper in Baghdad, called *Al Mufid*, published in its issue of August 1st, 1922, an account of a strange animal which can be none other than this river-demon. It was seen by some people near the Noria of Sayyid Letufi al Alusi, in the river Euphrates. They described the animal as resembling a camel in general appearance, though its forelegs and figure were human. It had greenish hair and a long red hea. The tail resembled that of a fish. Many natives of the place were reported to have seen this monster. They fired at it but could not hurt it, and local excitement was great.

The hobgoblin known as the Tantal is a rude and clumsy spirit. He leaps upon the backs of passers-by at night, and puts his foot in front of a man so that he is unable to stir without seeing what it is that hinders him. He is said by those who have seen him to be as high as a minaret, and he delights in fantastic and coarse tricks.

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The Jews have a demon of their own. He is called Shabatim, and, like the Tantal, is of prodigious height. He waylays travellers, and asks them their faith. If the traveller is a good Jew, he is allowed to pass in peace or even transported miraculously to his destination, but if he be Moslem or Christian, he is belaboured with blows, robbed of his money, and left senseless.

Violent love is looked upon as a madness or a possession to be cured by exorcism. Recently a young Jewish woman fell in love with a young man, being married to another. She was subjected to ablutions, fastings, beatings, prayers, and magic potations. Finally, to complete the cure, she went into the Rabbi's house for a time, and came out entirely free from her infatuation. With the Bedouins, love-philtres are concocted by the old women of the tribe. A political officer tells me that he has had complaints from parents that some young man had managed to get medicine, food, or even a piece of cloth, smeared with a love-potion, smuggled in to their daughter, on eating, drinking, or wearing which the girl had become madly in love with the sender. The only cure is to send for the Alim to read portions of the Quran to the damsel, to wash her several times a day, and to give her specially prepared food.

The life of a child is protected by every magic art that the mother can think of, though, alas! she forgets too often the sanitary precautions needful for its health. At its birth a bared sword is placed beside the baby to keep away evil spirits, and a portion of the Quran suspended round its neck. I have described how the anxious mother tries to preserve her weakling. Should a child fall down, as often happens in a country where a little sister is put to mind the baby, the mother has to cense (tabukhur) the ground where he fell. She goes to the place at sunset, taking with her salt, bran, and an egg. She kindles a fire on the spot and throws the salt and bran into it, and breaks the egg on the ground, kissing the earth and crying, "O, angels, good angels, do not hurt us, and we will not hurt you." Sometimes she contents herself with placing a lighted candle on the scene of the fall.

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A child who is troublesome to wean is taken to the river, where his face and hands are washed, and an egg is placed into his little hands, which he is made to drop into the river. This is done on three successive days. The women say this "chills (yibrad) the heart of the child, so that he does not yearn after his mother's breast."

There are many superstitions connected with houses. No Arab will take a house until he has heard whether it is lucky or unlucky, and for this reason a new house is always difficult to let. Its luck is, so to speak, untested until it has been tried. Illnesses are supposed to cling to certain houses. An Englishman I know was solemnly warned that the house he was about to occupy was haunted by housemaid's knee. A house haunted by jinns may not necessarily be unlucky, for the jinns may be harmless or even friendly.

But the number of superstitions is so enormous that, as one writes, fresh examples crowd into the memory, and, indeed, the subject deserves a book all to itself. Lest I should be tempted to carry the subject too far here, I will close the chapter.

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CHAPTER XIX

LITTLE PICTURES

RAIN, slanting, perpetual. The skies are grey, the roads in three stages of mud, according to the locality—liquid, glutinous, or furrowed, like fallow fields in a wet November. One wades through the first—often knee-deep—extracts one's feet from the second with a sucking sound, and stumbles through the last. The rain falls determinedly. Arabs cower under their rags, their cheffiyehs, or head-cloths, wound about their faces, for it is cold. In the coffeehouse by the wayside, some two or three huddle round a charcoal stove. Under an archway a little group shiver about a wood fire kindled on the muddy ground. They go shoeless for the most part, for no poor woman or man *wears* shoes in rainy weather; they sling them on their backs and wade through the mud. Cars splash through the mud of New Street recklessly. Arabanas, hooded four-wheel cabs, go through with even more devastating results, as the horses' hoofs spatter the mud upwards in the faces of the pedestrians. The arabanas are protected against urchins desiring joy-rides behind by a barbed wire entanglement at the back. Why this barbarity? Is it that the small ragamuffin would be the last straw for the ill-fed but breedy-looking cab-hack?

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It is the evening of the next day. The late sunshine turns a pool of liquid mud into liquid gold, and the mud wall of the small mosque behind it into a yellow ingot. Small boys, the Midas-touch catching their brown faces, paddle

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knee-deep in the golden filth, and the whole is afire in the broad, level beam of the lowering sun.

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A dust-storm is blowing. Skies, streets, houses, all are obscured by gusty clouds of dun-coloured atoms, which penetrate one's throat, nose, eyes, and lungs. The world is a rubbish heap, and the palms useless and agitated mops. Though it is still hot, men muffle their faces in their head-wraps, and fold their abas tightly about them. In the houses, shut windows are powerless to exclude the dust, which lies fine and brown on table, chair, and polished surface. Sky, river, road, and gardens, all are one hue—a blur of sepia, a monochrome of moth-colour. To-day the butterfly tints, the parrot patches have vanished. There is a child wrapped in an orange aba—all the glow has departed from it. A Jewess battles with the puffs of gritty wind, the thick silk of her pink izar blown out like the full-bellying sails of a clipper. She looks tawdry and drab, seen in the eddying dust. Now it becomes opaque—it is choking, nauseating. All the filth of the city is flying about. It is unclean dust—and like an unclean spirit, possesses the whole city.

. . . .

It is the hour of transfiguration. The Tigris is a broad mirror in which the tranquil beauty of rose cloud and golden ray is doubled. The sun has gone down in glory and might. Across the twilight green and primrose comes a darkness like smoke from the palm-groves across the river. It spreads and breaks, and the sky is covered with thousands of rooks. The noise of their wings is like rain, for they fly dumbly. For a moment they invade the whole vault of heaven, as far as the eye can reach, moving steadily in their myriads. They pass overhead, wheel, gather together in separate compact clouds, and finally disappear. A hawk often accompanies this great black company, but rarely ventures to attack unless a straggler lingers behind.

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A desert sheikh has come to Baghdad, and we are invited to eat with him. He is lord of many flocks and tents, and has hired taxis to take us through the narrow lanes to his house. We scrape walls, and people press back into their doorways to avoid being crushed, while pedlars, sitting by the wayside, gather up their wares and flee into a byway. We arrive at the house, which is poor and mean, and he apologises for it. It is not so he would have entertained us in his own *beled*. We are taken upstairs to an anteroom and are given cigarettes. His sons, boys of thirteen and fifteen are introduced to us. They do not dare to sit in their father's presence, or ours, but are well-mannered, nicely-spoken lads, who have learned to speak English in Mr. Van Ess's school in Basrah.

"How many brothers have you?" I ask.

"Four or five," they reply.

"And sisters?"

They look doubtful. Sisters are such unconsidered trifles. They ask their father, who looks perplexed.

"Many!" they reply at length.

"But how many?"

Earnest consultation.

"Fourteen or fifteen, or perhaps more," they venture.

"Then your father has many women?"

They turn to their father, who smilingly confesses that he does not quite know how many he possesses. He leads the patriarchal life, and it is the duty of patriarchs to increase and multiply with a careless joy above statistics.

We go into an adjoining room, adorned with carpets, where the meal is spread. There are ten courses, not counting fruits and sweetmeats to be got through, many of them very elaborate. The Arab likes his meats greasy and his sweets sweet; but, nevertheless, there are many appetising dishes—if one had only an appetite. But the latter vanishes after the first few courses. I should like to have kept mine for the giant oranges which adorn the table—for we eat in town, not desert fashion, sitting on chairs and using knives and forks. Presently the sheikh repeats an anecdote about himself, with which

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he is as pleased as everyone else. A fanatical friend had told him that they were saying that the Mahdi was returning, and that he would appear in Kadhimein. "Ha! and what would happen then!" The sheikh, who knew his friend's political proclivities, returned caustically, "Well, and if he did, he would bring Christ with him as his Adviser!"

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I walked one Wednesday out into the desert towards the Moslem graveyards, where dead were buried even in the days of the Abbasids. Here lie holy men and great men, but none more remembered to-day than Bahlul, whom the common people call the Jester of Harun al Rashid. He was a holy man, a simple man, a Brother Juniper among saints, and his tomb is visited by many humble people, particularly on Wednesdays. I called on the green-turbaned Seyyid at the tomb of Sheikh Jonayd, saw the holy stone produced for a little crowd of women, and paid my respects to the wonder-working well. Then I bent my way to the tomb of Bahlul. The women with whom I had become friendly at the tomb of Jonayd, accompanied me. Were we not fellow-pilgrims, having secret desires and inward vows, to which heaven might or might not lend an ear. Who knows, perhaps a word from that good, simple creature, Bahlul, in the ear of Allah, might win us a hearing!

The tomb is within an enclosed wall, and there is a courtyard before the little shrine in which the saint lies. Trees grow in the courtyard, and if you look closely at the ground, you will see here and there bricks laid endwise and sideways, so as to form miniature rooms, such as a child builds with its bricks on the nursery floor. Within there may be nothing, or there may be a few sticks and pieces of grass, a rag, or a scrap of mosquito netting, so arranged as roughly to resemble various objects, such as a baby's cradle. The women call these "houses," and each represents some heart's wish. The "house" which contains a cradle has been placed there by a childless woman. One strange arrangement of sticks

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and rags represents a marriage-bed, and is the wish-house of a marriage-ripe girl without a husband. Other "houses," more secretive, are empty. It is the custom to leave these little edifices in the courtyard as a mute reminder to the saint that a petition has been made. If the petition is granted, and the wish comes true, the happy builder pulls down her "house" and gives her thanks.

One of my companions came close to me and opened her heart. "Oh, lady, I am unhappy! My husband is in Bombay; for twelve years he has left me, and I am alone. I should like to send him my likeness, but I am ashamed to uncover my face at a shop. Oh, lady, will you take my likeness so that I may send it to my husband?"

She was a young woman and comely, but her face was sad and troubled. I promised her that it should be done.

"But you will not let anyone see it. I do not wish them to see my face. Let there only be one picture made."

"But two," I assured her. "I will keep one and you shall keep one. I will take it now, against the wall of the tomb."

But her heart failed her at the sight of the camera. She looked fearfully around, and was loath to pull aside her veil.

The other women admonished her. "Are we not all women together? Why are you ashamed?"

So at last she gathered up courage, and posed herself stiffly and anxiously against the sunny wall. A click, and it was done. I had to explain to her that the photograph could not be produced in a moment, but that when it was developed I would bring it and leave it in the care of the Seyyid of Sheikh Jonayd. His eyes should not fall on it because I would seal it up in an envelope, and write her name on the outside. What was her name? She gave it.

I had no pencil, and had to borrow one from my companion, a Frenchwoman who had lived in West Africa and carried a lucky black bean in her purse—a negro charm. As she opened her bag to get the pencil I saw the bean, and borrowed it to show our new friends. "This," I said, "is

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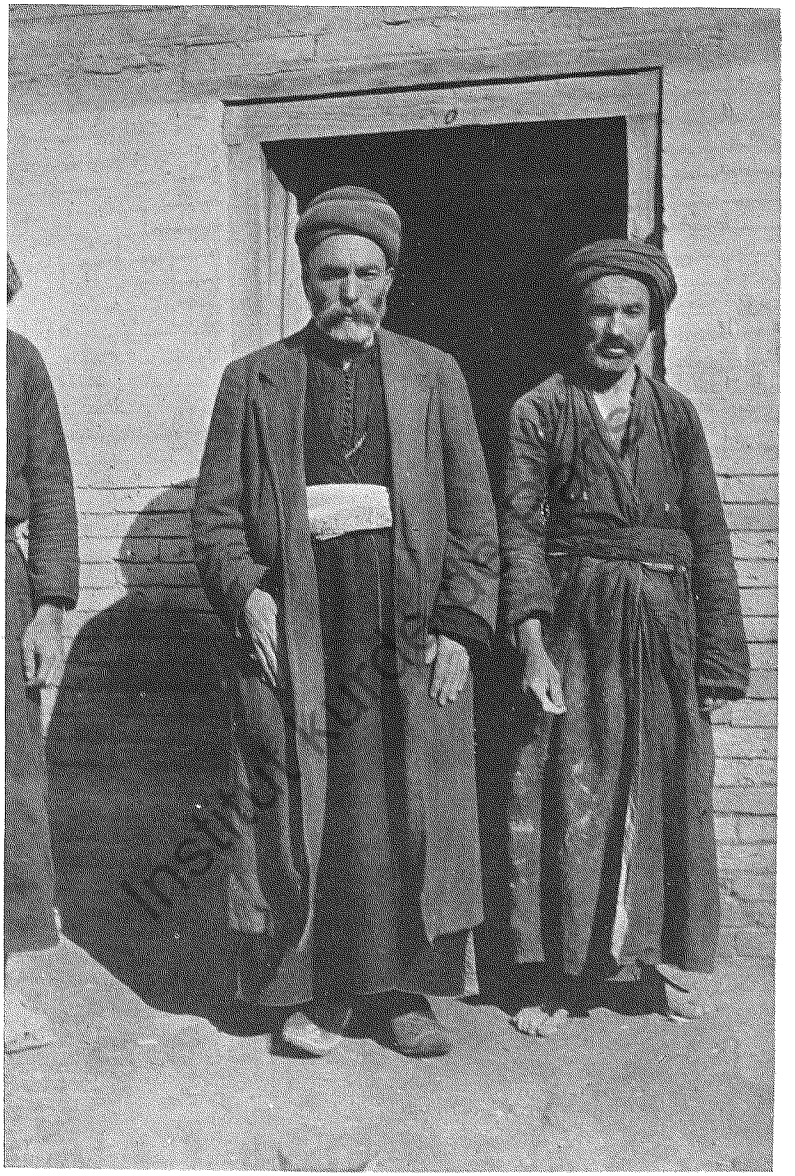
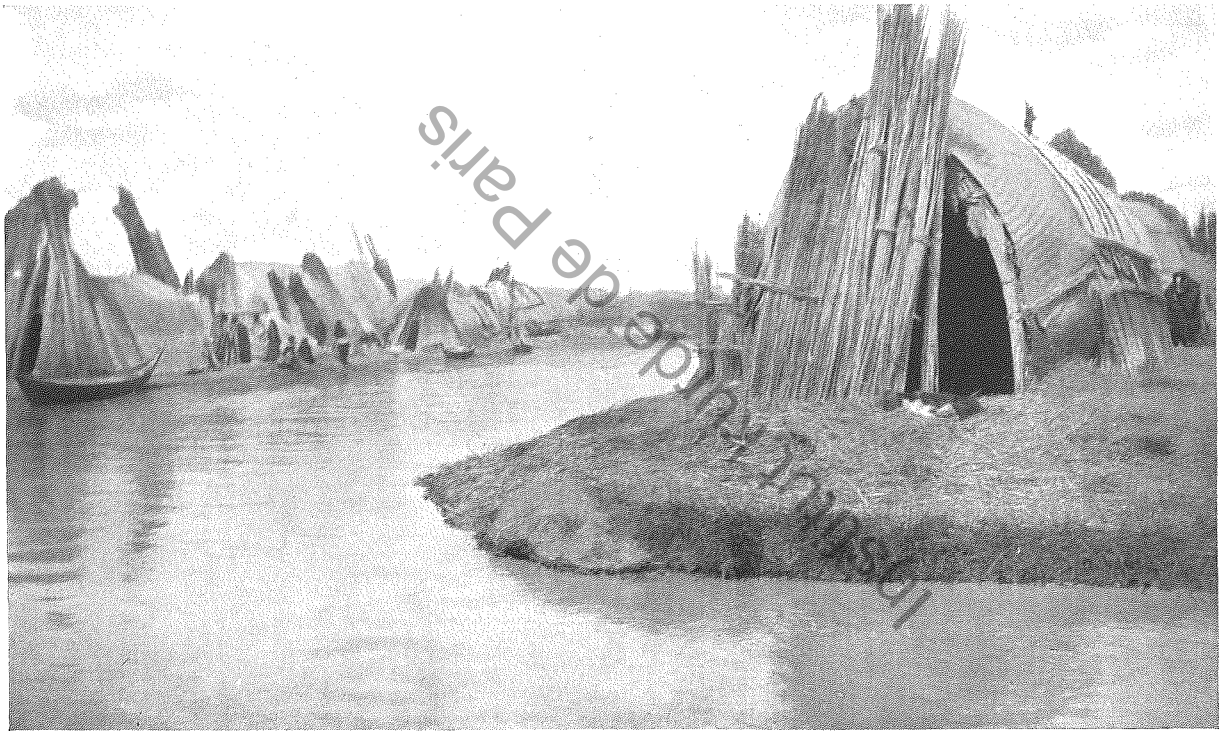


SEYYID ALI: THE TILEMAKER.

(*See page* 245.)



A Reed Village.

very lucky." They handled it reverently. The girl with the husband in Bombay took it, kissed it, and pressed it to each eye in turn, while she murmured fervently, "Inshallah, he returns! Inshallah, he returns!" There was longing in her voice, and I felt for her loneliness. Then we said good-bye, and left the little group of black-clad women by the tomb of Bahlul, to build their wish-houses and say their prayers. If wishes help, mine went to join those of the deserted wife, with her sad eyes and her faithful heart. I do hope that Bahlul may drop that hint in the right quarter.

. . . .

THE TILE-MAKER

He is an old man, but young still in vigour of body and brain. He works in the sunny precincts of the mosque, the pigeons wheeling above his head, the cooing of doves filling the air. Grave theological students pass him on their way to read and pray, and the little boys who daily attend the Qran school in the shadow of the blue dome. But he is too absorbed to pay much attention to either, for he is occupied with his craft.

Work, says the philosopher, is prayer; and this old man, under whose careful hands the tiles grow into beauty, that they may adorn places of prayer, surely prays the day long in his fashion, though he does not always go within the mosque at prayer-time, but keeps his green-turbaned head bent to his task. To him and the apprentices who work under his direction is entrusted the repairing of the tilework of the mosques, for the enamelled Persian tiles, or *kashis*, with which the domes and minarets are covered, need skilled work. Among them are tiles of intricate pattern, gay with enamelled roses, irises, vases, leaves, tendrils, and formal curves in every hue, and the tile-maker knows how to copy each one exactly and faithfully.

He guards jealously the secret of certain glazes and certain processes, which he will hand on to some cunning craftsman before death takes him. Not only can he copy modern tiles,

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and design his own, but he can produce close imitations of antiques, even the wonderful lustre glaze which he calls "sun glaze," and these he can dispose of to curio-dealers in the town, who no doubt sell them as genuine. His workshop is in a corner of the courtyard, and he shares it with a placid white cat. A small kiln is in one corner of the room, a large kiln, built of mud, being outside in another courtyard beneath a spreading nabbukh tree. In another corner he keeps his colours, in another tiles ready for painting.

He draws his own designs on paper, getting inspiration from ancient tiles if he is not actually filling in part of a broken pattern, and transfers the drawing by pricking holes on the lines, and rubbing the paper with powdered charcoal, thus indicating the design on a tile placed beneath the paper. The colours are mixed on an exquisite Chinese dish, broken, alas! The ingredients are pebbles and earths of various varieties, ground very fine, and metals—copper, gold, and others. The beautiful Persian blue, the colour which predominates above all others, is produced by copper. The mixing fluid is water, mixed with a kind of resin obtained from Persia, and the leaves of a certain shrub. The decoction is strained, and is then ready for use. The colours are kept in small bags when made. The glaze is simple, being made of ground pebbles, lead, and broken glass, for which he uses any old glass, from a woman's broken bangles to cracked soda-water bottles.

Attached to the mosque is a high chamber or portico where the earlier processes take place. Mud is obtained from a spot in the Tigris above Baghdad where the soil is suitable, and brought here, where it is patted into moulds previously lined with dry sand, and turned out just as a child turns out a "sand-cake" from his bucket at the seaside. These are laid to dry, and baked before the first layer of colour and glaze goes on. The process looks simple and primitive, and only a few men are employed. Above their heads a bulbul twitters in his reed cage, while the sunlight enters by the open doorway.

Above, on the dome of the mosque, there are workmen at

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work actually repairing the broken tiles, and we mount to watch them. They work leisurely in the hot spring sun, plastering on gypsum, and fitting the new tile into its place in the pattern. So quickly does the gypsum harden that the tile is firm by the time the next tile is lifted to its place. Foliage, and flowers conventionalised into arabesques, inspire most of the decorations, but here, contrary to the Moslem law that no living thing shall be portrayed, a workman, possibly a Shiah, has inserted cocks' heads into one design.

