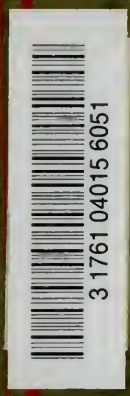


LAYARD'S EARLY ADVENTURES

EARLY ADVENTURES

IN

PERSIA, SUSIANA, AND BABYLONIA

VOL. II.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

THE AUTHOR WITH HIS SERVANT SALEH.

EARLY ADVENTURES

IN

PERSIA, SUSIANA, AND BABYLONIA

INCLUDING A RESIDENCE

AMONG THE BAKHTIYARI AND OTHER WILD TRIBES

BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF NINEVEH

By SIR HENRY LAYARD, G.C.B.

AUTHOR OF 'NINEVEH AND ITS REMAINS' ETC. : GOLD MEDALLIST OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II.

With Maps and Illustrations

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1887

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. II.

EARLY ADVENTURES.

CHAPTER XI.

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

SHORTLY after my arrival at Mehemet Taki Khan's encampment, news came that the Matamet, with his troops and artillery, had succeeded in crossing the last and highest pass of Zerda-kuh, and was descending the valleys which lead into Mal-Emir. Preparations were made by the Bakhtiyari chief for the reception of his guest in a manner becoming the rank of so exalted a personage. At the same time, he desired to show the Persians that they would have to encounter an imposing force if they attempted to carry out any scheme for the seizure by violence of his person or his property.

Accompanied by his two little sons, and by a large retinue of horsemen mounted upon the finest Arab horses, he went to meet the Matamet. The road by which the Eunuch entered the plain was lined by several thousand men, armed with matchlocks, which they discharged incessantly, whilst clouds of Bakhtiyari and Arab horsemen engaged in mimic fight—pursuing each other, bringing up their horses on their haunches when at full speed, firing their guns or pistols as they turned back in their saddles, and performing various other feats for which their ancestors in Parthian times were renowned.[1]

The Matamet appeared surrounded by his officers and guards, and followed by a motley crowd of horsemen. Before him walked the 'farrashes,' dealing blows right and left with their long sticks upon all within reach, on pretence of clearing the way for the great man. They were preceded by 'lûtis,' or buffoons, by Lur musicians with oboes and drums, and by a number of dervishes invoking Allah and the Prophet with loud cries, and calling down blessings upon the Matamet's head. His regular troops, with the artillery and baggage mules and a crowd of camp-followers, closed the

[1] The Baron de Bode, who was present, writes: 'I never witnessed a greater display of beautiful Arab-blood horses than on the plains of Mal-Emir at the camp of the Bakhtiyari chief, Muhammed Taghi Khan.'—*Travels in Luristan and Arabistan*, vol. ii. p. 92.

procession. Sheep and oxen were slain before him as he rode along, by way of sacrifice, according to the custom of the country.

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

The Persian tents were pitched at the opposite end of the plain to that occupied by the encampment of the Bakhtiyari chief, and between two and three miles distant from it. The Matamet's spacious double pavilion was lined with Cashmere shawls, and furnished with the finest carpets and silk hangings. Those of some of the high officials who accompanied him were scarcely less rich and costly. The troops were quartered partly in small bell-shaped tents, and partly in huts of boughs, which they speedily constructed. The vast number of ragged camp-followers were scattered about, living as they best could in the open air. They were for the most part thieves and arrant scoundrels, who robbed and maltreated any one who,

unprotected, fell into their hands. They were constantly brought before the Matamet, charged with some misdeed, and received summary punishment. The 'farrashes' who administered the bastinado were rarely idle, and I never visited the Persian headquarters without hearing the slashing sound of the long flexible switches and the cries of the victims, who probably in most cases fully deserved their punishment. It was only by such means that anything like order and discipline were maintained, as the soldiers were scarcely less lawless and given to crime than the crowd of idle and worthless vagabonds who followed in the wake of the Persian army.

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

I had to return on foot to the Bakhtiyari tents. Mehemet Ali Beg, who had accompanied me to

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

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

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

Some days passed before I felt well enough to ride to the Matamet's camp. I found that the Baron de Bode had left it for Shuster. We did not meet again until some years after in London, when he asked me to support, as a Member of Parliament, his claim arising out of the war with France, for, I believe, something like a million sterling, upon the British Government, which, after it had given rise to several debates in the House of Commons, was finally rejected.

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

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

himself at the head of the force which had now succeeded, with the chief's assistance, in reaching the low country to the west of the great range.

Ali Naghi Khan had from the first been in favour of temporising, and of avoiding a collision with the regular troops of the Shah, as well as any act of open rebellion against the authority of the Persian Government. It was through his advice that Mehemet Taki Khan had allowed the Persian army to cross the mountains, where the passes might have been held successfully against it by a handful of determined men. He still earnestly advised the same policy, and he was constantly going backwards and forwards from one encampment to the other, endeavouring to prevent any demand on the part of the Matamet upon his brother which might lead to a rupture of the negotiations and to war. He was considered by the Bakhtiyari to be a very skilful diplomatist, and, from his residence at court, to be well acquainted with all the tricks and arts by which Persian rulers are wont to entrap their victims, and to be able to frustrate and defeat them.

On arriving at Mal-Emir the Matamet renewed the Shah's offer with the promise of a 'khilat.'[2] But he required that Mehemet Taki Khan should

[2] A robe of honour conferred as a mark of royal favour upon persons appointed to high office.