We climb up the minaret, just rebuilt completely, its turquoise and rose shining bravely, and see Baghdad beneath us. From a height this flat-roofed city looks as Oriental as it looked in the days of the Abbasids. Like a shining ribbon the Tigris winds among the green of the palm trees, and behind is the desert where stood the Round City of the first Caliphs, now all gone to dust.

Storks clatter their beaks from a roof close by, and seem to be contemplating the town as we do. There are many nests full of young storks on the roof-tops, and one father-stork flaps up and away with the solemn dignity befitting one who yearly performs the Hajj to Mekka.

We leave them to their wise pondering and follow the narrow winding stair to the courtyard below, where the tile-maker stands with an offering in his hand, an old yellow tile, its glaze cracked a little by the years, but soft and beautiful in shade. This one, he says, is a genuine *antika*, not such as he makes for the bazaars. We thank him, and praise his work.

There is no false modesty about this old tile-maker. He says, "There is not my like in the world! In all Baghdad and Kadhimein there is no one who can make tiles like myself; as a tile-maker I am without a peer."

He may well be proud that he is one of the ancient and worshipful company of tile-makers, for here it is a long-honoured trade. When Babylon was in the pride of her strength, her streets, temples, and palaces were brilliant with enamelled tiles. Lions and griffins, in yellow, blue, and white, stalked along the glazed surface of plaques on the walls of

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the Sacred Way, and some were to be seen until lately on the great gate of Ishtar in the ruined city. Turquoise blue was then, as now, the favourite colour for tiles and pottery.

Perhaps the stately pleasure dome, decreed by Kubla Khan, was gay with lovely tiles, such as these manufactured by an old tile-maker in a Baghdad workshop. Somehow, I always picture it blue, against deep green trees, when I read the poem.

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It is a flaming summer day, and the king's birthday—King Feisal, not King George. Hence a river regatta has been organised, and the banks of the Tigris and the bridge of boats are crowded with spectators, among whom the izars and abas of the women make a brave show. Flags, national flags of black, green, red, and white, flutter in the breeze, for mercifully there is a breeze from the north.

All the races are started from Maude Bridge, the winning post is some few hundred yards down the glittering river, and near it the committee and their guests sit on a steamer chartered for the afternoon. Eager little boys in bathing-drawers, their numbers fastened round their necks, roam about in squads, or wait impatiently the signal to start.

Bang! A pistol-shot, and a number of small boys dive in off the bridge and forge down-stream, encouraged by shouts from the onlookers. The next race is for boats, or bellums, as we in Baghdad grow accustomed to call them. The starters grow tired of waiting for the swimmers to finish, and start the boats on top of them. Result, the oars are soon thrashing in among the swimmers, and it is only by the mercy of Allah that there is no serious accident.

Not content with that, the gufas are set going hard after the boats, so that the distracted spectators see three races in progress at once, and near the winning-post there is an indescribable *mêlée*. One of the gufachis stops rowing and brandishes his paddle before he has reached the end of the race, shouting that he has won, and is with difficulty persuaded

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that the race is not over. It is wonderful how fast these queer, basin-shaped, basket-boats can travel. Were there gufa-races in ancient Babylon? There were certainly gufas on the Tigris long before Nebuchadnezzar ruled, and the shape of those depicted by Assyrian artists on the friezes unearthed by Layard is the same as that of gufas made to-day.

On the Assyrian friezes, too, are portrayed swimmers supported by inflated sheepskins, and a race by these is the last item on to-day's programme. Manfully these sheepskin swimmers strike out with their feet, leaning over the skins to help themselves a little by their arms in front, and one adept in the art finishes far in front of his fellows. These sheepskin swimmers are a common sight in Mosul, even in early spring when the water is ice-cold with melted snow. When he freezes, the sheepskin traveller gets out of the river and runs for a while with the skin on the bank until he gets warm again. A special messenger is reported to have got to Baghdad from Mosul in something under two days in this manner, at the top of the flood.

The regatta has proved such a popular event that it is certain to be repeated another year. Swimming is a much-patronised sport in Baghdad, especially by Jewish boys, who swim in hundreds in early summer. Some say that they learn swimming as part of a religious observance, in memory of the Flood which once spread over the land, others that it is part of the ordinary training of Jewish youth. Be that as it may, the crowds of evening swimmers in the Tigris are part of Baghdad life throughout the summer, nor are the British slow to follow their example. The Alwiyah Club authorities put bathing-tents on a mud island which emerges in summer opposite the club landing-place; and every evening this becomes a miniature Deauville beach. Bathing picnics are the favourite form of entertainment during those days of mere existence during the great heat of summer, and in the merciful coolness that comes in the evening swimmers dress on launch or bank, and dine at their ease in some pleasant river spot, and forget the sweat and toil of the day.

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CHAPTER XX

CHILDREN OF THE REEDS

A VAST expanse of marsh and swamp, almost treeless, in which the roads are water and the village streets water; miles on miles of rustling reeds and long horizons; a watery desert; home of millions of mosquitoes. Who would believe that such a place could be chosen as a place of human habitation? Yet many populous villages exist in the great swamps which reach from Tigris to Euphrates in Lower Mesopotamia, and there are people who have never been beyond the confines of the marshes, and, like water-birds, know little of dry land.

The houses of these villages and townlets are not built of brick, stone, or even mud. They are built entirely of reeds, which shine golden in the sun against the blue water and ever green rushes, and to go from street to street or village to village the inhabitants use primitive canoes, daubed over with bitumen, which they pole deftly through the canals, over the wide expanses of flooded rice-land, or through the tall world of reeds.

There is something of the water-bird in their nature. Merry as water-wagtails, quick to see a joke, fond of laughing and singing, they are as much at home in the water as they are on dry land. Children can swim almost as soon as they can walk. In summer men are in and out of the water all day long, and even in winter their clothes are scanty. Little boys and girls run about the villages stark naked, and as for wet feet, no mother of the marsh-villages ever worries about that. Hardy little savages, reed-children grow up wiry and strong, and one rarely sees diseased eyes or wasted limbs as

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one does in the big towns. Morals are said to be loose; but seeing the close proximity in which these people live, and the limited nature of their interests, it is hardly to be wondered at if their morals become a little mixed.

I left Amara one dawn in March by launch with an officer who had to inspect in the district and a woman friend, who hoped to get a little shooting. After a few hours we left the Tigris, and were soon in the marsh country. The change in the houses we saw along the banks was gradual. Houses of brick became mingled with huts of matting, and then the reed hut, the *beyt el gasab*, appeared.

By ten we had reached the first of our stopping-places—the large village in which lives Sheikh Hamud, brother and agent of Sheikh Majid el Khalifa, who farms a district, or muqataah. For the marsh-country produces huge rice crops, and the Government, landlord of the swamps, lets large districts out to local sheikhs to farm. The average length of tenure is about five years, but at present the Government reserve the right to reassess the district at the end of three years and raise the rent if the crops justify it.

Sheikh Majid, just referred to, has just had his rent raised from four to six lakhs of rupees a year, and he is well able to meet this heavy demand upon his profits. He is of a local tribe, the Albu Mahommed, for an effort is made to choose the landlords among the wealthy sheikhs of the district who know their people, the lands they work, and the traditional methods of farming.

It was raining as we approached the village by the Shatt el Adil, but even in the rain the first glimpse of a large reed village is not easily forgotten. The huts are of two kinds. The simple beyt el gasab, built by constructing thick arches of reeds, sometimes of considerable height, bound together by rushes, thatched in, and closed at either end by upright reed walls. At the roof end the builders rarely trouble to cut off the feathery heads of the reeds, which give the whole structure a look of bird's-nest. In one reed wall a small, square doorway is cut. These arched huts in the case of a sheikh's

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guest-hall may be immense, as big as a large barn or church. The other kind of reed house is the *sarifa*, which, instead of being supported by thick arches of reeds, has four straight walls and a pointed roof supported by columns of reeds down the centre of the hut.

The land on which the huts are built is strewn with straw and reeds, and only saved from inundation by low narrow dykes or ridges sometimes only a few inches higher than the surface of the water. It was flood season at Beyt Hamud, and the water was higher than the ground on which the houses stood. As the water grows higher, they add a little more mud to their tiny dykes, and the pressure is so slight that a few handfuls of earth will keep the flood out.

The small sanctuary is shared by fowls, sheep, water-buffaloes, cows, and the big, shaggy dogs who warn intruders away. Children, naked, or lightly-clothed, run to stare at the passing stranger, and the dogs bound to the water and bark in deep, hoarse voices. At every few yards there is a large round bin, made of mud, in which is stored rice, lightly covered in with mud to protect it. The longer rice is kept the better it is, and it is taken out from time to time and sifted. I saw no vegetable patches, and the marsh-dwellers eat rice rather than bread. Rice is their staple diet, varied by meat and fish; and for green vegetables they use a certain kind of reed. The cows eat reeds—for there is little grass, being little land; and reeds are used for fuel, bridges, matting, and boat-building as well as for the construction of huts.

We got out of our launch at the spot where our host, Sheikh Hamud, awaited us, and were taken into shelter from the rain into a brick guest-room which he had built—a brick house is a great luxury in the marshes. This was spread with carpets and cushions, on which we reclined, waiting whilst a meal was prepared, for, seeing the bad weather, our host had hardly expected us.

We grew weary of coffee, tea, and conversation at last, and wandered out to see what we could see, and that, in the immediate neighbourhood, was the Sheikh's big reed *mudhif*

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or guest-house. Once inside the small square door we found ourselves in a vast, dim hall, the big reed ribs arched overhead. Furniture there was none, except for reed matting and carpets spread on the floor. The place was ventilated from below, through a light decorative lattice-work of reeds, which in hot weather can be entirely removed, thus ensuring a cool draught of air through the place.

Within the *mudhif* sat the sheikh's coffee-maker, a reed fire and an army of long-beaked coffee-pots before him—one, a very mother of pots, big enough, one would think, to supply a regiment with coffee. Enormous, too, were the big brass pestle and mortar in which the beans and cardamon are ground. At a word from the sheikh the coffee-grinder began to lift his pestle, which rang against the side of the mortar like a deep bell. "*Dump*-dong-a-dong-dong! *Dump*-dong-a-dong-dong!" went the pestle, which he seemed to wield as much for the music it made as for the work it did, for he struck the sides four or five times for the once that he smote the coffee-beans. "When people hear that," said the sheikh, "they come for coffee!" And, indeed, the mellow voice of the mortar could be heard for a long distance.

Hospitality is taken as a matter of course, and a sheikh will entertain a large company of men daily. There were some twenty visitors in the guest-hall when we entered it, who rose politely to their feet and remained standing all the time we were there.

At the meal which followed in the brick hut, the sheikh himself served us, excusing himself from sitting at meat with us. A cloth was spread on the floor, and dish after dish was brought in; all served at once—chickens, rissoles, lamb, mountains of rice, stews, sweets, and scented semolina boiled in milk. There were no knives and forks, of course; we ate the food in true Arab fashion, with our fingers. Personally, I never have been able to achieve the trick of rolling rice into a round ball in the palm of my hand, and pushing it into my mouth with my thumb in the approved way. And so far, being an unimportant person, I have escaped the lamb's eye. For an

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honoured guest, a lamb is brought in roasted whole, and the lamb's eye, scooped out by the host with his finger, is usually laid by him on the plate of the principal guest, for the eye is the titbit, a delicacy which it would be unmannerly to refuse.

After the meal a brass basin, ewer, and towels are brought, and the guests, in order of importance, wash their hands, the hosts following suit. Then the retainers troop in and take their place at the table and finish what is left.

We had a long way to go, and, after we had finished our meal, said good-bye to our host and got into the mash-hufs which were waiting for us. These queer boats have long, beak-like prows, and are long, low, and shallow. At first one expects to be upset; but though they ship a little water, they are safe enough. Our host had placed mattresses and large roly-poly silk cushions in them for our comfort, and three men were allotted to each mash-huf to pole us along. They were typical marsh Arabs, and one in particular I regret not to have photographed. With his square projecting beard, hooked nose, and clear cut features, he might have stepped straight out of a frieze in the Assyrian room at the British Museum. Their skirts were short over their bronzed, muscular legs, and the skill with which they managed our unstable vessel was wonderful. However narrow the passage of water, however winding, they never allowed the mash-huf to collide with the bank, and performed miracles of twisting and turning with a deft manipulation of their poles.

At first, however, our way lay up the broad water-streets of the village, Beyt Hamud, and then over tracts of flooded ground. Sometimes we passed through another reed village, sometimes through a watery waste. Once our mash-hufs had to be dragged up over a "fokka," a barrier built of reeds and mud, which shut off the silt water from one sheikh's land to enable it to spread its richness over another sheikh's crops of rice. Though there were reed villages, we were not yet in the reed country proper; for such reeds and rushes as we passed through were no bigger than rushes in rivers at home.

The country over which we were passing was chiefly rice

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country, and, later on, the green rice would rise thick and brilliant, the potential wealth of another year. Our boatmen knew exactly where the deep channels were. Sometimes we stuck for a moment, and they got out into the water and pushed us from the shallows ; sometimes one would get out and run on a bank ; sometimes, in deeper water, paddles would be used. They sang, danced, and chaffed each other perpetually, and a mishap to one awoke a storm of banter and laughter. And always the dry land was lower than the water, and protected from it by the slenderest, lowest of ridges, sometimes so low that the ripples made on the water by the breeze splashed the top of the barrier.

There was plenty of traffic—all mash-hufs. Some were laden with reed fodder for the cattle, so high that water washed in over the edges of the boat ; one was a water-shop, laden with cottons, prints, and other wares, going from village to village. Here and there, outside a village, we passed a cemetery. The reed people build their last resting-places of mud, making arched vaults to hold several corpses at a time. Except that they are of mud, these houses of the dead are miniatures of the arched reed huts of the living, which, again, resemble the tents of the desert Arab. The half-hoop is the principle of all. Over one reed hut a flag fluttered, a sign, our boatmen said, that there had been a death in the house.

At nightfall we came into a large reed townlet. Thousands of reed huts caught the yellow glare of the watery sunset. Streets, alleys, all were of water. When we landed on the piece of ground on which our new host's house was built, the water had invaded the land a little, and it was wet under foot.

We were in the territory of another sheikh—Shawai el Fahad, of the Azairij tribe. He, too, had a brick guest-room as well as a reed mudhif, and here we sat and talked a long time with him. Sheikh Hamud is a silent man, but Sheikh Shawai had a merry eye and an easy-going manner. His retainers sat round on the floor while coffee and tea were served to us, and we all talked, especially the sheikh's mullah.

Sheikhs of desert or marshland nearly always have their

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mullahs, who, being educated men, can help them with their correspondence, advise them in matters of law, especially when they have to come into contact with the craft and guile of townsmen. This mullah was typical of his class—smooth-tongued, diplomatic, well-informed, polite, and voluble. One Englishman told me that when he had dealings with the sheikhs of his district, the mullah was invariably conducted outside before the conversation opened. We talked of many things, amongst others of the delicate matter of the differences between Moslem and Christian theology. The mullah's tact was quite equal to the occasion, and the company ended with the impression that the differences in creed between English Protestants and orthodox Shiahs were quite negligible and trifling.

I asked permission to call on the sheikh's harīm, and, after a little time for preparation had elapsed, we were told that the ladies were ready to receive us. We found about five or six women awaiting our visit in a brick room similar to that which we had just left, but bigger and more comfortably installed. Silk cushions and carpets on the floor constituted the furniture, and in one corner, above some carved and painted benches, a vast stack of bedding for the use of the household and guests was stored—silken pillows and quilts, all of gaudy hues. Had we not brought our own bedding the best of these would have been at our disposal, and we should have slept on silk and down, with silken sheets and embroidered pillows—as if we had been brides.

We sat down beside the dignified dame who seemed to preside over the rest, and conversed on the most conventional subjects, our journey, the weather, and our health—but the ice was broken when we were rude enough to admire our hostess's handsome necklace. In another moment abas were pulled aside and the women were displaying their jewellery —thick bangles, silver and gold headdresses set with turquoises and other stones, silver and gold chains, and so forth. We, to save our face, and show that our menkind really did value us enough to make us presents sometimes, explained that we wore no jewellery when we travelled, and that we

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really had a little at home. They were much amused at my interest in the tattooing on their arms, and pulled aside garments and hoisted up skirts to show us that they were elaborately decorated as far as the knee and upwards, for belles of the marshes specialise in tattooing around their slender waists.

I made an effort to disentangle the relationship of the women to each other, but it was a delicate matter, and I did not succeed, beyond eliciting that the gracious lady who took the lead in the conversation was Sheikh Shawai's chief wife, and that the young man who had brought us in was her son.

After another big meal, which was served in a large hut near by, beds were brought in for us, our hosts left us, and we prepared for rest. We were to make an early start, for the mullah had undertaken to take us to a *real* reed village—not a village built on dry land, but " in the belly of the water," as he expressed it, and thence, through the marshes, back to Sheikh Hamud's. We drank glasses of tea in the chill of the morning, and then started. It was some time before we left the big place behind. As we poled down the water-street, women and men came out to gaze at us. We could see them at their morning avocations as we passed: grinding grain or rice between two stones, weaving, or tending the cattle. The type is, on the whole, low. Occasionally a striking, keen-featured face is seen, especially amongst the men, but not often.

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Before long we were in the great wilderness of reeds. The reeds are stout, and grow to a great height. Here and there they are sparse, here and there they are impenetrably thick. One hears voices as one glides along, and realises that people are quite close, though hidden by the reeds.

An Englishman who lived in the marshes during the early part of the late war told me that as he went through the reeds in his mash-huf one day, a woman's voice came from the forest of green.

" Which way is the wind to-day ? " said the voice.

" The wind is from the north."

" El hamdulillah ! " (Thank God !)

The Englishman was puzzled, knowing that the woman spoke in parables, for no Arab would need to ask another which way the wind was blowing.

"What did she mean?" he asked.

"She meant," said his companion, "who is winning, the English or the Turks, and I told her the English."

In summer the shallow water gets very hot, so hot that one draws the hand out quickly. To get cool water to drink, you must drop your drinking-pot to the bottom of a deep spot, where the water is beautifully cool. This cool water is called "mai el arous," or "bride's water."

One of the things we had come to see, officially, was the condition of the boundaries. These, visible for miles over the flat waste of reeds, were built by the British adviser to the division, and their erection ended long dispute between the sheikhs of the district. They are cone-like erections of mud in the middle of the water, a long pole planted in the centre of each. We saw two, and after six months or more they were firm and undisturbed. The mullah was loud in his praise of the foreigner, who had with the justice of Solomon settled so difficult a question.

In fact, the mullah was full of information as we went along. He gave us the name of the waterweed that looks like a miniature water-lily leaf as it floats on the surface of the water—qaabu was the name, I believe—and told us that, reduced to a powder and blown into the eyes of sick cattle, it had a curative effect.

At about noon, or before, we reached the village which the mullah had promised to show us, coming upon it suddenly as we glided along the narrow passages between the high reeds. It was most literally in the water, for there was no dry land at all. Each reed hut was built on reed mats piled one on top of one another and supported below on piles driven into the mud. If the water rises, the householder piles on more mats, and is rarely more than an inch or so from the water. To get from house to house he must go in a mash-huf, but here and there is a reed bridge. The water squeezes through under-

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foot, but no one minds. As these tiny platforms of reeds upon which the houses stand are shared with fowls and water-buffaloes, they are not very sweet-smelling, and, I imagine, somewhat verminous.

At the request of the headman of the village, we drew our mash-hufs up at his guest-house. Within, a reed fire was burning, on which were set the inevitable coffee-cups. There are never enough cups to go round. Cups are passed from hand to hand as they are emptied, and unless one has the hardihood to make an excuse, politeness compels the visitor to drink with the rest. The men were scantily clothed, the children not at all. The children, veritable water-babies, as at home with the fishes as with the hens, learn to pole a mash-huf as soon as they can toddle, and look healthy and strong, though dirty.

A large part of the population, women and men, were out reed-cutting, for one of the main occupations of these people is the making of reed-mats after the pattern of those made by their forefathers thousands of years ago. Some cut reeds for fodder or litter, others pick the rushes called "bardi," tough and supple, which are used to bind the great sheaves of rushes which form the supporting arches of the huts. They are, of course, great fish-eaters, and in a corner of the guest-hut stood a three-pronged instrument for spearing fish. The net and the line are also used, as well as a drug sprinkled on the water which stupefies the fish and makes them float to the surface. Frogs and fleas hopped about the floor, upon which worn carpets were spread.

The headman said that he would accompany us on our way, and got into his own mash-huf, accompanied by some of his villagers, his polemen, and his little son. Their mash-huf was close to ours in the narrow way, and as we went along I caught the word "humeira," which means "little donkey" and is the current expression for whooping-cough—the whooping resembling the donkey's bray. Seeing the child languidly reclining in his father's lap, I inquired if he had the whooping-cough.

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"No," said they; "his *name* is Whooping-Cough. When he was little he was very ill with whooping-cough, and ever since then he has been called Whooping-Cough."

I remembered having been told that the marsh Arabs are very fond of giving their children queer names, such as "Not-Wanted," "No-Good," and so on, as they think that this practice averts the evil eye. What power of evil could attack a child called "Measles"? It would surely smile and pass on.

Back to Beyt Hamud, and thence by launch to Amara, after a Gargantuan spread in Sheikh Hamud's guest-hut, with an hour or two in the reed village, and our visit was over, a visit which will remain in my memory for ever. For thousands of years these children of the reeds have lived the same life, eaten the same diet, following the same trades. Religion does not trouble them much, though they are Shiahs. There are no mosques in the villages, and though the local mullah may lead them in prayer and a man or two here and there perform the pilgrimages to the Shiah shrines (ritually known as "visits," to distinguish them from the journey to Mekka), religious observances do not sit heavily upon them. Education is practically nil. Water-birds they have always been, and water-birds they will remain, possibly, until the end of time.

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CHAPTER XXI

ISRAEL IN 'IRAQ

A SYRIAN once complained to me, " If the Jews want a National Home, why don't they go to Mesopotamia? Their father Abraham was an 'Iraqi, a large part of the race has lived there ever since the Captivity, and there are more Jews to-day in 'Iraq than in the whole of Palestine."

There was some truth in his complaint. Jews have lived continuously in Mesopotamia a longer time than in Palestine. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, but they rose up to make money, and have been making money there ever since. Certain trades are almost exclusively in their hands. For instance, in Baghdad the fish, meat, and provision shops are almost entirely Jewish; the gold and silver souk closes on the Jewish Sabbath; the moneylenders and money-changers are nearly all Jews; and so are a large number of the cloth and cotton-merchants, many of whom have relatives in the cotton trade in Manchester.

It is said that descendants of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, who were borne into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser III. (Pul, king of Assyria, in the Bible), are to be found still in 'Iraq, and there are families claiming descent from the Jews led into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar who, following precedent, captured Jerusalem, destroyed it, and bore its principal inhabitants to Babylon. Many Israelitish patriarchs are buried in the soil of 'Iraq: Ezra, Ezekiel, Jonah, Nahum, and others. Ur will be for ever associated with Abraham. There is small doubt that the Ark floated over a flood caused by an overflow of the two great rivers of Mesopotamia, and

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is not the Garden of Eden declared to be at Qurna, near Basrah ?

The keen Hebrew, once reconciled to captivity, settled down to spoiling his spoilers. While he faithfully worshipped Israel's God, he followed the national genius for commerce and finance. Professor Delitzsch conjectures that the great firm of Egibi and Sons, who carried on business during the last days of Babylonian empire, was really a Jewish firm, Egibi being Babylonian for Jacob. The records of this great Babylonian firm of bankers and agents have been found by excavators in great numbers—clay tablets neatly packed into jars, and can be seen in the British Museum. This firm flourished through several centuries, reaching its greatest height of prosperity during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Professor Delitzsch says that the financial business of the Babylonian court was entrusted to it for many generations.

"They" (Egibi & Co.) "collected the taxes with which land and the crops of corn, dates, etc., were burdened, also the dues for the use of the public roads and the irrigation canals, etc. Thus, these insignificant-looking little cakes of clay unroll before us a vivid picture of Babylon's national life ; we see people of all classes, from the highest court-officer to the lowest peasant and slave, crowd the courts of this treasure-house to transact their business."

Among the later tablets, some bear Alexander the Great's name. The first Egibi or Jacob was probably a Jew of Samaria, taken captive in the reign of Sargon.

The author of *The Golden Bough* sees in the Jewish feast of Purim a variant of a Babylonian festival, held in spring-time for the fertilisation of the crops. Esther, the queen, may be, he thinks, one with Ishtar the goddess, and Mordecai with the god Marduk, whose shrine was the most famous in Babylon. I have asked Jews of the country if there is anything in local observance which would bear out the theory, but they deny it. Little boys look forward to Purim, not only for the feasts which are given, but for the effigies of Haman, which, like Guy Fawkes in England, are borne around, and finally

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burnt in a bonfire. The day on which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple is observed as a day of mourning.

One can easily believe that the Jews of 'Iraq were quick to adopt the Lydian invention of coinage. The instinct of the race for barter and exchange is a really wonderful example of the strength of national characteristics throughout the ages. Generous, charitable, and intelligent as the Jew is, his love of money amounts to a passion, and nowhere more than in 'Iraq, where he is pitted against another money-loving Semitic race, the Arab. But the Arab quickly loses his patience; he has not the concentration, frugality, the unfailing industry, and the singlemindedness of the Jew. What the Arab gains lightly goes lightly; he hates continuous work, and with all his talk of rupees and annas, he is as a child in the hands of the skilful Jew. Money is to the Arab a mere incident, while to the Jew it is his whole existence.

Towards the end of the war the value of the rupee rose by leaps and bounds, until it was worth, in 1919, at one time, two shillings and sevenpence. A certain Baghdad Jew had speculated largely on the inflation of the value of the rupee. The rupee began to fall; he went about with an anxious face, asking everyone whether it would rise again. It fell again, and went on steadily depreciating, with but slight variation. The Jew fell ill, and grew worse and worse. The doctor was puzzled, until a friend said to him, "I can diagnose Ezra's illness—rupee." He finally recovered, but has not been the same man since, although still a rich man.

Two recent cases are on record in which rich Jews committed suicide because some paltry debt had not been paid. A Baghdad doctor told me that he was called to visit a sick Jew, a well-to-do man. He found him suffering from obstinate vomiting, pains, weakness, and general *malaise*, and this, in spite of diet, continued. He began to suspect that his patient's illness was one of mind, and made inquiries as to his affairs. He learnt that the Jew had recently had some money losses which had angered and annoyed him. The next time he visited him he said, "I cannot continue to visit you until

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you have paid me my fees." The sick man asked how much he owed. The doctor named an absurdly high sum. The sick man leapt from his bed and began to remonstrate, and from that moment he was entirely cured. I did not ask the doctor if he subsequently reduced his fees.

The Jew of Baghdad is still an Oriental, and the older generation follow with scrupulousness the customs and religious observances of their forefathers. But an unregenerate generation is springing up which travels to see cousins, uncles, and brothers in Paris, London, and Manchester, and becomes impatient of many of the restrictions imposed upon it by conservatism. These modern spirits view with abhorrence the lovely silken mantles, or izars, of their female relatives, and the habit of veiling the face. They try to replace the ceremonious courteousness of their elders with the free-and-easy manners of a European counting-house, and treat the customs of their stricter relatives with irreverence.

This is, of course, inevitable, but it is not without regret that one looks forward to a time when the Baghdad Jew, who formerly lived his life much as his ancestors lived theirs hundreds of years ago, will shape himself on the stereotyped pattern of the European Hebrew, who has lost much to gain little.

But what about education? scandalised voices will cry. I dare not reply without confessing myself a heretic of the worst order, though open to conversion. After all, there is no reason why education should banish all that is beautiful, revered, and honoured by custom in the past, and some day education in the East may cease to ally itself with vulgarising influences. Till then I shall only be a half-hearted partisan of its benefits.

Jewish feasts and festivals are, of course, the same in Baghdad as in other parts of the world. The gayest, perhaps, is that of Passover, when the Jewish women, clad in silk izars of every pale and lovely hue, make the streets look as brilliant as a bed of sweet-peas in June. The rules as to unleavened bread, the lamb, and so forth, are rigidly observed, and during

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the first and second nights of the feast great hospitality is shown and visits are made and exchanged with all friends and acquaintances. It is the practice to send anonymous gifts—flowers and sweets—from house to house, and on the last day most Jews make a point of visiting the gardens, as the palm-groves are called.

The Day of Atonement is observed with the utmost rigidity. Hardly a man dares openly to break his fast, which lasts from twenty-five to twenty-six hours. Jews dress from head to foot in white on this day, and the wearing of a leather shoe is strictly forbidden.

The Feast of Tabernacles is looked forward to by every Jewish family, for then the whole family camp out, eat and sleep in small sheds, covered over by date-palm branches, which are decorated by oranges and fruits so as to remind the beholder of the old agricultural activity of the race. On the last day of the feast there is a great gathering of Jews in bellums on the river, or they sit by the side of the river.

The poorer class of Jew is a firm believer in the power of the evil eye, of jinns, and of magic. In my chapter on magic I have mentioned that Jews have recourse to Seyyids. Jewish women also go, with their Moslem neighbours, to visit many of the Moslem shrines, notably that of Abdul Kader, who is believed by some of the Jewish women to have been a Jew.

Many old Jewish women profess to be witches, and cure, not only all manner of diseases, but the pangs of unrequited love, madness, childlessness, and ill-luck. They can mix a love-potion and cast out an evil spirit; can talk with the dead and get news of the absent. A Jewish witch is called in to diagnose a sickness which has baffled medical skill. She immediately pronounces it a case of possession by a jinn. The jinn may be an earth-jinn or a water-jinn. If incantations and amulets do not succeed in expelling the malignant spirit, she tries to cajole him. The patient is brought to an empty house, where he is to spend the night alone with the sorceress. The sorceress asks for chickens, vegetables, meat, and so forth, in addition to her fee. At nightfall she makes a feast, to

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which she invites the spirit. The spirit cannot resist the smell of the savoury viands ; he leaves the demented or sick person to come to the spread, and once out of the body of the person, he has lost his power and can be exorcised. It is possible, however, that the jinn is a water-jinn, and, if so, chicken and meat have no attractions for him. In this case the patient is taken to the riverside, where the old woman breaks eggs into the river, for water-jinns are greedy for eggs.

Sickness is sometimes believed by them to have been attracted to the house by some sweet scent. In this case, the sick child or person is taken to a tannery or some other place where there is an evil smell, and made to snuff it up, in the hope that the sickness will flee away. The contrary also holds good. Jinns attracted by evil smells may be expelled by a sweet odour. Charms and magical practices precede the doctor and often succeed him, and the talisman—a metal disc inscribed with a magical formula, or a scrap of parchment on which something has been written by a Rabbi or a wizard—is almost universally worn.

The Jews share many superstitions with the Moslems. Bird's feet and onions are supposed to be efficacious against jinns. A house in which there is sickness, or which has an unlucky reputation, may be treated by getting in some wise man or woman who will throw some drops of oil on the corners of the building. Calling through a cemetery, and extracting a nail from a bridge are resorted to in various cases ; in fact, examples of magical healing are legion.

I have had for some time a servant who is a Jew, and his grandmother is a noted white witch. She makes a comfortable income out of fees, and whenever my servant goes sick, it is as much as I can do to persuade him to go to the doctor. He prefers to go to some " ajuza," or old woman of his quarter, who will practise her quackery upon him. The people of his quarter are fond of consulting a certain old Rabbi, who " talks with spirits." His awed clients behold him smiting the floor with his stick, and listening to mysterious whispers which issue from the ground.

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The poorer Jews, in general, observe most strictly the ordinances of their faith. It sometimes happens that a Jewish clerk in an office will refuse to switch on the electric light or to light a match on a Saturday, because it is forbidden to kindle fire on the Sabbath. In most Jewish houses no cooking is done from the Sabbath eve, which is six o'clock on Friday, until six o'clock on Saturday. During this time no fire is lighted in the house, and only cold viands are eaten.

Jewish schools are well attended, and the Alliance Israélite has a fine boys' school which, I have been told, is attended by Moslems as well as by Jews. The Alliance also has a girls' school, but I do not think that the teaching is as good there as at the boys'. The girls learn to talk French and a little English, and to make embroidery and lace, but their knowledge of other subjects is limited, and they leave at an early age to marry. Jewish girls, like Moslem girls, veil their faces, though not as rigorously as the Mahommedans, and the veil is now often discarded by women with modern ideas. They are bright, intelligent little creatures as children, and are said to leave the boys behind at school.

I attended the prize-giving ceremony of a large school kept up by the charitable support of one of the leading Jews of the town, and was struck by the perfect self-possession and ready wit of the small girls. All Oriental schoolchildren amaze one by their absolute lack of self-consciousness when reciting a speech or acting in a play, but Jewish girl-children excel them all.

The age for marriage is between twelve and seventeen, as a rule. A marriage-broker, who gets a fee from one or both parties, acts as go-between. My servant knew no suitable girl in Baghdad, as he was a stranger, and he employed three dellals, or marriage-brokers, one man and two women. They found him a likely girl, and on the appointed day he went to her house with one of the brokers and his friends. He was allowed to see and talk with his prospective bride, and the dowry was discussed. He had never seen the girl until that moment.

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I asked him what he said to her. He replied: "She sat on a chair and I sat on a chair near her. I asked her if it was true she knew English, and she said, 'Yes, she knew a little English.' We talked together a little in English, and then I asked her what her dowry was. She said, 'Three thousand rupees.' I said, 'That is not enough; I want six thousand.'"

Eventually, after much chaffering, the dowry was fixed at four thousand rupees, to which another thousand was added for marriage expenses. Everyone drank coffee; the women uttered joy-cries; a band, hired for the occasion, made the usual cacophony, and the matter was settled; the rabbi making the formal betrothal—which is as binding as marriage. Fees were, of course, paid to rabbi and dellals. My servant did not pay the dellals (only five rupees bakshish); his father-in-law paid such expenses.

Such was the account given to me, and, making due allowance for the probable inflation of figures, it serves to show that romance is not to the fore in these transactions of the common people. Of course, with the better classes, the young man usually knows his *fiancée*, and matters are conducted upon more European lines.

Every Jewess marries. In rare cases, such as when a girl is diseased, deformed, or prevented by some other disability from marrying, she is kept by some member of her family. However rich her father, she inherits nothing when he dies, all property going to the sons or male relatives. The dowry system is meant to equalise this unfairness. Very heavy dowries are given with the daughters of rich men, and if the girl is repudiated or left by her husband, her dowry goes with her back to her father's house.

Recently I witnessed the wedding of a well-to-do Jewess. The ceremony, to which we were bidden by the bride, was held in the school of the Alliance Israélite, and many guests were present. The large courtyard of the school was spread with mats, and a double row of takhts, or wooden benches, covered with white cotton, stood on either side of a way up the centre. On a daïs at one end sat the bridegroom, in best

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EZRA'S TOMB.

(*See page* 261.)



A Gathering of Tribesmen and Notables.

European clothes, with a tarbush on his head, and two friends, one on his right and the other on his left. Upon the benches, in stiff rows, sat the male wedding guests, all wearing European dress and the red tarbush.

The women were upstairs in the balcony, which ran round the open courtyard. They stood, and all were robed in izars of beautiful silk and variegated colour, stiff with gold and silver thread. Over their faces nearly all wore either the hard black blinker affected by Baghdad Jewesses, or the more modern covering of thick black lace. Calm and untalkative, they leaned on the rail of the balcony and gazed below. A bench was brought for us Europeans, and we gazed with the other women.

The bride, who came out to receive us, was in conventional European bridal dress—white satin gown, veil, orange-blossom wreath, and bouquet complete. She greeted us briefly, and then retired, for custom ordained that she should sit within a room opening off the balcony, with her mother beside her.

Various relatives were introduced to us. The older women wore beneath the hoods of their izars a kerchief brought under their chins, and a curious little pill-box hat, which raised the izar from the head. This pill-box erection, which sits on the top of the skull, is heavily embroidered with gold, and the top is thickly sewn with seed pearls. Like the Panjandrum's hat, it has a little round button on top, of filigree gold, and from this depends a thick tassel of seed-pearls. No coffee was served, but " mulebbas," or comfits, were brought round, and little nosegays of flowers.

Just below the part of the balcony where we sat, were two bands, and these discoursed alternately. One consisted of Arab instruments—a zurna, or kind of oboe, " snud," or cymbals, a " tabbal," or big drum, and the " naqara," a double drum consisting of two copper bowls with sheepskin stretched over each. The Arab band played Arab music, and played well. The other band had European instruments, all slightly out of tune, and played Turkish music, with dreadful result. Proceedings were varied by the vociferous singing of a group

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of little boys, who opened their mouths to their widest extent and let rip. They produced a great volume of sound.

The musical entertainment being over, the bridegroom, who had sat with unsmiling face on his chair down below, rose and came upstairs. The rabbi also appeared, and bride and bridegroom took their places beneath a canopy. The rabbi had a metal tumbler in his hand, filled with red wine. The men guests still remained downstairs. A brief service was intoned by the rabbi, small boys downstairs singing the responses. Then the wine was handed by the rabbi to the bridegroom, who, when he had drunk, poured a little into an ordinary earthenware coffee-cup and gave it to the bride. She drank and returned it to her husband, whereupon he, at the rabbi's direction, hurled it to the ground and broke it. This is, of course, more or less the procedure at any Jewish wedding all over the world, but here the people believe that the sharp, broken pieces of the cup keep jinns away.

During no part of the ceremony did the bridegroom glance at or speak to the bride, and as soon as the ceremony which made them man and wife was over, he departed and went to rejoin his men friends downstairs. Both of the principal actors looked extremely bored, and indeed I expect they were, for no immediate escape after the ceremony is allowed them. Had the family been less civilised, we should have seen some of the older marriage customs, that of killing a cock and hen and presenting them to the newly-wedded pair, and, of course, the candles burnt over wheat or barley to ensure the fertility of the union.

When a Jew dies, his relatives all assemble in the house and wail loudly. Some cast dust on their heads, but even in Europeanised houses it is the custom for men and women to tear their clothes as a sign of grief. Professional mourners, usually women, are employed by the Jews, as by Moslems, and these weep, shriek, and sob frantically, keeping up a flow of talk about the virtues of the deceased and the grievous loss his death has caused. It is not considered in good taste for the women of a house where there has been a death to leave

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it at all for months afterwards except on urgent business. They may receive visits, but may not make any, and their demeanour before their friends for the period following the death must be unsmiling and dismal. Daily visits to the grave are made at first, and later at intervals, and at each visit the wailing and sobbing is renewed. Mourning—black, as with us—is worn for a year.

There is a pretty and significant custom among some of the Jews of Baghdad, of having music at the funeral of a young unmarried man. I am told that formerly a girl was hired to walk beside the bier attired in bridal dress, and that wedding music was played. The idea was that the young man should not be defrauded by death of all the joys which he would have had if he had lived. This custom seems to be dying out, like many others, and its significance is forgotten.

The Jew is, and will continue to be, well to the fore in Government service. He was well represented on the Judicial Bench before the war, and has retained his position since the occupation. At the present moment the Minister of Finance, on whose shoulders lies the task of extricating 'Iraq from the slough of deficit, is a Jew of striking personality, whose ability is recognised and appreciated by his Moslem colleagues. If the new Government is ever tempted to alter its present attitude and to allow religious prejudice to blind it to the abilities of the Jews, 'Iraq will be the loser.

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THE TRIBESMAN IN THE TOWN

Within the market's winding maze,
Chequered with sun-thrust, narrow rays,
The merchants sit long leisured days
And sometimes sell, and sometimes raise
Incurious eyes, with idle gaze.
Here is no fierce untempered blaze,
But shadow where the vendor lays
His coloured silks in rows, or stays
The eyes of hungry folk with trays
Of comfits, meats, sweet fruits and maize,
Or from his khan, with guileful phrase,
Entices him whose stare bewrays
A stranger, and within displays
Rare carpets, rugs for him who prays,
Keen blades, well-tempered, for affrays.
Gauds d'ye lack for pretty fays
At home? Your honour may appraise
Strung amber, crystal, chrysoprase,
Beads, jewels fit for popinjays.

The desert man, he walks a-gaze,
Views townish plenty with amaze;
But in his heart gives Allah praise,
Who made the plains and hills that raise
Their heads to heaven, and sheep that graze.
For these no pedlar's toll he pays,
But goes a free man all his days
And thanks the Lord of Desert Ways.

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CHAPTER XXII

DESERT LAW AND DESERT WAYS

PEOPLE at home, deriving their impressions from highly-coloured novels and films manufactured in California, get an impression that the desert is a place of chivalry and romance. It is nothing of the sort. The desert sheikh is not always a man of magnificent physique with the manners of a prince and clothes which robe him like a king. He is more often a wiry little man, as tough as a nut; not too clean, with a Franciscan tolerance of "little visiters," a keen appreciation of profit and loss, and a tendency to regard women as inferior animals. His manners are certainly good, and he is hospitable, according to the tradition of the desert, for convention is convention in the tents as in a drawing-room in Mayfair.

His chivalry, as regards women, is slight, as some tales that I shall tell will show; and he is, in practice, often treacherous, mean, and money-grabbing, though somehow likeable in spite of all. He has a keen sense of humour. He leads a life so hard that freedom is a big price to pay for it, and one respects him for it. When he meets you he does not, as in the films, bow low and extend his arms before him. That is a gesture unknown in the East, and was invented in a cinema studio. He salutes you by touching his breast, mouth, and brow with his hand, and if he inclines his head it is very slightly. Film-producers please note this!

He has been a law unto himself for hundreds of years, keeping far from the rulers who sit in towns, and has evolved a rough and ready justice which is far from being perfect. This desert code during our stay in 'Iraq we have recognised

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to a certain extent, for an attempt to impose the literal law of the land upon nomads leads to complications and misunderstandings which would do more harm than good. A little story may serve to illustrate this.

Early in the history of our occupation, a woman's only son was murdered, and there was wailing in the tents. The murderer was captured by the police and brought into the nearest large town, and thrown into prison awaiting trial. In due course he was tried and sentenced to death. The British Political Officer was thereupon approached by the mother of the deceased man. She sat on his doorstep and refused to go away until she had seen him, and when she had secured her interview, threw herself at his feet, and with tears and sobs begged him that the murderer should be set free.

The Britisher was puzzled. "Why do you ask the life of your enemy, the man who has murdered your only son?"

She would not reply, but, on being pressed, said: "If I told your honour, you would not understand."

"Tell me, and I will try to understand."

She opened her mind. "In the first place, I am a widow, and my son, the boy that is dead, was my only son, the sole support of my old age. If you left the murderer to be judged by the law of the tribe she would be forced to pay me dia (blood-money), which would be enough to keep me until I die. Moreover, if you hang my son's murderer you do not wipe out the blood-feud that is between us. Another of our tribe will be killed, and then another of theirs, and thus more blood will be shed and the trouble will be unending."

Not much romance or chivalry about such a tale, but much plain desert sense. The officer was able to get the death-sentence commuted into one of imprisonment, the blood-money was paid, and the matter was settled. To meet the difficulties of such case a set of regulations are in force, under which cases involving tribesmen on both sides can be dealt with by the administrative authorities, in consultation with the sheikhs of the tribes concerned, without being put before the courts. On the whole, the system does not work well, as

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the line between tribesmen and townsmen is often hard to define, and the severity of the penal law is much greater than that of tribal custom. As a result the townsman, or the settled Arab, often feels that he is hardly used by comparison with the light penalties awarded to his nomad neighbour for similar crimes.

I have said that desert justice is far from perfect, and this is, above all, the case as regards women. A girl is compelled by desert law to marry her first cousin, if he wants her, and she is his property from the point of view of marriage. A man who wishes to marry a girl has not only the father and mother to consider, but the cousin, and it sometimes happens that the cousin is a dog-in-the-manger, who, without the least intention of marrying the girl himself, likes to prevent her from marrying other people.[1] If the impatient lover carries off the girl in the face of the cousin's refusal to give consent to the match, it is considered justifiable homicide if the cousin kills, not him, but the unfortunate girl.

A similar travesty of justice is visible in the case of a girl who has been slandered. The whisper of a jealous woman, the hint of a rival, will start the talk. Whether the insinuation against the girl's chastity is true or untrue, it is thereupon the duty of her nearest male relative—usually a brother—to kill her. He may hold no court of inquiry, he simply kills her out of hand.

Women themselves assent to this hard code. A certain girl of the tribes roused the enmity of another woman, who went and made false accusation against her to her brother. He went immediately to her mother's hut and shot his sister. The poor girl was brought in to the hospital at Hillah, shattered and dying. As soon as she regained consciousness, she sent for the Political Officer, and implored him not to kill or imprison her brother. "He did what was right," she said pathetically.

At first the Englishman, who was thoroughly disgusted by

[1] It may happen that the cousin will keep a woman in spinsterhood all her life.

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the brutality of the murder, said that he could not interfere with the course of justice; but the poor victim, in frightful pain, only alleviated by injections of morphia, begged him most piteously, with grievous weeping, to promise to do what she asked. He was so distressed at the suffering of mind his refusal had caused, that he did as she wished, and gave his word that her brother should not be imprisoned or executed if he could help it.

Seven days the girl lingered in agony, and then died. A mejlis of the elders and sheikhs of the tribes was assembled, and the murderer was brought before them. With all the eloquence he could command, the Englishman told them the story, and of how the dying girl had sought to save her murderer's life. The old men were impressed.

"*Wallahi*, the girl did well: she acted virtuously; but the man, too, did well to shoot her. It was his duty; you cannot punish him, though the girl was innocent, as we believe. The girl was his honour, and when honour is slandered there is only one remedy."

The young man was finally banished from the tribe for a certain period.

Here is another case, in which the woman's own husband was powerless to defend her. This woman went to a town a journey away in order to attend a wedding, and during her absence, a woman slandered her. Warning came from friends, "Do not return; you have been unjustly accused." But the woman's heart was hungry for her children and her husband, and she took road and went back.

When she arrived, her children begged her to escape quickly. "Our uncles have sworn they will kill you—they have dug a grave for you!" Her husband joined in their plea; he loved her, and believed her innocent, but was powerless to help her. Persuaded of her peril at last, she fled to the town she had left and asked British protection. The sheikh of her tribe was sent for, and the woman summoned; with tears and sobs she swore that before heaven she was innocent.

The sheikh listened, and seemed sympathetic. The

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Englishman said to him, " Now I hand her from my protection to yours ; see that no harm befalls her." The sheikh refused. " Let her still be under your protection ; it will be better." But the Englishman had no quarters for ladies in distress, and, sorry as he was for the lady, he could do no more than hand her over to her sheikh, though the poor young woman implored him to keep her, and would not go until he had given her a letter promising her British protection, which the sheikh said would secure her from harm. But the sheikh was wrong, and even as she left the gate of the house, the document in her hand, she was set upon and done to death.

In another case the same official was more successful. A young woman came into his office and seated herself mutely on the ground.

" What do you want ? " he asked.

" I want protection. My tribe want to kill me."

" What is your trouble, my sister ? Come, show me your face and tell me all about it."

She opened her wimple and disclosed a comely young face.

" My name is Binniyah. This is the trouble. I have sinned." And she told him her story simply and plainly She had been affianced by her relations to a certain man, " a horrible man, a man I hated ; *wallahi*, he was a brute ! " Perhaps she might have married him obediently enough had she not had a sweetheart already, whom she loved. The marriage went forward, the *haufa*, or wedding-tent in which the married pair spend the first week of their honeymoon, prepared, the wedding sweetmeats cooked. The night before the final ceremony, her sweetheart came to her tent by night, and whispered to her that she must fly with him.

" What was I to do ? " she asked naïvely. " My understanding flew away " (*tar akili*), " my heart was weak as water at his words. I went with him."

The pair went off into the desert, and there was hue and cry after them. For days they lived a life of fear, hiding here and there, and suffering hunger and hardship, until at last

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the young man, as she told with shaking voice and tears, spurned her because of the trouble she had brought upon him.

" He told me I had better seek protection from your honour, and as for him, he must set about the saving of his own skin, as our love had brought him nothing but trouble."

This time the Englishman did not return the girl to her tribe, though the sheikh came and swore that she should be taken into his own house.

At the mere suggestion the girl was terrified. " He is dissembling ; he will murder me when he gets me."

Thinking this extremely probable, the Englishman sent her to the family of a servant of his, and in the end—alas for romance, again !—she married a respectable man who kept a coffeehouse. She is now the mother of children, and has forgotten both her false lover and the fear of death.

The way of a Britisher dealing with the tribes was a very difficult and thorny one even in earlier times, when our hand was heavier on the land than it is now. Prompt decisions and quick action were necessary, and ability to take initiative without reference every time to Baghdad.

A certain Britisher, whose work took him among the Muntafik tribes, ordered a sheikh to attend a mejlis, or meeting of sheikhs. The man sent word that he was afraid to come, as his deadly enemy, another sheikh of another branch of the same tribe, was on his road to the place of meeting, and it would be unhealthy for him to risk an encounter. He added, however, that if he was given the word of an Englishman that he would not be harmed, he would come. The official, somewhat rashly, gave his word.

The meeting was held in a large guest-hall, or mudhif, and when all were assembled together the Britisher said to the fearful sheikh, " Which is the man of whom you are afraid ? " The sheikh pointed out one of those present, and the Britisher then said in a loud voice, " If anyone dares to touch any sheikh who has been my guest here to-day, it will be the worse for him." All listened ; nevertheless, the sheikh was waylaid as he left the place of meeting and was killed.

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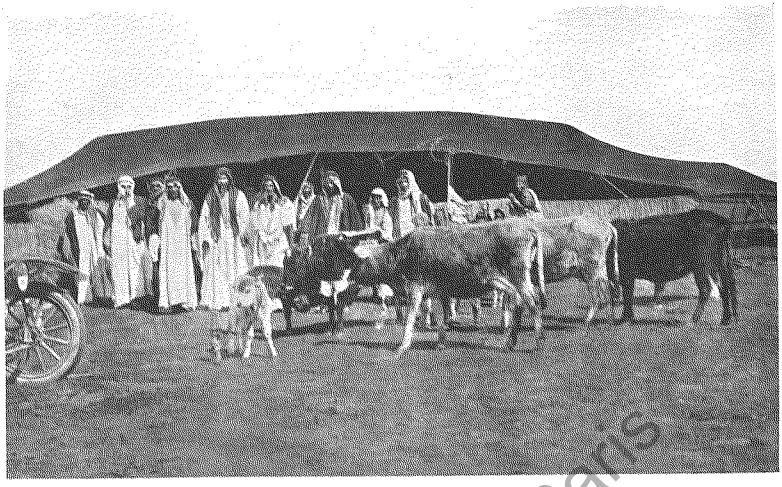

TRIBESMEN AND THEIR "HOUSE OF HAIR."

Bibliothèque de Paris



Photo by Victor.]

VIEW OF CROWD, SHOWING BLINKER WORN BY JEWISH WOMEN.

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A Desert Sheikh.

(*See page* 273.)

British honour demanded that the murderer should be punished. The murderer refused to come in or answer for those of his tribe who had set upon the dead man, and the Political Officer was puzzled as to what he should do. He applied to Baghdad, but the hands of the Government were full, and a tribal feud was a small thing to them. He was forced to take the law into his own hands and to do an unconstitutional thing, and luck was on his side.

A gunboat, manned by a few Britishers, was passing up the river. He explained the trouble, and asked their help. That evening he sent letters to all sheikhs of the district except the murderer, to meet him further up-stream on the river-bank. The next morning, at the appointed time, he arrived on the gunboat at the spot where the sheikhs, to the number of about twenty-five, were assembled. The guns of the boat were turned on them and they were surrounded. Then the officer said to them, "No harm is intended to you; but you are called together so that you and your tribesmen may know the power of the British Government. I go to punish Sheikh ——." He called a friendly sheikh, and leaving the others waiting, went inland with him until they reached the rebel sheikh's village. It was a reed village, and when they set fire to it with their own hands, it blazed to heaven. The peccant sheikh's *qasr* shared a similar fate, while the men stood sullenly by and the women screamed. None dared to attack the two men because of the sheikhs assembled on the river-bank under the guns of the British.

Some time after this, riding in the desert alone, the Political Officer met the sheikh whom he had punished. The sheikh rode up to him, and, uncovering his face, said, "Do you know me?" "I do." "Is there still a price on my head?" "Yes, there is." "You and I are alone, what prevents me from killing you." "You would be a fool to do so. I should be replaced by another officer, and you would be punished." The sheikh smiled. "Will you get the price taken off my head?" "I will try to do so if you agree to pay blood-money to the relatives of the murdered man." The two

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parted, and, later on, heavy blood-money, fixed by the Government, was paid over to the relatives of the dead man, and the price was taken off the sheikh's head.

The friendly sheikh who had accompanied the Englishman on his mission of vengeance, once protected him at risk of his own life. Some tribesmen of his own fired from the bank, when both were passing in a motor-launch. The sheikh stood up and covered the Englishman with his own body, and, seeing their sheikh, the attacking party desisted, but not until the sheikh had been wounded by a stray shot. He made the Englishman promise to hoist a black flag, which amongst the tribes is a sign that a man is at feud with those who have injured him, and, some four or five days later, the sheikh appeared with Rs. 600 compensation, and two young girls of the tribe, one sixteen, another thirteen years of age. The Englishman explained that he had no need of wives just then, that he "accepted them, but let them return with you."

When blood-money is paid over to the family of a murdered man, a girl relative of the murderer is in most cases handed over to the brother or son of the murdered person. At first sight this custom seems horrible, and one naturally expects the womenkind of the murdered man to make the poor girl's life a hell on earth. Perhaps they do, at first, but the underlying idea is not without beauty. The hope is that the girl sent with the compensation money will bear a child to her new lord, and that the young life to come may knit together the enemy households by bonds of common love, so that the rancour of the feud may be forgotten. The rôle of the girl is that of peacemaker.

There are conventions in the desert as to the way feuds and wars should be conducted. It is not considered good form, for instance, to attack a tribe without warning. An offended tribe informs the tribe against which it intends to war, either by letter or verbal message, that "niga" (or warning of a state of hostility) has been sent them. "Hidra" means the formal cessation of war between two desert tribes, and "alleg" means truce.

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A desert maiden hardly ever loses her chastity, and if she does, as I have said, the penalty is death, except in the rare case when her seducer marries her and pays a sum of money to her relatives. Still rarer an occurrence, a man has been known to come forward and take the place of the seducer, marrying the girl and protecting her against the vengeance of her relatives. Married women, on the other hand, often indulge in clandestine intrigue,though for them, too,the penalty is death if they are discovered.

" You may be sure," said a man with wide experience of the tribes, " that when there is trouble in a tribe, the cause in nine cases out of ten is a woman." The " sahat harma," or woman's cry for help, is a frequent cause of feud and murder. It is the women who egg on their men in a fight, and taunt them with cowardice if they hang back in a quarrel. A woman likes her man to have acquitted himself well in fight and raid, and a man with a conscientious objection to shedding blood would find no favour among desert girls.

Their influence is sometimes turned to peace. If a man has sought refuge among the women of the tribe, even when their own men are pursuing, they will often protect him fiercely. During the rising of 1920 a British Tommy, chased by some rebel Arabs, stumbled bleeding and dazed into the tent of some poor Bedouin women. They spread their soiled skirts about him, and the tribesmen who showed their faces at their door were met with a storm of vituperation. Later on they smuggled him out into safety.

Tribeswomen on the whole are active, independent, and, when young, comely, though they spoil their appearance by their custom of tattooing face, limbs, and body with indigo. Each tribe has its special tattoo mark, just as each tribe has its own " wasm," or mark, wherewith it brands its cattle and marks its wells. An interesting collection might be made of these " wasms " if one had the opportunity ; and many a knotty point of dispute as to watering-places and so on has been settled by the conclusive evidence of a " wasm."

Marriage is, of course, the main event of a desert woman's

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life, and she marries very young. A dowry, previously fixed by agreement, is paid by the prospective bridegroom to the girl's father about a fortnight or month before the marriage. This dowry is usually about six hundred rupees, but for a sheikh's daughter the amount of dowry varies according to the position of her father. It is rarely, however, more than about three thousand rupees. Among most tribes the sum is almost always handed over to the prospective bride, together with a sum of money provided by the father himself.

The girl, with the help of her mother and female relatives, then makes an expedition to some town or place where she can buy jewellery, which is a form of investment and safe keeping at the same time, for jewellery remains on her person and can always be reconverted into money in time of need. Her " trousseau " consists of household effects as well as of clothes. Cooking utensils, pillows, cushions, blankets, bridal bed, curtains, and household gear are brought to her future home borne on the heads of women, who utter joy-cries as they walk along. The bride never brings with her a horse or mare.

A special bridal tent, known as the " haufa," is prepared for the first week of married life. It consists of a tent, spread with carpets and cushions, and surrounded by " kannat," or side curtains. This tent is prepared by the bridegroom, and when the bride is brought it is to the haufa that she is led, where the bridegroom comes to her. In the haufa she remains for seven days, not being permitted to show herself outside at all, although the bridegroom may come and go as he pleases and may receive the congratulatory visits of his friends in the mudhif, or guest-tent. On the eighth day the woman comes out of the haufa, goes to her new home, and takes charge of the household duties—wood-gathering, grinding grain, making bread, cooking, spinning, and so forth.

A big marriage-feast is given at the wedding by the bridegroom's people, and when the food has been eaten, a tray is placed in the centre of the tent and presents of money, trinkets, or other gifts are thrown into the tray. As each present is thrown in, the bridegroom's friend shouts out, " Shabash

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Mahommed ! " or " Shabash Zaid," according to the name of the donor.

I have made mention above of the protection extended to women fugitives who claim their protection. They are, in reality, obeying one of the most ancient and honourable of desert laws, that of " dakhala," or " refuge." A murderer, appealing for " dakhala " in the house or tent of the brother of the man he has just murdered, is quite safe. The commonest form of this law of sanctuary is when a man, chased because of some crime he has committed, rushes into a house and begs " dakhala." Not only is the master of the house bound in honour to protect the criminal, but he must feed, clothe him, and see him safely to the house, village, or tribe where the suppliant thinks he is safe, after which the responsibility of the householder ceases. So strict is this desert law that with the stick of its sheikh in his hand, a man may pass through a hostile tribe in safety, even though there may be persons with whom he is at deadly feud amongst them.

Allied to the law of " dakhala " is that of " safe-conduct " (*tisyar* and *wejh*). " Bi wejh fulan " means under the " countenance " or safe-conduct of So-and-So, and for a man to betray the trust of safe-conduct is a serious crime. A man who has broken his faith as protector or guide brings disgrace on his tribe, and heavy " hashm " or " honour money " must be paid to the offended parties.

Feuds are often pursued with blind fury and brutality, in which the innocent suffer for the guilty. Here, for instance, is a tale of the marshes. The Political Officer was seated in his office one day when he was told that two women wished to see him. He sent for them, and both uncovered. One was a woman of about thirty-five years of age, and the other, a tall girl, might have been fifteen or sixteen. She told him her tale. Her tribe was at feud with another, and men of the enemy tribe had captured her son, a lad of eighteen, and carried him off. The desert is a vast whispering-gallery, and the news soon reached her that he was being most cruelly used by his captors. " By day he tends the oxen, but at

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night they bury him up to his neck in sand. They starve him and ill-treat him, and they mean to torture him before they kill him."

The Political Officer asked questions and gathered the necessary information. The tribe, he knew, was a bad tribe, one in general disfavour. The woman fell to begging him for his help. "If you will help us, this, my daughter, is yours."

That night, forty shabanas, or native soldiers, all stout fellows, were collected, and the nature of their errand explained to them. They received the news with enthusiasm, a scrap was just what they were spoiling for. They crowded into the Government launch, and off they went thirteen miles up-stream to the nearest point for reaching the village of the tribe. The shabanas knew the village, and told the Political Officer that he was better where he was, in the launch, as they could move noiselessly, and would try to find the boy and release him by stealth before attempting force. "If we are not back by midnight," they said, "go back without us and bring help."

They scrambled ashore, through the high reeds, and the Political Officer waited and listened. His men had disappeared utterly, and there was no sound in the darkness but the croaking of the frogs, the hum of night insects, and the stir of the wind amongst the reeds. Not a voice was raised, not a shot fired. Midnight came and passed, but as he had heard no sounds of *mêlée*, he decided that he must still wait.

Suddenly a gun split the silence of the night. It was followed by more shooting, screaming, and hullaballoo. Out of the reeds came stumbling and crashing a shabana. "Make haste, sahib, we are all here," he whispered, "but the village is alarmed, and we must get off at once."

The others then appeared, amongst them, naked and shockingly emaciated, was the half-fainting prisoner whose rescue they had effected. Last of all, with a knife pricking at his neck to enforce silence, walked Sheikh Hajji Mirri of the offending tribe. They pushed off and made down-stream, and before daylight the poor tortured boy was restored to his

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mother. His eyes had been put out, and only ten days after his release he died.

The night after her boy had been brought home the grateful mother came after nightfall to the house of the Englishman and knocked at his door. He opened, and inquired what was wanted.

"But your honour," she faltered, "our promise. You did what I asked—and here is my daughter!"

He had forgotten! "It is not our custom," he said. "Let your daughter return with you to your house, and may Allah go with you!"

The murder of a man is a far more serious thing among the tribes than the murder of a woman. A woman's honour is valued because she is the property of her family, and represents the family honour, but her word does not count for much, and her interests are only valuable where they are the interests of her family. The testimony of one woman is regarded as worthless in a court of law, although the evidence of two or more women is regarded as equal to that of one man

A case was recently tried in which a woman, who had married outside her tribe, was murdered by her cousins as she was drawing water from a well with two female neighbours. A majority of the court considered that the evidence of the two women who were with her was not adequate, as the law required two men witnesses, or one man and two women. In this there was no question of settlement by tribal custom, and the case was heard in the ordinary criminal courts. Happily, such narrow views of law are rare among the native judges, but the story serves to indicate one of the many curious difficulties the Quranic law of evidence places in the way of the administration of justice.

A story is told by the Arabs which, although it should have no place in this chapter, is a good illustration of circumstantial evidence, which is much distrusted, and presumptions which may not be rebutted.

Three doctors of the law were going into a room where a meal was prepared for them, and as they entered a dog rushed

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out, his mouth white with leban, or sour milk. When they sat down to eat they noticed that the leban had evidently been eaten and scattered.

"I am not going to eat that leban," said Number One, "for that dog has eaten and defiled it."

"How do you know that the dog ate and defiled it?" asked Number Two. "We did not ourselves witness it, and so can we know? Not being proved guilty, according to law the dog is innocent, and the leban has not been defiled."

"But it is plain that the dog ate it," said Number Three, "for did we not see the dog rushing out with leban on his jaws?"

But Number Two was obstinate and ate the leban, while the other two refrained.

Number Three left his companions and went outside. The street was deserted but for two men, who were fighting. Even as he went to interfere, one man stabbed the other, who fell to the ground, while the assassin, throwing away his dagger, made off with the utmost speed. The alim bent over the dying man, whose blood spurted over him, and picked up the dagger.

At that moment up rushed some men and seized him. "How is this, villain? Why have you killed this man?"

"I did not kill him," and he tried to explain.

"A likely story!" said they. "Here are you with the bloody dagger in your hand and your victim breathing his last at your feet, and you deny the crime!"

At that moment out of the house walked Number Two.

Number Three turned to him. "You were right," he said. "The dog did not eat the laban."

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE WOMEN OF 'IRAQ

THE women of 'Iraq! What a procession of mental images crosses the stage of memory at the words! The high-bred Moslem, gracious and slender, draped in funereal black, her face veiled from the stranger; the Christian woman flamboyant in her silken izar of tulip hue; the Jewess, equally gay in hers, but masked by a stiff black blinker, edged with silver; the humbler Israelitish woman in black, threaded with tinsel; the tribeswoman, healthy and unveiled, her smiling, comely face rosy as a pomegranate, tattooed with the mark of her tribe on brow, cheeks, and chin; Chaldæan women with their wool-embroidered mantles and turbaned heads; Tel Keyfi damsels with the wonderful headdress of gold and beads which gives them a strangely hieratic look; Yazidi women, attired in scarlet and silver, wrought stomachers girt about their waists; Armenians, looking like Sicilian peasants with their kerchiefed heads and sturdy shoes; the wistful-looking Subbi women, with their air of living half in another and more beautiful world; and many more.

One remembers the interior of Chaldæan churches at festival time, where, in the dimness shot by the flickering lights of tapers, the women congregate together in the part reserved for them, turning the dingy twilight into shimmering colour where they bend their wimpled heads in devout rows. Their enveloping mantles conceal all but their faces, and gleam silver, blue, rose, pink, jade, scarlet, white, and wine-colour, rustling like a field of barley when their wearers kneel or rise. The rich silk izar of the Christian or Jewess and the aba of the

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Moslem is the outdoor garment worn over the house-dress. A magnificent izar or aba is in the wedding trousseau of every Iraq bride.

On a single izar a woman in Baghdad will spend more than a careful middle-class Englishwoman would spend on half a year's dress, but then the izar is eternally in fashion, and the silk so good that it will wear a lifetime. It is thick and hand-woven, interthreaded with designs in gold and silver, and costs from £10 to £15 for a plain specimen, and twice or thrice that amount for the more sumptuous. With all this, it is an unpractical and clumsy garment, a combination of hood and skirt, with no armholes or sleeves; held together by tapes and safety-pins. The hood is perpetually slipping off the head, and hitching it up again becomes a mechanical movement with its wearers. There is no doubt of its pictorial effect out of doors, and Maude Bridge in Baghdad and Ashar Creek in Basra become kaleidoscopes of colour on Saturday evenings in spring, when every Jewess is out in her best izar.

The aba, the graceful, straight-falling wimple of the Moslem, which envelops her from head to foot, can be as gorgeous as the izar, though a Moslem woman of better class does not wear bright colours in the street, and reserves her rainbow raiment for occasions like a wedding. Young girls of the people, however, love their orange, puce, and green.

In Basrah I lived next to a girls' school, and the abas worn by the little schoolgirls as they came over the bridge beneath my window were brilliant as a flower-garden. They walked demurely past, under the care of a servant, throwing an upward glance as they passed for the sweets which they knew I sometimes dropped into the silken folds of their little mantles as they went by. As soon as they had arrived at young womanhood, they were clad in the unrelieved black which is the uniform of the better-class Moslem out of doors, and their bright faces were hidden by the concealing veil.

The European soon learns to detect the religious and social status of the men and women he meets by the dress they wear. The divisions between race and faith are sharp.

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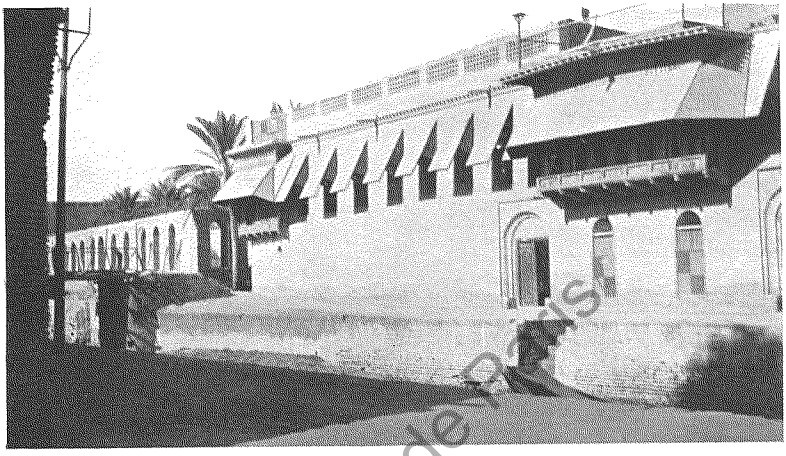
WOMEN OF THE PEOPLE FETCHING WATER.



POUNDING CORN BY MEANS OF A HEAVY STONE, THE CORN BEING IN A HOLE IN THE GROUND.

p. 288.



Our House in Basrah.



Creek: Basrah.

The people of one creed rarely mix with those of another except on terms of distant acquaintanceship, nor would a man or woman of any one class or faith dream of seeking to appear other than he or she is. One speedily grows accustomed to this, and says, naturally enough, "There were some Christian women there . . ."; "I asked a Jew . . ."; "a Chaldæan told me . . ." and so on. In no case would it have been necessary to ask religion or race; the appearance and dress is enough.

A Moslem gentlewoman of the best class prefers to dress unostentatiously. Within doors, if she is conservative and has not adopted clothes in the French style, made by the sisters of the Convent or bought within the dazzling doors of the Établissements Orosdi-Back, she prefers the dress of her own country. Her hair is plaited in two long braids which fall on either side of her face. A black silk kerchief, the *boyama*, neatly conceals her head, its two ends hanging over her ears. This is kept in place by a second black silk kerchief, folded bandage-wise round her brows and secured at the back of the head by a pin. A long-sleeved garment, opening in front and fastened together with a brooch or pin, usually of white silk, covers her undergarment. This is called a zibuna, and is sometimes embroidered with heavy gold thread. Slipped over the zibuna is a graceful robe called a hashimi, a wide, transparent garment with wide sleeves, drawn over the head, and usually made of a striped, gossamer-like black silk net.

Cosmetics are freely used, though not universally. Kohol, the black powder chiefly made of antimony, put into the eyes, is supposed to strengthen them as well as give them a becoming black rim; similarly an infusion of henna-leaves, rubbed into the hair at the hammam by the woman attendant, is supposed, by its astringent properties, to prevent the hair from falling, and the majority of 'Iraqi women have quantities of hair.

When she goes out, the Moslem lady dons two abas. Into one she thrusts her arms, and the other she puts, hood-like, on her head. Her face is entirely covered with an impenetrable black veil. She does not wear much jewellery: anklets and

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chains are left to those of a lower social status. Young Moslem women of the lower classes, particularly Shiahs, are not so severe in their taste, and one can see heavy gold or silver anklets showing through their stockings above their heelless shoes. A favourite colour for the silk under-dress of a Moslem woman of the middle-class is turquoise blue, which shows brightly beneath the black aba.

The countrywomen and tribeswomen of the poorer sort do not veil, and the ornaments they love are the *khezama*, or nose-ring, and the *warda*, a rosette of pearl and gold and turquoise studded into the nostril. They wear silver chains, anklets, beads, amulets, and bracelets, and, in spite of their tattooing, they look comely and graceful, for they are usually of small build, with neat, slender ankles.

Just after daybreak I used to see a string of these hard-working little women stepping it featly across Maude Bridge, some six or eight heavy "boxes" of laban, or sour milk, poised on their heads. Some of them had come many miles across the desert, and had children slung on their backs; but they walked like princesses and were always good-tempered and smiling, with a jesting word for acquaintances they met on the way. Arrived in the town, they squatted down in the roadside beside their round boxes, and sold laban to such as wished to buy from them, chattering good-humouredly to each other, and suckling their babies from time to time. To protect their feet during the long march they wear swathings of rag, and their heads are bound round many times with kerchiefs to shield them from the sun.

One never sees a fat or unwieldy desert woman; their lives are too full of hardship and work to allow them to accumulate superfluous flesh. Theirs is a freedom which the pampered wife of a rich man in a big town can scarcely imagine, but they pay their toll for it in scant fare and unfailing industry. I heard gossip one day of a wealthy man in Hillah who married a tribeswoman of the Shammar. She used to spend her time gasping for fresh air on the roof, and he finally divorced her and got a wife who appreciated the sheltered life.

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The life of the women of the tribes is as widely separated from the life of the townswomen as the East is from the West, though the wives of a big sheikh may have to endure a town-in-country seclusion, with rigorous veiling and all the other marks of high appreciation which a townsman bestows on his wife. Some of the big tribal sheikhs have a large number of women. I was told of a certain sheikh of the Muntafik who had some hundreds of wives, or, rather, wives and concubines. These lived in a compound under the charge of an old woman, each having a room to herself. It is a law of the Mahommedan religion that a man shall treat the women of his household with impartiality, and so it was left to the old woman to decide whose turn it was to have the honour of a visit, and every night a red flag was placed before the door of the woman with whom the sheikh was to pass the night. A Moslem may only have four legal wives, but he can manage to get through a good deal of matrimony by divorcing them often. The men of the tribes have usually only one wife, especially Sunni tribes. The Shiahs are more inclined to polygamy, and use the facilities for divorce with great freedom.

M. Habib Chiha, who wrote an interesting book dealing at great length with the habits of the nomads of the Baghdad Province, says that the Bedouins always quote the example of one Sheikh Feisal ibn Khalifa, of the tribe of Al Bu Mahommed, who had nine hundred and eighty wives. His son, who succeeded, only reached the number of ninety-two. He often expressed the wish to reach the number of a hundred, but his mullah persuaded him that the number would be fatally unlucky. The better-class Moslem of the town, following the more civilised usage of Constantinople, rarely takes more than one wife at a time, and divorce is not looked upon with favour unless for a very good reason.

I am fortunate in counting many Moslem ladies among my friends, and for intelligence, courtesy, and the graces of conversation they compare favourably with the women of any country. Those who have been in Stamboul, and belong to the educated classes, are practically Europeans, except that

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in bigoted Baghdad they observe local custom, always veiling in public, receiving no men, and attending no public entertainment. Sometimes a Europeanised husband will take his wife and womenkind, strictly veiled, to the cinema, where, in the seclusion of a box, they can watch the antics of Charlie Chaplin or follow hairbreadth escapes unobserved. But custom is very varied. The wives of two high officials in Baghdad, although they are Moslems, and use the veil in the street, are taken by their husbands to dine in European houses, where they wear evening dress, and converse with guests invited to meet them.

The very charming mother and sister of another Moslem friend, himself the most Europeanised of men, are conservative, and live in the strictest seclusion. Local custom forbids a woman to leave her house while she is in mourning, and in the case of these two ladies, mourning for a beloved brother has been observed for two years, during which time they have never been outside their own door. They would resent the imputation that this immurement was not voluntary. A certain Moslem, of high position in Baghdad, does not permit his womenkind to go out at all, just because they are his women, and they themselves look upon this as a condition of their high estate.

It is entirely a mistake to think that the Moslem women of 'Iraq are pining for freedom. They sometimes grumble a little at the necessity for veiling, especially in hot weather, but they know that seclusion is a mark of respect on the part of their menkind. The stricter amongst them look upon the innovations made by some of the women with disfavour, as being ill-bred and conspicuous. But the influences which brought about the changed conditions o! women in Constantinople are already at work, and there is a leaven of discontent at work among the younger generation. The daughter of a wealthy Shiah remarked to a friend who, being a Turk, was accustomed to liberty, " I wish I were not ——'s daughter ! I would rather be the daughter of a *bellumchi* " (boatman), " and be free ! " Her mother refused to allow

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her to go to a cinema when invited there by a friend. The friend remonstrated and asked what the harm could be, if all went closely veiled. "Well, when I am dead, my daughters can do as they like, but while I am alive I cannot countenance such things."

One thing is certain, that if freedom is desirable and worth a struggle, the women of 'Iraq will have to fight their own battle for it. There is not a man in 'Iraq, however "advanced," who is feminist enough to wish to make his womenkind conspicuous and call down on their heads the censure of the religious and the ultra-conservative. The women of Constantinople brought about their own revolution, aided by the war, and there not only is the veil put aside, but women fill posts reserved formerly to men, such as tram-drivers, sweepers, clerks, and so on.

Taken on the whole, seclusion narrows down the horizon for a woman and makes her small-minded. A Turkish lady once complained of her Baghdad neighbours to me. "They have no conversation but the kitchen and gossip," said she, "and nothing better to discuss than the length of such and such a young man's eyelashes!" Similarly one of the Ministers pathetically declared that his women were entirely useless and feckless. "They do not keep their houses looking nice, as you Englishwomen. In our house I can get nothing done. If I want a window cleaned I must do it myself."

Education will improve all this, and education for women in 'Iraq is practically nil. In Constantinople there is the splendid school for girls established by the Americans in Scutari, which has done so much to widen the prospects of Turkish women. In Baghdad there is nothing for the better-class girl. She can go, it is true, to the nuns of the French convent, dear kindly souls, who teach her French, English, a little piano, and the rudiments of learning, and, above all, how to sew embroidery and make lace; but, were it not for the good sisters, whose work cannot be too highly praised, they would be entirely dependent on private tuition, and that of a low standard. Higher education there is none, and

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elementary education is often lacking, too. There are women of wealth and position who cannot read or write, though this illiteracy is rare and cause for comment.

Shiah women are more conservative, ignorant, and superstitious than their Sunni neighbours. They do nothing important without consulting the omens. I asked a Shiah girl to have tea with me one day and sent the invitation through a Moslem lady of my acquaintance. The girl was anxious to come, as she had never visited a European house, but the mother was inclined to think that the visit would be a pollution. Her visitor pleaded, her daughter begged, and she consented to try her rosary, which she picked up at random, separating off some beads and telling them off by twos. The count ended with a single bead, and this was a bad omen; but the daughter had told hers, and the beads told out evenly. At this point a cup fell and broke, and that, said the mother, proved conclusively that it was wrong to go. This mother, a pious Shiah, is a lovable person, and against her own convictions sometimes entertains Sunnis and Europeans, but says, with a sigh, that she is a bad Shiah.

The broken cup, by the way, would have counted against the visit in any case, for it is extremely unlucky if a breakable object falls to ground without breaking, and it is better to break it at once. The lady I am describing was once entertaining friends, and her little boy was playing with a glass ball on the table. He dropped it, and his mother saw, horrified, that it had not broken. She picked it up with the intention of dashing it to pieces, but was restrained by her friends. "It would be a pity to break the ball; it is so pretty." She replaced the ball on the table, and declares that from that instant her little boy turned pale, and fell down with all the symptoms of high fever. There was nothing to do but to smash the ball at once, and she did it, whereupon the little boy recovered and began to play again.

A Shiah baby is surrounded by his anxious mother with protections against evil from the moment he is born. A sword or knife is laid beside him as soon as he is in the world,

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so as to keep off jinns, who detest anything sharp, and charms and verses of the Quran are tied round his little neck. The first day of his life he is taken to all the painters of the quarter, and each painter dabs his face with paint, dabs also being placed on a handkerchief brought round for the purpose. Except for this ceremony, which is not universal, a newly-born baby may not go out of the house for forty days, neither may it have its head washed for the same period. At the end of forty days it is taken to the hammam for a bath, and then, swaddled and be-charmed, is allowed to make its acquaintance with the Shiah world outside.

The mothers say that a worm must emerge from the "soft spot" on the baby's skull before the fontanel can close properly, but I do not know whether she watches for it. Many a baby suffers from sores because a clean, attractive appearance draws the evil eye. The hole for a nose-ring pierced in the nostril of a girl baby, kept open with a piece of string threaded into the wound, is also a source of trouble, and often results in a sore which spreads over the whole face. Baghdad boils very commonly attack babies of a tender age, and when the sores have reached the running stage, the women dab them with a preparation of bitumen, which in itself is not a bad thing, but the stickiness attracts and accumulates filth, and the flies which settle on the child do not improve matters. Mothers suckle their babies as long as they can, often continuing until after the children walk.

Should a child fall and cut himself, a good remedy is to plaster dust or mud on the wound, taken from the ground where he has fallen. Furthermore, the malign spirits who have caused him to trip must be propitiated by the burning of candles at the spot. There is much trachoma, and a mother so afflicted, careless in her ignorance, necessarily infects her children. Too frequently she accepts the sore eyes and blindness as coming from Allah, and does nothing; but if she goes to one of the quacks in the bazaar, who supply a red antiseptic ointment, little care is taken by either "doctor" or patient about the cleanliness of the rag with which it is

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applied, and the same rag may be used for several sufferers. Christian, Jew, and Moslem are all alike in this terrible disregard for the most elementary precautions.

Just outside Mosul a monastery of St. George is celebrated on account of its sanctity. Within the church a number of unsavoury-looking kerchiefs adorned with red crosses hang on the wall. These, the visitor is told, have healing properties for eye diseases, since St. George is a saint who occupies himself particularly with this branch of miracle. Hence person after person wipes his or her diseased eyes on these kerchiefs in the hope of a cure—old women with cataract, children with weak sight, and those suffering from infectious and deadly eye disease.

One or two woman health visitors have now been appointed in Baghdad, and these visit mothers and try to advise and help them, but they tell me the very elements of common-sense are lacking in the women, and it is difficult to make them realise the value of such accessible aids to good health as river-water and sunshine. Nevertheless, they appreciate keenly any interest taken in them, and a friend of mine, who, moved by the number of sore-eyed babies she met in the street, receives daily a number of women and children in her house and attends to their sores and bad eyes, is met with touching gratitude. Some of her poorest patients contrive to collect a few eggs or vegetables to offer her, and are inclined to feel hurt if she does not accept them.

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With all this, however, the standard of cleanliness, actual cleanliness of body, is far higher among the Moslem women of low class than among women of the same class at home. When it is remembered that in many cases all water must be fetched from the river in pitchers and carried home, in it may be, the deep mud of winter rains or the flaming heat of high summer, one wonders that they maintain the standard of cleanliness which their religion enjoins, in the observance of which the majority are scrupulous.

Marriage is the great event of a Moslem girl's life, and wifehood and motherhood her only career. She awaits with

a mixture of curiosity, patience, and resignation the day when one of her mother's friends will pay a discreet visit in her son's interest and broach the question of an alliance between the families, nor is the day long delayed, as girls marry early in 'Iraq. She may have known the young man in days of childhood, particularly if he is her cousin, as often happens, or he may be a total stranger, whose face she will see for the first time on her wedding-day. But though it is a girl's duty to accept her parents' decision in these matters, it is becoming increasingly common for the elders to allow the young people to peep at each other from a window or from behind a curtain, and if the girl took a violent dislike to her proposed husband, I think few parents would be hard-hearted enough to insist on the match. I know one desirable, but not over-young, *parti* who was refused by the Moslem girl whose family he had approached, and she has since become engaged to another and younger man.

Woman is by nature a gambler, and this lottery of marriage, into which the Mahommedan girl goes blindfold and unresisting, is certainly one in which Fortune holds all the stakes. Marriage, however, is merely a means to an end—the bearing of children. Half the charms and sorcery employed by dealers in magic are intended for the use of the childless. The childless woman looks upon herself as without the favour of Allah—a useless creature, a blind alley. She leaves no charm unsaid, no shrine unvisited, no prayer omitted, that may change her evil fate. The charms used at marriage, the wheat, the green leaves, and so forth, are symbols of fruitfulness and while there are thousands of charms to secure the bearing of children, there is not one against it, for no woman in 'Iraq, Moslem, Jewess, or native Christian, thinks she has, or can have, too many children.

The Moslem bride is provided by her parents with a dowry. This dowry is fixed when the marriage is officially arranged, for a formal demand for the girl's hand is made when the harīm diplomacy is successfully completed, and an imam recites prayers on the occasion of the engagement. Christians

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and Jews also have formal engagements, at which priests and rabbis are present.

The engagement may be long or short, but during the term of betrothal it is not etiquette for the bride-to-be to visit her future mother-in-law's house. Presents are exchanged, and a short time before the actual marriage, the young man sends gifts to the various ladies in the house of his future parents-in-law. In the old days, and still with some of the poorer people, the bringing of the gifts was accompanied by a band of music.

The marriage contract is then solemnly signed by the parents or guardians of the contracting parties, prayers are said, and then the legal part of the ceremony is at an end. There is a growing tendency among Moslems of the better classes to confine the merrymakings to a small gathering of relations, but, as a rule, there is feasting and assemblies of women in the harīm and men in the men's rooms. The wedding is not yet over. The bride must send her furniture, trousseau, and house-linen to the bridegroom's house. In lower circles this is a ceremony in itself. I have often seen these processions, which mostly take place at night, and are accompanied by music and women uttering shrill joy-cries. Trays, upon which lighted candles and greenery are placed, are carried, as well as oil-lamps. The furniture, cooking-pots, water-pitcher, wardrobe, bed, cushions, pillows, curtains, and all the other gear is carried along, usually on the heads of the women, and made gay with much tinsel and gaudy-coloured ribbon.

When the women have arrived at the rooms in the harīm, they arrange the furniture to their liking, spending most time on the marriage-bed, which is a gorgeous and conspicuous object with its gold and silver embroideries, gauze curtains, and silken coverlets. The pillows in a well-to-do house are of thick satin, embroidered with gold and silver. The next event is the arrival of the bride, and her reception by the women of her husband's family. Before the young husband is allowed to see his wife, he goes in procession to the mosque

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with his friends. On his return, before he enters the bridal chamber, in which he is to see his wife face to face, he must step over a naked sword, which is placed across the threshold. Within the room his bride awaits him, but not alone, for an older woman of the family is there—often his mother—who introduces the one to the other, and wishes them happiness and then leaves them together.

"*Enfin seuls!*" as the French novel has it; but the bridegroom's duty is to go back to the room where he has left his friends, who embrace him and give him their good wishes before they take their leave.

The Christian marriage is a more social affair, though, throughout, men and women keep severely apart, usually remaining in separate rooms. A great deal of whisky and araq is drunk, and at the first Christian wedding which I attended in 'Iraq I felt seriously concerned when I noticed the stiffness of the "pegs" which were being poured out so freely among the wedding guests. But the proceedings were very decorous. The women sat round in their best dress in stiff rows on benches along the walls of one room, and the men in stiff rows in a room adjoining. Music was discoursed, both Arab and Turkish, and mangled European.

That reminds me of what happened at Basrah when a French friend, accompanied by the French consul, went to a wedding. Whisky and other drinks were flowing freely, and the usual decorum was observed, when the bridegroom's father approached my French friend. As a compliment to the distinguished guests present, he announced the French National Anthem would now be played. The band made preliminary noises, and at the first notes everyone rose and stood in respectful attention. The French guests rose, too, but found it very difficult to control their gravity. The tune played with such solemnity was a ditty from "La Fille de Madame Angot," always a great favourite with Turkish bands. Needless to say, they did not disillusionise their polite hosts.

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BEDOUIN LULLABY

Hush thee my sonlet, hush-a-bye.
The tent is dark and warm.
Thy tired father sleeps, and I
Still hold thee in my arm.
Before the day dawns on the plain,
While yet the night blows chill,
We must strike tent and ride again
O'er desert, dune, and hill.
When thou art big, my son, wilt hold
A rifle, like thy dad's,
Wilt own a mare, thyself most bold
In raid of all the lads.
A beard wilt grow, a wife wilt take,
And I, grown fond and old
Will nurse thy children, for thy sake
Twice-loved. . . . The night grows cold.
Then hush, my eyes! Sweetheart, don't cry!
Cease whimpering, my life. . . .
Thou little Shaitan, sleep! or I
Will slit thee with this knife!
A Jinni sure is in the child:
He'll rouse the camp! *Uskut!*

. . . . . .

His cries are ceasing—Allah praise!
The darling's eyes are shut.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE HUMBLER PEOPLE OF 'IRAQ

It is spring, and the hoarse cooing of the doves and pigeons is heard in every garden and from every mosque courtyard. The children, droning the Quran in the first spring warmth while their schoolmaster nods, watch the pigeons outside bowing and cooing in the bright sunshine, or clustering for shelter on the shady side of the great blue dome of the mosque. They know that the pigeon is making his prostration towards Mekka and uttering the holy name, for the pigeon is a hajji, like the stork, Hajji Lak-lak, who returns year after year to his nest on roof-top or turret in Baghdad and other big towns. As for the doves, who make vehement protest to each other all through the spring, any Baghdad child will tell you what he is saying :

Cucu, ukhti !	Coo-coo, Sister,
Wein ukhti ?	Where is my sister ?
Bil Hillah !	In Hillah.
Wesh takil ?	And what eats she there ?
Barjilla.	Beans, my brother.
Wesh tishrab ?	And what drinks she there ?
Moy Allah.	Allah's waters.
Wein tanam ?	And where sleeps she ?
Bab Allah.	At the gate of Allah.

The wild pigeons who love to nestle on the domes and minarets of the mosques are called " taier etwarni," and there is a pretty legend about them. When Hoseyn was killed at Karbala, the pigeons, in pity, flew down to mourn. Their feet were imbrued in his blood, and ever since then their feet are blood-red and featherless. The doves, too, wear mourning

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for Hoseyn since that day, each one bearing a black ring round her neck.

It is the pigeons who have aided the decay of the oldest minaret in Baghdad, in the Souk el Ghazl. Tradition relates that the Caliph Mutassem, who is said to have built the mosque of which this minaret is the only remaining part, was at his devotions one day when he noticed his attendants chasing away a poor dervish who had come to say his prayers. He ordered his servants to desist, scolded them for over-zeal, and presented the humble holy man with a purse of money. The beggar gave the Caliph a cageful of pet pigeons, his only possession, in gratitude. The Caliph released them, and they flew off to the minaret, where they and their descendants have lodged ever since. In the old days, before the coming of the telegraph, carrier pigeons were employed to announce the setting out of caravans from Baghdad to their destination, or from Damascus to Baghdad.

The stork and the swallow return with the spring, and are loved by the 'Iraqis as birds of good omen. They build year after year in their old nests, and when one hears, "The Bab Mu'adham stork is back again," one knows that the fine weather has come to stay, for the storks have built near the Bab Mu'adham for many years, and are very weather-wise.[1] If a stork is interfered with, he flies away, and this is unlucky.

I once saw during a journey by train to Samarra, that the storks had taken up their quarters on the telegraph poles, and were busily building their nests at the tops. A naturalist, hearing this, a little later chartered a special trolley-car to take a photograph of the nests, but he made his journey in vain, as zealous officials had cleared away all traces of the invasion.

The other town birds are the sparrow and the owl. The sparrow is every whit as troublesome and impertinent as his English brother, and a great pest in the gardens. A great concourse of sparrows, chattering and chirping about the

[1] Baghdad children are not told that storks bring babies. Little Children believe that the new baby arrived in a ship.

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house, means, so say the wise women, a journey for a member of the household. The owl is a bird of evil omen, and his name is a term of reproach and insult. If an owl flies over you while you sleep on the roof, do not fail to call out, " Melh wa sekkin ! " (Salt and knife !), for so you protect yourself against misfortune.

King Faisal told me that one night while asleep on his roof, he was wakened by the sound of someone snoring close to him in the dark. He summoned an attendant, but no intruder could be found. This happened for several successive nights, until one evening the king heard the snoring very close indeed, and discovered an owl, which had perched itself just beside his bed.[1]

The 'Iraqis are fond of the bul-bul, and in coffeehouse and mosque the bul-bul sits in his wicker cage, piping out his few melodious notes, liquid and clear. They like to give him a little wine, or a few pomegranate seeds, as he sings more garrulously when he is intoxicated. They interpret his song as a perpetual begging of roses :

Shedda warid	A bunch of roses
Abu el warid	Father of Roses (rose-seller)

is his plea, reiterated incessantly. He is a quarrelsome fellow, the bul-bul, with his sleek grey body and black cap, and the sparrows have great respect for him.

The handsomest field-bird in 'Iraq is the bee-eater, all green and blue as he flashes hither and thither in the sun, though the blue roller runs him close. The kingfisher belongs to the river and the creeks, and is quite common. There are three varieties of kingfisher in 'Iraq, including the beautiful black and white kingfisher. The blue kingfishers look gorgeous fellows as they move like flames through the groves at Basrah, or over the still, warm waters of the palm-fringed creeks.

[1] Young owls snore after dark to let their parents, questing after food, know where they are. The snoring is quite loud. The tale is told in Baghdad that a certain general and the American Consul, who live next door to each other, each accused the other of snoring. They eventually discovered the offender to be a young owl.

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The hoopoe, the bird of Solomon, with his fine crest, is, as I have said elsewhere, used as a charm against knife and bullet, and so is the desert lark. Both the crested and the uncrested lark are plentiful, and one often sees yellow wagtails, water-wagtails, thrushes, blackbirds, finches, and other varieties common in Europe.

The magpie is numerous at Hillah; one rarely sees the unlucky single magpie, or, if one does, the omen is quickly contradicted by the two for mirth or three for a wedding. The bittern, which the prophet said should haunt dead Babylon, does haunt the wilderness and waste places. Of eagles and hawks I know no popular legend, nor of the gulls that haunt the Tigris, floating down lazily on the swift bosom of the stream, to rise and flap their way up again until they reach their starting-point. The big black and white crow is a noisy haunter of roofs. The rooks of 'Iraq are wise, aloof people here, as they are elsewhere. Arabs prize their flesh for food, though rook-pies are unknown.

Of the birds which people kill for food I will not write, though the sand-grouse, black partridge, quail, snipe, and wild duck make succulent eating. Alas! when the Arab goes shooting, he does not always trouble to kill a wounded bird, but lets it live until it is needed for the pot. The wild goose, since the days of ancient Rome, has been an excellent sentinel, and here her reputation is unchanged. You never find her sleeping, because she holds a stone between her webbed feet, and were she to doze, the stone would fall and wake her.

The little people of the date-gardens and desert are many. One of the smallest and most charming is the mongoose, called by the Arabs date-tree rat, or, more prettily, Abu Eres, father-of-weddings. He is smaller than his Indian brother, but, like Rikki-tikki-tavi, is easily tamed and makes a delightful pet. Where he runs about the house and garden cockroaches and mice are never seen. His nimble, snake-like little body is often seen leaping in fields or running across the roads. Another queer pet is the stone-marten. His fur is costly, but I do not think that those who have adopted him into their

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houses could wear his pelt without a qualm. He is very affectionate to his patrons and fierce with other animals, although so small, and is a solitary by nature, attacking even those of his own kind except at breeding season. The gazelle, dainty, timid creature, which is easily tamed but is not a particularly intelligent pet, and has a great aptitude for snapping its delicate ankles.

The fox, the wolf, the hyena, the jerboa, and the jackal are the plebeians of the wilderness. The Arab name for a jackal is a *wowi*, a word which imitates his wailing, eerie cry. When the jackals howl outside the city, the dogs within bark in angry chorus, and the Assyrians in the mountains tell you why. Once, they say, the dogs lived without the city and the jackals dwelt snug and comfortable within. One day the dogs approached the jackals and said, " Oh, jackals ! one of our number is sick, and we think that a sojourn in the city with its comforts, might work a cure. Change places with us, therefore, for a fortnight, so that we may tend our sick one within the walls." The jackals answered, " Willingly ! May Allah cure the sick one of thy tribe ! " At the end of a fortnight, the jackals came back and cried outside the city wall, " Dakhi ileh mariya ? " (How is the sick one). To which the dogs barked gruffly, " B'ad 'oo(l), B'ad 'oo(l) ! " (Still ill !). And night by night ever since the jackals make the same plaintive inquiry, " Dakhi ileh mari-i-i-ya ! " and receive the same reply.

Bears are found in the hills, and the people there declare that he understands human speech. A girl crept into a neighbouring orchard one night in order to steal some fruit, and when she peered up into the branches of an apple tree she saw the bare soles of a bear's feet. She took him to be a boy, a thief like herself. " Throw me down some of the fruit ! " she said. There was no answer, and the girl grew angry. " If you don't throw me down some fruit, I shall tell the farmer ! " Frightened by her voice, the bear dropped down and ran away, and you would find it difficult to persuade her that he did not understand every word.

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Of course, there are many tales about the camel. His supercilious look is no matter of wonder to the Arab, for he knows it comes of superior knowledge. Even Mahommed only knew ninety-nine names of Allah, but the camel knows the hundredth, secret Name, and that is why he looks proud. Everyone knows that horses do not like camels. The reason is that they are a living rebuke. When the horse was created, he was not contented, and asked for a longer neck, so that he might crop grass with greater ease, for a natural pad to protect his back from burdens and for longer hair and legs. Allah then created the camel, and said to the horse, " There ! Look at this ugly creature ! This is what you asked to be ! "

The camel has many trials, but not the least of them is that, when he plods his way with his fellows, the caravan is always led by a donkey. He complained to Allah, " Thou hast made me the ugliest of beasts ; my neck is too long, my feet are misshapen, and on my back Thou hast put a hump, but all these things are as nothing. What I cannot endure is that a small ass should walk before me on the march ! " There is no camel corps in the Arab army as in the Egyptian army, though there is a police camel corps at Rumadi. The fast dromedaries used for riding (the *dhelul*) are peculiarly adapted for military purposes, one would think, but in winter, when the ground is wet, they would be useless, as they slip and injure themselves on muddy ground. To the Bedu the camel is precious property. He is not only a beast of burden, but provides milk, meat, cheese and hair for weaving into clothing and tents.

The wealth of tribes is also counted in sheep, particularly with tribes like the Shammar or the Beni Lam. There are several breeds. The Kurdish sheep, a breed with very fat tails and a preponderance of white, are prized on account of their hardiness and vigour ; but the Arab sheep, the awass and the shiffal, yield softer wool, though their colour is usually black and brown. The sheep, too, give milk, butter, and cheese ; their wool is used for clothing, and their guts are exported to Europe and America for sausage skins. 'Iraq

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would do a fine trade in leather were not the curing so poor and careless. The skins are of very good quality, but the treatment of them is so bad that they are all but useless for export. Goats are kept with sheep, herding together and being used for much the same purposes. It is the sheep which is killed at a threshold in honour of a guest, however, and when a high personage like the Shah visits 'Iraq, as on the occasion of a pilgrimage to Najaf and Karbala, he has literally to step over many streams of blood.

The donkey is an indispensable part of the life of the poor. It is the donkey who lends legs to the mountains of desert thorn that one sees coming into the city for firewood, and the donkey who transports in wide panniers on either side of his back rubbish, bricks, sand, melons, and every other commodity. It is the donkey which is used for riding by those who are not well-to-do; it is the donkey which provides the cheapest mode of transporting household goods. I have even seen a corpse on a donkey, which was used for the time as a hearse; the rough, wooden coffin being laid across the little beast's back and secured by ropes.

Yet it is not polite to mention a donkey without an apologetic preface, not even the aristocrat among the donkeys, the large white donkey which comes from Nejed, though he fetches almost as much money as a horse. He looks very gay, with his strings of blue beads and cowries, his bells, his tassels of coloured wool, and his henna-dyed mane and tail. He has usually the imprint of a hand in henna upon his flanks, as the "Hand of Abbas" keeps off the evil eye, and brings the owner prosperity. The small, grey donkey may be bought for less than a pound, and looks irritatingly humble. He is often cruelly treated, for there is no S.P.C.A. in 'Iraq, and though the Arab is not naturally fiendish in his cruelty like the Italian and Spaniard, there are cases which make one wish that the poor beasts had redress.

One hears very much about the Arab's love for the horse, but on an 'Iraq racecourse it is easy to distinguish the well-groomed beasts which belong to English owners and the thin,

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uncared-for horses of Arabs. Their pedigrees may be as long as those of kings, and their price above rubies, but their grooming is perfunctory and their feeding scanty. The desert sheikh's favourite mare feeds from his hand, and is of more account to him than his wife, but then a wife is of not so much account after all, and a mare of good lineage commands a price which is higher than the best wife's dowry. A mare is looked upon as adorning a man's house like a wife or child.

A mare of good blood may lose its value if its markings are unlucky. A mare with one white leg and three black ones is unlucky, and should never be ridden. Mares are rarely sold outright, a leg, two legs, or three legs are usually sold, conditions being laid down as to who is the owner of the first foal, the second, and so on. As a rule, half a dozen owners exist for each mare ; hence the difficulty in purchasing an ordinary mare, while to get a thoroughbred is practically impossible for a foreigner.

Arab breeds are many, the most important being the Hamdani, Saglawi, Krush, Wathnan, Khaila, Dhaman, Harga, Obeiyan, Managi, and Darbiyat. They are all supposed to originate from five famous Nejdi mares of the epoch prior to Mahommed. The first horse, say the Arabs, was created in this wise. Allah summoned the south wind, and said to it, " I purpose to create a new being from thy essence ; condense thyself into visible form." The wind obeyed, and from its substance, visible and malleable, Allah took a handful, breathed on it, and it became the horse. " Henceforth," said He to the beautiful creature, " thou wilt be the servant of man, bringing him happiness and wealth, and he will become more noble when mounted on thee."

A sheikh of any standing is supposed to have his own " rabat," that is, a mare from which he breeds a strain. For instance, Ibrahim Beg as Saadun of the Muntafiq, maintains some thirty mares all of the famous Dhaman breed. The whole of 'Iraq knows this, and gives him credit accordingly ; similarly the Mutair tribe of Nejd breeds the equally famous Krush strain.

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Arabs put no value on a mare that is fast for a short distance only. The highest value is put on a "stayer," hence they frequently have races for ten and fifteen miles. The reason is obvious. The principal use of a mare is in a raid, the "ghazzu." Upon her speed and staying power depend the success of her master as a raider and his safe return home. If in a raid the horses of an enemy tribe are taken, each man may keep what he has captured except the pedigree mares, which are handed over to the sheikh. Sometimes, if the owners demand these back, the sheikh performs the graceful act of returning them. A blood-horse is sold with its pedigree in writing, certified by the sheikh of the tribe in whose possession the horse first saw light.

Both cows and buffaloes are kept in 'Iraq. The three largest towns, Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul, all have good dairies, some British-owned. The buffaloes—slow, uncouth-looking, iron-grey beasts as they are—yield good milk with a rich percentage of cream. On any hot evening one may see them standing up to their necks in the river, placidly enjoying the coolth of the water. They swim across very leisurely if they wish to reach the other side, with, perhaps, a small herd-boy mounted on the back of one of their number.

Early in our occupation of Basrah we established a military dairy, as afterwards in other places, and these have been valuable object-lessons to the 'Iraqi as to cleanliness of method and care of the beasts. These dairies have now for the most part been taken over by Britishers or natives, and continue to supply a good quality of milk, cream, and butter.

Dogs are regarded as unclean, or defiling, as in all Mahommedan countries. A writer to the *Baghdad Times* says, however:

"The average Baghdadi is decidedly prejudiced against the killing of dogs, even from humane motives, and he is equally averse from any form of cruelty. The reasons for this attitude may, perhaps, be found in an old Arabic proverb which alleges that 'The spilt blood of a dog will soon avenge itself,' while it is a common superstition among Baghdad

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women that the man who is guilty of cruelty to a dog will have no offspring. When a married couple have not been blessed with children it is no unusual thing to find the wife making cautious inquiries into the possibility of the husband's having kicked his neighbour's dog!

"Although dogs are considered as unclean, there is no actual contamination in the touch of a dog unless it is a wet dog—*e.g.*, if the animal has been enjoying a swim in the river, or if it has been out in the rain. From this it follows that a dog's mouth is always unclean. The Arab will pat a dry dog on the back, and think nothing of it; but if the dog, to show its appreciation, turns round and licks the hand of the patter, the Arab will not relish the doggy idea of courtesy. He will regard his hand as defiled, and will take the earliest opportunity of throwing water over it three times as a purifying process, at the same time repeating the words, 'In the Name of Allah.' The super-pious Moslems regard even a dry dog as a defiling animal, and if one happens to rub up against them they consider themselves debarred from engaging in prayer until they have entirely changed their garments.

"It is a curious commentary on these beliefs that the Persian 'long dog,' or *salugi*, is believed to be exempt from the Quranic laws on the subject. The salugi is a hunting dog, and its master considers himself at liberty to eat the partridges or other game which the animal may retrieve." [1]

The salugi, or Persian greyhound, with its feathery tail and long, silky ears, is not only used for retrieving, but is trained by its masters to hunt gazelle in conjunction with the falcon. The hawk is taught to fly in the face of the fleeing quarry; pecking at its eyes and beating its head with her wings, thus confusing the gazelle and causing its speed to slacken. This gives the salugi the advantage, and it has no difficulty in overtaking and leaping upon the doubly-assailed gazelle. Arab sheikhs are very fond of hawking, and one often sees hooded hawks on the wrists of their retainers.

[1] I know several Mahommedan ladies who keep pet dogs, and puppies never go long homeless.

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Lions are now practically extinct, but legends still linger in Bedu camps of encounters with lions; of young men who proved their courage by engaging lions single-handed, and of marvels of the chase. That the lion was once abundant the sculptures of lion hunts on Assyrian monuments prove to us; moreover, as lately as fifty years back there were a fair number still to be encountered. Leopards are found, but, on the whole, one can pass through the country with no fear of meeting anything more fearful than the timid wolf of the country, jackals, or foxes.

The Tigris and Euphrates give a bountiful supply of fish, some of them, like the biz, of enormous size. The biz is harmless and edible, but the shark, or kossaj, which renders summer bathing in the creeks at Basrah most dangerous, and sometimes ventures up as far as Baghdad, or, at any rate, to the mouth of the Diala River, is a less pleasant fish to encounter. Among the many fish found on the stalls at the fish-market are the binni, excellent in flavour, the shabbut, and a small, sweet-fleshed fish with numerous hooked bones which make it dangerous eating.

The Shiahs are forbidden to eat flat fish. The reason, they say, is becaue Ali, stooping one day by the river to perform the ceremonial ablutions before prayer, disturbed a flat fish, which flapped and muddied the water. Ali pronounced a curse on the fish for its impiety, and forbade good Shiahs to eat its flesh.

Fishermen letting their nets down into the Tigris from boat or gufa are a daily sight if one lives in a riverside house, and the hauls are sometimes large, though whenever I have watched the operation it seemed to me that the fishermen were like the disciples who laboured all night and took nothing. Traps are also set for fish, and there is a certain plant which, when powdered and dropped on the water, drugs the fish so that they float to the surface and are easily taken.

Of the insect world I fear that I know nothing beyond that experience of insect pests common to mankind in this quarter of the globe. Butterflies one sees even in winter

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on sunny days, the commonest being the white cabbage butterfly, the red admiral, and the painted lady, as in England. But here one would be rid of the whole insect world, even at the expense of the butterflies, such an affliction of the flesh is the insect creation. Was it really the grasshopper which Solomon declared to be a burden, or did he refer to another hopping insect, which flourishes in the East?

Flies are recognised as belonging to Shaitan, but the flea has the blessing of Mahommed himself. One day it was sultry, and the prophet was tired, and at the hour of prayer he slept. But the pious fleas who were his pensioners, combined their forces and bit him so hard that he rubbed his eyes and awoke. Perceiving the service which the fleas had rendered him, he blessed them, saying, "O, fleas, blessed be ye! Increase and multiply!" which order they have obeyed until this day.

There is a "flea-season" in 'Iraq, during which no house is free from the pest. It lasts from the end of February to the beginning of the great heat, during which fleas entirely disappear. The mosquito and the sand-fly replace him, though their activities are lessened in winter. The Yazidis attribute fleas to the ingratitude of Noah. It was, they say, entirely due to the thoughtfulness of the serpent that the Ark during the Flood, did not sink. It bumped into Jebel Sinjar and sprang a leak, which the serpent helpfully stopped by thrusting his body into the hole. When the Ark came to a rest on the top of Jebel Judi, and the waters subsided, the serpent's children became many, and they bit the sons of men. Noah cast the serpent and his children into the fire, and from their ashes came forth fleas, which ever since have tormented the flesh of mankind.

How, may it be asked, did the serpent get on board the Ark? Another Kurdish legend explains this. The serpent, not having had an invitation to enter the Ark, twined himself round the ass's tail as that animal was preparing to go on board. On the gangway the ass halted and began to bray. Noah bade him go on, but the ass, mindful of his burden, refused to move and continued to bray. Noah bade him go

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on a second time, and as the ass still hung back, he cried furiously, " Go on, and the devil go with thee ! " This time the ass obeyed, and ass and devil entered the Ark. Some days later, when the Ark floated on the bosom of the waters, Noah encountered the serpent. " Who gave thee leave to come ? " asked Noah in surprise, and the serpent said, " Thou, when thou badest the ass move on and the Evil One with him " ; and Noah, confounded, hung his head.

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CHAPTER XXV

THE ENGLISHWOMAN IN 'IRAQ—HER HOUSE AND HER HUSBAND

THE Englishwoman with a husband in 'Iraq should have many of the cardinal virtues, but, above all, she must be patient. The first time that she is called upon to exercise that quality is when, after receiving the blessing of the Colonial Office, securing her passage, buying her frocks and packing her trunks, she repairs to the Passport Office, where she is told point-blank, "Very sorry, but we cannot allow you to proceed to Mesopotamia."

For the question of women in Mesopotamia is a bone of contention between the civil and military authorities. The attitude of the military is, "Women are an unmitigated nuisance; if there is trouble and anything happens to a woman we get the responsibility and blame, hence, keep the creatures out at any cost." The attitude of the civil powers is, "Our men get Bolshie and disgruntled if they are perpetually separated from their wives, and there is little enough in conditions of service here anyway to attract good men: therefore, for heaven's sake let the wives come!"

Eventually the civilian wives filter out; some evading the decree, others waiting to rush out the moment there is a temporary weakening in the attitude of the War Office; but the ban is still inexorably on the wives of soldiers. There is naturally a good deal of "grousing" at this difference of treatment. It cannot be soothing to an officer to go to a fancy dress ball at the Club and see a couple of hundred women there, when he is forced to leave his wife in England or India.

Arrived in Baghdad or Basrah, what is an Englishwoman's

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life? Many people at home imagine it to be a wild chase after pleasure—a round of dinners, dances, tennis-tournaments, picnics, moonlight parties, and flirtation. We have heard all about it, they say. We have read in the papers of a quarter in Baghdad called Alwiyah, a kind of New Delhi; rows of sumptuous bungalows with large gardens attached, from which the Englishman drives to his office every morning in his car—for you all have cars. We have heard of your luxurious houses, of the magnificent Residency upon which so much money has been squandered, of the hectic life which turns night into day.

Well, what is the sober reality? To begin with, the Residency is not the Aladdin's palace pictured by imaginative pressmen, but a building of modest dimensions and no more than moderate comfort, though admittedly it was far costlier than it should have been. Secondly, Alwiyah is very far from being another New Delhi. I should compare it rather unfavourably with Golder's Green, for the bungalows, built of mud brick and plagued with sand-flies, have fewer rooms than most suburban villas, and not half the comforts. In fact, but for the entire absence of trees, it would be easy to imagine oneself in a London suburb. Along its bare roads children run and babies are wheeled by their nurses, and the houses are surrounded by neat little gardens in which rows of hollyhocks stand hard by beds of cabbages and potatoes. As for the cars, the unfortunate Englishman must have some means of getting to his work. Alwiyah is a good two miles by road from the South Gate of Baghdad, and from the South Gate it is another good mile and a half to the Government offices. It comes cheaper for the Government to grant a small monthly allowance to help pay the running expenses of a car than to pay the huge rents which are asked for houses in Baghdad, if, indeed, there are houses in Baghdad to be obtained. Many an Englishman curses the expense of his decrepit Ford, but it is hardly to be expected that he will walk six miles or more daily to and from his office when, for six months out of twelve, the thermometer varies between

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a hundred and a hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. As yet there are no tubes or trams in Baghdad, though the day may come when one can take a season ticket on a light railway.

The usual forms of exercise—tennis, golf, riding, and dancing—can be indulged in all the year round. In summer, people rise very early and go to bed late, that they may use to the fullest the hours of respite from the intense heat, and sleep in the afternoon to make up for it. Office hours are changed in hot weather, most Government and private offices beginning at seven or eight in the morning and closing at one or two. People who live in Arab houses take advantage of the sirdabs, or basement cellars, during the hot weather, living there by day like the people of the country, and, like them, sleeping by night on the flat rooftops. Mesopotamia has the advantage over the plains of India in that, even in summer, there is a big drop in temperature at night ; and if it has no hill-stations, as yet, it has the advantage of a bracing cold season.

Indeed, for the six cold months the climate of 'Iraq is perfect. Rain, it is true, reduces the roads to soup, caramel and plasticine in successive stages, but for weeks together it does not rain at all, and the touch of cold, or even frost, in the bright sunshine is invigorating and exhilarating, as the advertisements of seaside resorts say. Flowers are always found in the gardens, and in April my little garden in Baghdad, upon which I had expended very little trouble, contained any number of flowers in bloom : roses, violets, wallflowers, sweet-peas, phlox, hollyhocks, cosmos, larkspurs, cornflowers, verbena, and many others. In the north especially, March, April and May bring wild-flowers in sheaves. Round Mosul one wades knee-deep in scarlet anemones, wild tulips, borage, buttercups, and a thousand varieties of flowers of the countryside. Anything will grow in Mesopotamia, from potatoes and truffles to carnations and orchids. The Englishwoman who loves gardening is richly repaid for any trouble she may expend on the fruitful soil of her small patch.

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The Arab gardener cannot understand our absurd habit of trying to grow lawns. One man painstakingly reasoned with his mistress. "Was it not a pity to waste all this space on mere grass, and that cut short and not allowed to grow to a height at which it would be useful for fodder? Would not vegetables, or even flowers, be far better?" But she persisted, and he gave in, confirmed in his opinion that we are a crazy race.

High wages and uncertain conditions do not always attract the most desirable type of servant to English employment in 'Iraq. Mistresses get philosophical. "I'm sorry, but cook is drunk to-day"; "My dear, will you ring up the police? Butler is in prison"—are remarks which occasion but slight sensation in the family circle. One couple I know have a good cook who gets helplessly drunk every pay-day, and they congratulate each other on this regularity, because they can make arrangements accordingly.

The Arab, useful on trek, is almost useless in the house. He detests routine, and will only work well in an emergency, such as the time when one moves into a new house, an outbreak of fire, or a sudden influx of visitors. But one cannot manufacture emergencies all the time, and the idea of dusting a room every morning seems too hopelessly dull and futile, as does our love of fixed hours. 'Iraqis of the servant class are as a rule incurably untidy, and, not to put a fine point upon it, dirty. The Moslem is a little cleaner than the Christian, but not much.

As cooks, most 'Iraqis are quite impossible, though occasionally one gets an Armenian who can cook passably. Many an Armenian will come to you hopefully and assert that he can cook "Turkey and France," but he seldom succeeds. The result is that head-servants, butlers, cooks, and usually bearers are mostly imported Indians or Goanese, who demand wages altogether out of proportion to their value. A cook is given from eighty to two hundred rupees a month, a good average being a hundred. A butler gets from seventy to a hundred rupees a month, a bearer fifty

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to seventy. The "boy," the real worker of the house, often an Assyrian or Armenian, gets from thirty to forty rupees, and the sweeper, who does the dirty work of the rest, is paid about half that. Out of these wages they are supposed to buy their own food, but in nine cases out of ten this is a fiction.

As in India, the cook buys all the food in the bazaar and gives his daily bill to his mistress, and has control over all provisions except those kept in the store-cupboard. When a woman runs a house she can regulate the cook's expenditure, more or less, but in a bachelor establishment the cook has a free hand, and makes the wildest charges. Bachelors will pay for a pound of butter and a shilling's worth of fat daily, and imagine they are being used quite fairly, nor does the cook undeceive them.

Living in Mesopotamia, if the cook would permit, is not dear, though dearer than in India. Beef costs from six to eight annas a pound, mutton eight to ten. Eggs are an anna apiece nearly all the year round—sometimes cheaper. Milk costs eight annas to twelve annas the whisky-bottle full; butter (excellent butter) is two rupees eight annas a pound. Chickens cost from eight annas to two rupees apiece. Of course, these prices are absurdly high compared to pre-war prices in 'Iraq, but the quality of the food is good. Some vegetables are dear, others cheap. A cauliflower costs about twelve annas, a cabbage from six to ten annas. Lettuces are an anna each, and truffles about four annas a pound in the height of the season.

Indian and native servants alike have a touching faith in the medical skill of the European woman. Many English women in 'Iraq have had hospital experience during the war, so that this belief is often justified. So strong is this belief, that the gift of a bottle of medicine will work wonders, just because the patient feels himself cured as soon as he has it in his hands. The thermometer is looked upon with reverence, as an instrument of magic. My husband asked one of our servants one day as he was taking his temperature, if

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he knew what the thermometer was for. " Oh yes, sahib," the boy replied, " it is to take the number of the fever."

Similarly, Englishwomen are often stopped in the street and are shown a sick child, or some infirmity, by a passer-by. It is usually in vain to recommend the sufferer to go to the hospital, where they can get free advice and treatment. The 'Iraqi has got firmly fixed into his head that the hospital is a place to die in rather than to be cured in, and in Turkish days no doubt it often was. " If I go to hospital I shall die," they tell you naïvely, and I remember that when a patient energed alive from the Civil Hospital in Basrah, which was opposite our house, he was not infrequently met with bands and procession. It most certainly lessens the hospital's chance of curing a patient if he waits until he is at death's door before going in.

Besides the various military hospitals in the larger towns of 'Iraq, there are civil nursing homes to which the sick Britisher can be taken. I believe that Lady Astor made, or is said to have made, some remark as to the impossibility of Englishwomen bearing children in 'Iraq owing to the chlorination of the water. On the contrary, the birth-rate amongst European women has been very high, as a glance at the books of the nursing homes will show; 1922-23 brought a fine crop of healthy English babies born in 'Iraq.

Children stand the climate very well. During the hottest months they lose their rosy colour, but pick up rapidly as soon as the colder months arrive, and during the winter they are as bonny a crew as any in the world. Children's nurses are recruited amongst Assyrian refugees from the highlands of Kurdistan. These healthy mountain girls make devoted, if not always very competent, nurses, and the mother can superintend the nursery and train the handmaid. Ayahs, imported from India, are as a rule not a success. They feel the cold of the 'Iraq winter, and sooner or later get homesick for their own land and people.

Neither Basrah nor Baghdad suffers from lack of clubs, Baghdad being specially blessed. In Baghdad there are at

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present the Alwiyah Club, the Race Club, the British Club, and the 'Iraq Club. The Alwiyah Club gives very good dances and *thés dansants*, and has excellent hard tennis-courts. The Race Club has a racecourse, polo-gound, and golf-course, as well as tennis-courts and a charming lawn and garden where teas and dinners are served in hot weather. The British Club has tennis-courts and a dancing floor, while the 'Iraq Club is shared by Europeans and 'Iraqis. Ladies are members of all but the last.

As I write, a grievous disaster, which very nearly involved Baghdad also, has overtaken the Race Club, which is now a lake owing to the flood. An exceptionally high river burst the confiding dyke above Baghdad, and weakened other dykes. For some time the town, and especially Alwiyah, was in danger. Nothing but the most energetic action saved Baghdad from deluge, and racing, polo and golf will be made impossible there for a long time.

There are other polo-grounds at Alwiyah, and the game is also played in Basrah and in other towns. Polo and football are legacies which the Englishman will leave behind him when he departs. Small Arab boys are becoming enthusiasts for football, and the Arab army officer is taking kindly to polo, which, as everyone knows, was an Oriental game to start with. The tribesman is particularly handy with his polo pony. An English officer in charge of an out-of-the-way spot called Tell Afer, taught the local gallants how to play polo, and got them really keen. The pity was, that the leading light got into trouble, and had to be put into prison. However, he was allowed out on polo days, played his chukkers like a lion, and went back to prison like a lamb. Racing is also becoming a passion with the 'Iraqi, and in love of the horse Arab and Englishman meet on common ground.

Englishwomen in 'Iraq can be divided into two classes—those who like it and those who "have no use for it." There are those who regard their surroundings with interest, like to get into touch with the people of the country, and wish them well. There are others who make no secret of detesting 'Iraq,

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and turn determined backs on everybody and everything in the country except the English colony. Men, on the contrary, especially those engaged on political duties, become, as a rule, keenly interested in their work and the people with whom it brings them into contact. Sooner or later, the spell falls upon all those whose work takes them amongst the tribes and into the less sophisticated districts. Such men when they come into Baghdad or Basrah, enjoy the social life of the colony for a time, and then find themselves pining for the wilds.

The Englishwoman who came first to 'Iraq and has stuck gallantly to the country through all the years of our stay here is, of course, the nursing sister. In the earlier days, when we were fighting our way up to Baghdad, she endured many hardships. Those were the days of makeshift hospitals and hospital boats, without ice or fans, days when work was unceasing and, at first, medical appliances few. Cheerfully and ungrudgingly the sisters worked during that time, and cheerfully and ungrudgingly they have worked since, going through hot weathers and cold weathers, patiently training raw native nurses, doing their daily rounds with unflagging energy and patience. Off duty, they played tennis, danced, and rode, and many a man's experience of Englishwomen in 'Iraq was limited in the earlier period of our coming to the sisters who were so good to him both in sickness and in health.

The story of the wild rush of Englishwomen to 'Iraq in 1919-20 and their subsequent hurried retreat, has been told in other books, so I will not do more than refer to it here. Many of the soldiers' wives who came out, although of the working class, were entirely helpless. They could not cook, they could not adapt themselves in any way to the life of the country. They caused many aching brows among those who had to look after them. The sergeant's wife, so familiar in Kipling's stories, who did the officers' washing and met hardships and difficulties with the courage of a man and the sound sense of a woman of the people, seems dead as a door-nail. Until her successor has been found, it would be a mistake to allow the wives of the rank and file to come out to 'Iraq

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en bloc. Perhaps some system of selection may yet be devised under which only sensible, practical women, approved of by a board of those acquainted with the conditions of the country, would be allowed to come.

Many British privates and non-commissioned officers, working in the civil administration, as well as some civilians, have contracted alliances with the ladies of the country, both Moslem and Christian. "I have married locally," is the expression. I have nothing, personally, against the practice; it is entirely the affair of the man concerned, and may or may not be successful. In any case, the "local" wife may be a more practical companion for the man whose lot is cast in 'Iraq than an absolutely helpless young person from home.

There are civil chaplains in Basrah and Baghdad, and the usual *padres* wherever there are troops. A sizeable Arab building near the South Gate in Baghdad has been converted into a garrison and civil church, whilst Basrah has a well-built church near the junction of Ashar creek and the river. There is, of course, a fairly large commercial British colony in 'Iraq, which will need places of worship whether or not we "leave the country, bag and baggage." I, for one, hope that day to be distant. If we are to fulfil our engagements, and to hold to the word we have given to the people of 'Iraq, we shall not be able to leave the country without providing it with very solid safeguards, and such safeguards cannot be quickly furnished. In a word, some "baggage" must be left behind, and we are committed in all honour to keep our promises, as well as to maintain our prestige. That "the word of an Englishman," once given, would be kept, has been accepted for long years by the Oriental as a matter of course. It is to be hoped that this fact, so deeply impressed on all who have spent their lives in the East, will not be disregarded by the politicians at home.

Baghdad, *April 8th*, 1923.

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APPENDICES

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SCRIPT USED IN YAZIDI HOLY BOOKS

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APPENDIX I

The Sacred Books of the Yazidis

(Following principally the translation of Père Anastase with reference to the Mosul translation.)

I.—The Jalweh

I was, I am, and I shall be until the end of time. I have sovereign sway over all creatures and administer the interests and affairs of all who are under my suzerainty.

I am swift to help those who trust in me and make supplication to me in their need. I am omnipresent. I take part in all those events which infidels call "evils": they only name them thus because they do not correspond to their wishes.

Each epoch has its master appointed by my decree. Each generation differs from that which precedes it. The Masters of this world, and those beings who arise superior to their contemporaries and environment, pass away each in his turn, as soon as they have fulfilled their destiny and consolidated their work.

I allow created Nature to accomplish that which is natural to it in justice and equity. He who works against me will reap sorrow and trouble. The other gods do not interfere in my work. My separation from them was an important matter, and they cannot hinder me from carrying out that which I intend, no matter what it may be.

The books which are in the hands of strangers to my doctrine have no authenticity, and are not written by the prophets. These unhappy infidels have gone astray, avoiding

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the road of truth, and making a path for themselves. Thus each of their prophets abolishes that which his predecessors established.

Truth and sin are known to me at the time they are committed [M. version]. Moreover, truth and deceit can be recognised by those who have experience.

Punishments are reserved for those who speak against me, however clever and powerful they may be. I reserve certain things for myself. I forbid certain actions, the whole in time and place. I instruct and direct in the right way those who follow my doctrine and they will find true pleasure in conforming to my precepts.

I punish and reward the generation of Adam in ways which are known to me. In my hand is found all that has being upon earth, above it, and beneath it. I do not permit the worlds to clash. I do not oppose good, when this good benefits my own people, who obey me blindly. I reveal myself in one manner or another to those who are faithful to me or who follow my precepts. It is I who give and take away, I who enrich and make poor, I who cause the happiness of man or permit his misfortune, but everything is according to the laws of circumstance and time. No one has the right to interfere with that which I do, and no one has the right to resist my doings. I send sickness and infirmity to those who refuse to obey me. He who exerts himself to satisfy me, does not die like the outcast children of Adam. I allow no men to live longer than the span I have allotted him; however, if I judge it suitable, I may send him again to earth, twice or thrice, in different forms.

I instruct without book. I direct my beloved and my faithful people into the right way, but invisibly. My education costs nothing and is always conformable to circumstances. I punish in the next world all those who act against my law. The children of Adam ignore the fate reserved for them: therefore, behold them delivered up to many illusions. All depend on me, the animals of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea; all these creatures are in my hand

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The treasures and minerals hidden below the earth are mine, and I only uncover them at will, and as much as I desire to those I intend to discover them. I reveal my miracles and my supernatural works to those naturally disposed towards them when they ask them from me. The infidels who are against me, or who show themselves my enemies, only wrong themselves, and they know not that it is I who give honours and riches, and that I only award them to those among the sons of Adam who are worthy of them. The government of worlds, the revolution of centuries, and the destruction of those who are fore-ordained to destruction have been decreed by me from everlasting.

I do not yield my rights to any one of the other gods. The four elements, the four seasons, and the four bases (the four cardinal points) have been established for the necessity of created beings. Accept the books of the infidels in such part of them which is in accordance with my law and conforms to it. But the part of their books which is in disaccord, that is the fruit of their own vain imagination. Three things are hateful to me and I abhor three things.[1] Those who keep intact and secret my mysteries, will have the reward which I store up for them. Those who endure patiently the troubles and misfortunes of this world I shall not fail to reward in one of my worlds. I desire that my faithful people shall unite themselves together in a bond of unity to confront the stranger. O ye who have followed my commandment and precept, renounce all which is not suitable to my law, in avoiding the pronunciation of my name or mentioning my qualities to anyone, lest ye commit sin, for ye know not what strangers will do to my religion and to my teaching.

Render the utmost honour to my image and to my statue (*sanjak*) for they will keep my memory before you, which you have neglected for years. Observe my commandments, hearken to my ministers, for these are they who will teach you that which is invisible and pertains to me. Keep secret what

[1] Not stated what the three things are.

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is taught you and do not repeat it to outsiders, such as Christians, Jews, Mahommedans, and others, because they do not know my teachings. Do not give them your books lest they make changes in them without your knowledge. Guard the teachings secretly in your hearts, for there no stranger can interfere with me.

II.—The Mashaf Rash, or Black Book

In the beginning God created a great white pearl from the depths of his mysterious and impenetrable being. He further created a bird called Anfer and placed the great pearl on its back, and sat on it for forty thousand years.

God created on the first day, which is Sunday, an angel of the name Izrail. He bears yet another name, that of the Peacock Angel, and he is prince of all the angels.

The second day God created the angel Dardail, who is the Sheikh Hassan. [1]

The third, he created Israfail, who is the Sheikh Shems-ed-din.

The fourth he drew from the void the angel Mishael, who is the Sheikh Abu-Bekr.

The fifth day the angel Gabriel appeared from the void, who is Sajjad-ed-din.

The sixth day Shammail was created, he is known by us under the name of Nasir-ed-Din.

It was only on the seventh day that Nuranail appeared, who is Fakhr-ed-din.

Melak Taus [2] (Peacock Angel) was established as supreme lord of all the angels.

God then created the seven heavens, the earth, the sun and the moon.

Fakhr-ed-din created man, the animals, the birds, and the wild beasts. He put them into the pockets of his *khurqa* [3]

[1] El Basri? These angels seem to have reincarnated in certain saints, according to the Yazidi.

[2] Satan.

[3] The black shirt worn by the Faqirs.

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and from these emerged a great pearl, escorted by a multitude of angels. He uttered a great cry against the big pearl and it was immediately divided into four pieces, and from his middle sprang forth the water which formed the sea. At this time the earth was round and without cleft.

God gave to Gabriel the form of a bird. He sent him to fix the four corners of the earth. He then created a boat in which Gabriel placed himself for thirty thousand years. He came later to dwell in Lalish. In his turn, he cried against the earth and the earth became solid. Become dry land, this earth began to tremble. Then Gabriel took a piece of the pearl and placed it beneath the earth to give it stability and put another piece on the gate of heaven to adorn it. This portion of the pearl became the sun and the moon. Then he sowed the powder, which resulted from the breaking of the pearl, about the two lights of heaven, and the powder became the stars of the firmament. The whole was suspended on high.

It was Gabriel, also, who caused the earth to bring forth fruit trees and plants. It was he who made groves and caused mountains to adorn the world. He then established the Celestial Throne and placed it upon the Carpet of Glory.

The Sovereign Lord then said, " O, angels, I am going to create Adam and Eve, and I shall render them human beings. From their seed will be born Sahr ibn Safar, from whom will issue a nation upon the earth. From this same Adam will issue the nation of Izrail, the privileged nation of Taus Melak, otherwise called the Yazidis.

The Sheikh Adi ibn Mosafir will come later from the country of Syria to inhabit Lalishi.[1]

The Lord descended then upon the Black Mountain. He cried, and immediately thirty thousand angels were created. He caused them to be divided into three choirs, and immediately they began to adore him, and this was during forty thousand years. He delivered them then to Taus Melak and he caused them to ascend into heaven.

[1] Hills about Sheikh Adi.

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The Lord then descended to Jerusalem and ordered Gabriel to bring a little earth from the four quarters of the globe. It was done. He added to this earth some air, some fire, and some water, and it was thus that he created the first man. He gave him a soul, breathing his spirit into him. He ordered Gabriel to place Adam in Paradise. He did so. God allowed this first man to eat the fruit of all the trees, but he forbade him to touch corn.

At the end of a hundred years, Taus Melak said to God, " How will Adam be multiplied ? Where is his seed ? "

God replied to him, " I have placed all in thy hands, do as thou wilt."

Taus Melak addressed himself then to Adam and said to him, " Hast thou eaten corn ? "

" No," said Adam, " because God forbade me to touch it."

" Eat, it will do thee good."

Adam had scarce finished eating, when his belly began to swell.

Taus Melak then ascended into heaven, abandoning him to whom he had given this counsel.

Adam found himself in great discomfort and pain, for he was unable to obey the call of Nature, being so perfectly formed that there was no fissure in his body. God, moved by compassion, sent him a bird with a large beak, which, by pecking him in a convenient part of his person, was able to give him relief.

Adam wept the loss of his counsellor in desolation for a hundred years.

God then ordered Gabriel to create Eve. The angel, obedient to his master's order, drew the future companion of the first man from the hollow of Adam's left shoulder (armpit ?).[1]

When the hundred years were accomplished Taus Melak descended from heaven to earth in order to concern himself with our nation, then created. He gave us, besides the ancient

[1] Here the Mosul version gives the story of the birth of the Yazidi nation.

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Assyrian sovereigns, the following kings: Nesruleh (Nesrox), otherwise called Nasr-ed-din; Cambyses, or the angel Fakhr-ed-din; Artymus, or the angel Shems-ed-din; then two other monarchs who were renowned amongst us, the two first monarchs named Sapor. Their reigns lasted together a hundred and fifty years.

From them, in direct descent, come our present Emirs.

We hate four potentates.[1]

[From this point the Mosul edition varies considerably, adding a mass of legends about Noah, etc., so I shall follow Père Anastase's version only.]

There are certain things which we forbid unto you. Firstly, the eating of lettuce (*khass*) for it is sacred to our prophetess Khassiyeh.[2]

Haricot beans.

The colour blue (consequently blue clothing or the possession of a blue object).

The eating of fish is forbidden us, out of veneration for our prophet Jonah.

The gazelle is also forbidden, because it is the sheep of one of our prophets.

The sheikh and his disciples must not touch the flesh of a cock, for this fowl represents the image of the PEACOCK, who is one of the seven gods who rule the universe.

The same must never eat pumpkin.

It is strictly forbidden to make water in a standing position.

No one may pull on his drawers in a sitting position.

There must be no fixed place in which to relieve Nature.

Public baths are strictly forbidden us.

It is forbidden to pronounce the following words:

SATAN, because it is the name of our god.

Or any word which resembles the word SATAN, such as *kitan*, *shatt*, or *sharr*.

[1] Unnamed.

[2] The word for "string" is also forbidden, which is Kheyt in Arabic. A legend says that the lettuce is forbidden because Sheikh Adi, passing a garden called the lettuce. It did not answer him, and so he said, "*Huss*" (Kurdish, "worthless"), and forbade Yazidis to eat it.

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Never must the mouth pronounce the words *malaun* (accursed), *laaneh* (curse), *naal* [1], [horse-shoe, also vulgarism for curse], and others like it.

Before Jesus came to this world, our religion was called paganism. The Jews, the Christians, and the Mahommedans have always shown themselves the enemies of our religion, likewise the Persians (Mazdæans).

Among our sovereigns of old was one called Ahab. He commanded each of us to give him a special (secret ?) name, and our people at that time called him the god Ahab, or Ba'alzebub. To-day he is known among us by the name Pir Bub.

We had in Babylonia another king called Nebuchadnezzar ; in Persia the king Ahasuerus, and at Constantinople, Agrinkalus.

Before heaven and earth existed, God moved over the seas. He made himself a ship in which he travelled everywhere at will for his pleasure.

God had created a large pearl, which he had commanded

[1] A political officer tells me he was present at a dramatic performance given by the schoolchildren of Mosul. Many were invited, among them a number of Yazidis. The subject of the play was the Crusades. In one scene one of the characters is made to say, " Curse Austria ! " at which the Yazidis drew their abas over their heads and retired in horror.

A good story is quoted in a Government report as follows : " It is believed that any Yazidi who pronounces the name ' Shaitan ' will be struck blind. . . . In this connection I may perhaps be forgiven for relating a story told me by the Principal of the monastery of Alqosh, *apropos* of a lay brother there who was a converted Yazidi. ' That man,' he said, ' used to be a Yazidi, and, when a boy, was one day out ploughing his father's fields. As he ploughed, all sorts of thoughts kept passing through his mind, until he happened to think of the prohibition against the word Shaitan, and the penalty for breaking it. Finally his curiosity got the better of him, until, finally, focussing his vision on a stone, he said, very low, " Sh-sh-sh ! ' Nothing happened, and he ventured as far as " shai," and by degrees he progressed further and further, until at last, in a firm clear voice he said " Na'al Shaitan," and found his vision unimpaired. Elated, he returned home, and to his father sitting in the house said, " Father, I have said that which is forbidden, and I am not blind." " Aren't you ? " said the father, reaching for his gun ; " then you soon will be," and he came running with his father behind him, until he took shelter with us and became a Christian.' "

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during forty years ; then he grew angry with it, giving it a kick.

The great noise caused by its breaking caused the mountains to arise, the little noise gave birth to the hills, and the vapours which arose from it produced the heavens. It is since then that God ascended into the heavens, condensed them, and established them without pillars.

He locked up the earth and its abysses with a key, then took a pen into his hand and wrote the events of creation.

He then created six gods of his own essence and his own light, but he created them in the same manner that a man lights one lamp from another.

The first god said to the second, " I have drawn from the void the sky alone ; as for thee, ascend to it and create something." He ascended and became the sun. He said the same to the third, and he became the moon. The fourth became the orbit of the celestial bodies, the fifth proclaimed himself star of the morning, and the sixth changed himself into the atmosphere.

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APPENDIX II

NOTES ON THE FULL RITUAL OF THE SUBBA BAPTISM (*see p.* 204)

(I set down the notes as I made them. I was not able to follow completely here and there, as the movements were complicated and rapid.)

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THE bishop puts on his complete rasta, in some place apart, and then goes out to perform his ablutions by the river, while we await him in the courtyard. Returning, he stands on a square of matting with his back to the sun, hence facing the North Star, as it was midday, and the sun almost directly overhead. His books are in a small bag on the ground, and the other properties are :

(1) The apparatus for incense, consisting of four pieces : (*a*) The *kangona*, a small, round, slightly-hollowed-out stand upon which the other pieces are placed ; (*b*) A shallow saucer with a lip on either side. (*c*) A small terra-cotta vessel, not unlike an ink-pot, which stands in one lip. This is full of powdered incense (*briho*). (*d*) An earthenware brazier, standing in the saucer (*b*). This brazier, the *toriono*, had been already filled with lighted charcoal.

(2) The *keptho*, a small brass bowl, about as big as the bowl of a cooking spoon.

(3) The *kanino*, a glass bottle.

(4) A little meal.

(5) Some freshly-plucked sprigs of myrtle.

The bishop blesses each separate part of his rasta, touching each in turn. His prayer is voluble, sonorous, and rapid.

He takes the *tagha* (a piece of circular-woven tape about as

big as could be placed round a child's crown), and holding it in his hands, prays over it, and then, still continuing to pray, touches his mouth, eyes, and brow with it, then places it beneath his turban on his head.

He raises his hand to the right side of his turban and keeps it there some moments.

He picks up the incense, and touches his hand with it several times. Then he holds a pinch of incense between finger and thumb of right hand.

He stops praying an instant to get a long straw with which he revives the fire in the *toriono*. He replaces incense-pot in lip of saucer, praying again, and then takes a pinch from it and puts it on the glowing charcoal.

He stops praying and opens a book, from which he reads rapidly in the same chanting voice employed for the prayers. He bows low, reading all the time. He kneels, continuing to read. He takes long end of stole and carries it to turban with right hand, while still kneeling and reading. He rocks himself slightly from side to side. The pastoral staff is held throughout in the crook of the left arm. He drops the hand holding end of stole, but continues to hold stole. He stands again, reading all the time, and makes little gesticulations with his right hand. He takes another pinch of incense and puts it on the fire, placing staff for a while in his right hand. He stoops on his heels.

A pause while the bishop takes a little meal in the brass bowl and disappears from the courtyard to make the *peytho*, or sacramental bread. While he is gone, the bishop's sister dresses her small nephew in his rasta, the child looking at me smilingly all the time.

The bishop returns, bearing a small wafer of uncooked bread about as big as a round Osborne biscuit. He takes it in his right hand and begins to pray again. He places the wafer on the charcoal and cooks it. Then he takes it in his hand and, after some long prayers, eats it, and drinks water from the brass bowl. This done, he goes out of the courtyard again (his sister says to the river). He returns with water in

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the bowl, praying continuously, and throws the water over the end of his staff; then repeats a formula sixty-one times, holding the end of his stole in his hand and marking off the number with his fingers. The words sound like "Kantara kadmon." He bows, with stole still held between his hands. He opens his palms upwards, keeping the hands together, then bows again three times, holding his hands over his body.

He calls his little son, who takes the stole in his hands, and repeats a formula, word for word, after his father.

The bishop places the end of the stole on the boy's turban. He continues to pray rapidly, holding the stole against the right side of his turban.

Next he takes the *tagha* and touches his eyes, mouth, and brow with it sixty-one times. ("All this," interpolates his sister, "must be repeated to-morrow.")

The small deacon picks up the sprigs of myrtle, the bishop carries the earthenware stove, incense, and other paraphernalia, and they walk out, making me a sign to follow.

We walk along a street until we come to the river. On the river bank is a house. We enter the door, which brings us into a pleasant courtyard, in the centre of which plants and trees are growing. A few priests and men and women are awaiting us.

A handsome, black-bearded young priest, dressed in white, takes the myrtle-twigs from the boy-deacon, and carefully divides a twig into two long strips, leaving a few leaves on both halves. The bishop, meanwhile, praying all the while, is making another sacramental wafer. He cooks it and places it in a white cloth. He, too, takes a twig of rosemary and divides the stem as the priest has done. He then leaves the house, and, going to the river, stoops down, and performs ablutions, praying meantime. He returns and he and the priest twist the divided myrtle-twigs into three rings. A priest tells me that one ring is called the *klila*, but I do not catch the names of the others. The bishop takes the *tagha* out from under his turban, places one myrtle-ring on the little finger of his right hand, and prays, the stole tucked into his belt.

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He touches his eyes, mouth, and brow with the *tagha*, and does the same with the myrtle-twig ring. Then he takes the hanging end of his turban and fastens it across the lower part of his face, so that his eyes alone are visible. He picks up incense-holder (myrtle-ring on same hand) and places pinch of incense on the charcoal, replacing holder. He stands again and begins to read, his staff always held in his left arm. He reads at a great rate and when he has finished, takes off his aba (hitherto worn over the rasta), and, praying rapidly, begins to tuck his clothes up into his belt. He lets his stole hang at full length, and then lifts ends and puts them over each shoulder, finally tieing it round his neck, repeating one prayer many times over. He ties the *kinzala* (turban) also.

Walks from house and down into the river, wading in up to his thighs. Prays continuously. Places staff upright in the water, and lets one myrtle-ring slip over it (this later floats away down-stream). Washes the water with his hands, holding staff firmly in the mud of the bed of the stream.

The woman to be baptised, who wears a black aba over her rasta, wades out to him. She dips completely under water three times, while he splashes water over her to ensure that she is thoroughly wet. He gives her water to drink (*mambuha*) from the hollow of his hand or from brass bowl (I am unable to see which.) This he does several times.

The woman wades back to the bank, and several small children bearing the polluted pots and utensils used by the woman during the month of her confinement, wade out to the bishop, who, without ceasing his continual prayer, dips them in the river and returns them.

All return to the house, the bishop not pausing in his prayers, and the baptised woman, dripping wet, places herself before the bishop with her back turned to him. The bishop takes a little sesame from a bag, makes a paste of it and water, and smears it across the forehead of the woman, who crouches before him on her heels. He then touches her hand and she goes off a second time to the river and washes her bared arm and hand, without immersing herself again.

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On her return from the bank she holds her arm away from her so that it may touch nothing, nor, so the women tell me, is she allowed to open her lips.

The bishop then takes the *peytho*, or consecrated bread, in one hand and the brass bowl full of water in the other. The woman eats the *peytho* and drinks twice from the bowl he gives her, throwing the rest of the water over her right shoulder. He continues to pray with his hand laid on her head.

Both bishop and woman then extend their right hands, while the woman repeats a formula word for word after him. The bishop crouches on his heels behind the woman, being careful to let no part of his rasta touch the ground. Then both rise, she always keeping her back to him. He bows several times, then advances to stand beside her, taking her hand. She makes the formal salutation, touching heart, mouth, and brow. Then both crouch again.

The torrent of prayer ceases a moment as the bishop goes out of the house and down to the river again to fetch water. He returns and prepares another *peytho*, holding the uncooked paste in his right hand and water in his left. He eats the *peytho*, then removes the covering from his face.

Once again he goes down to the river to get water, and on his return he dashes it over the end of his staff.

He takes the long end of his turban in his hand, and repeats a prayer over it sixty-one times (the same as that repeated at his house; in fact, this part of the ceremony is in part a repetition of the beginning). He takes his turban between his hands, bows with his hands held on his body several times.

The boy-deacon gives his hand to the bishop and repeats a formula after him. The bishop now unties his clothes and touches each part of his rasta with a prayer over each part. Removes the *tagha* and the myrtle-ring which he had placed beside it beneath his turban, and touches his mouth, eyes, and brow with them sixty-one times.

A little more prayer, and the service ends.

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