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

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

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

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

Ali Naghi Khan's advice seemed to have been justified when the Matamet announced his intention of striking his tent and marching to Shuster. He took the road to Kala Tul, where he remained encamped in the plain for two days, on one of which an entertainment was given to him in the castle. Every precaution was taken by Mehemet Taki Khan to prevent a surprise, and the upper rooms were filled with armed men ready

to resist any attempt on the part of the Persian troops to seize him. The Matamet had, on the other hand, placed a considerable body of horsemen and regular troops in the courtyard and round the building, for his own security, as the mistrust was mutual. As he ascended, on horseback, the mound on which the castle stood, the usual sacrifice of sheep and bullocks was made before him, and he was presented by the Bakhtiyari chief with five high-bred Arab horses, twelve fine mules, a Cashmere shawl of great value, and two hundred tomans (100*l.*) in money on a silver salver. Presents were likewise distributed among his secretaries and principal officers. Mehemet Taki Khan had further furnished provisions to the Persian troops during the time they had been encamped in the plain of Mal-Emir and had been in the Bakhtiyari country. These calls upon him had well-nigh exhausted his resources, and he was under the necessity of calling upon his tribes to send their quota of the supplies demanded by the Matamet—a measure which naturally caused much discontent.

During the time that Mehemet Taki Khan was encamped in the plain of Mal-Emir, I had opportunities of revisiting the ruins of Sûsan and the rock-tablets of the Shikafti-Salman, and of searching for other sculptures and inscriptions in the

neighbouring mountains. In a small defile or gorge, called Hong, I discovered five figures, somewhat under life size, carved on a detached rock. They appeared to represent, from their costumes, the meeting of a king of the Sassanian dynasty, followed by three attendants, with another king, perhaps a Roman emperor, on horseback. There was no inscription near them.

I discovered another bas-relief near a ruined Imaum-Zadeh known as Shah-Suor.[3] The fall of part of a cliff on a hill-side had left the surface of the rock as if artificially scarped. Upon it was carved a tablet containing six figures, which appeared to me to belong to a much earlier period than the sculptures at Hong. They represented a king, probably of ancient Susiana or Elam, seated on a throne, receiving five captives with their arms bound behind their backs. These figures were scarcely two feet in height. An inscription, probably in the cuneiform character, which had once existed beneath them, had perished from the effects of time and weather.

But the most remarkable remains that I discovered in Mal-Emir were those in a ravine called Kul-Fara, or Faraoun. I counted no less than three hundred and forty-one small figures sculptured in the rock. They occupied five different tablets, and

[3] 'The king on horseback.'

were accompanied by a long and perfectly preserved inscription of twenty-four lines in the Susianian cuneiform character. There were, moreover, short inscriptions carved across some of the figures.[4]

The largest tablet, which was high up on the face of the rock, but easily accessible, contained ten figures, and appeared to represent a sacrifice. Men were seen in it bearing animals, and playing on instruments of music before an altar, near which stood a priest. The heads of most of the figures had been purposely defaced, probably by the early Musulman occupants of the country.

The three faces of a large triangular detached rock were covered with similar figures, also represented as engaged in sacrifice or in some religious ceremony. The same subject was repeated on a second detached rock, and in a third tablet, with one hundred and thirteen small figures, in a kind of recess in the hill-side. In another recess was a bas-relief representing a king seated on his throne, with attendants, priests, and others worshipping before him. On a fallen rock at the entrance to the gorge I found the figure of a man about seven feet high—apparently a priest, as his hands were raised as if in prayer. On one side of him

[4] These inscriptions are included in the first volume of the collection of cuneiform inscriptions published under my superintendence for the trustees of the British Museum.

were nine smaller figures, and four beneath him.[5]

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

The Matamet having left Kala Tul and proceeded on his way to the plains, there was every reason to expect that, satisfied with Mehemet Taki Khan's submission, and with the money and presents he had extorted from the Bakhtiyari chief, he would, after collecting the arrears of revenue due from Shuster and Dizful, return to the seat of his government at Isfahan. This hope was, however, doomed to disappointment. The cunning eunuch had effected his first and main object, which was to conceal his designs against Mehemet Taki Khan

[5] All these figures are fully described in my memoir published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* for 1846.

until he had safely crossed the mountains and had established himself in the open country, where he could best avail himself of his artillery and regular troops, and carry on in security his intrigues among the tribes, which he was endeavouring to detach from their chief.

Mehemet Taki Khan had sent his brother Ali Naghi with the Matamet to Shuster as a mark of respect. On his way thither the Matamet, when passing through the tribe of Gunduzlu and that of Suhunni, of which Shefi'a Khan, it will be remembered, was the head, invited that chief and others to accompany him. They did so, and were shortly afterwards treacherously made prisoners, and thrown into chains. At the same time Mansur Khan, supported by the governor of Shiraz and incited by the Matamet, marched against his rival, Mirza Koma, at the head of a force of regular and irregular troops, thus preventing him and the Kuhghelu tribes from coming to the assistance of Mehemet Taki Khan in the event of his being attacked.

The Matamet, having Ali Naghi Khan and some of the most influential Bakhtiyari chiefs in his power, summoned Mehemet Taki Khan to Shuster. He refused to obey the summons unless hostages were given to his family and his tribe for his safety. This condition was rejected by the

Matamet, who proclaimed the Bakhtiyari chief 'yaghi,' or in rebellion to the Shah, and commenced preparations to march against him.

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

Both Mehemet Taki Khan and his wife Khatun-jan were in despair at the thought of losing their child. Ali Naghi Khan, who had consented to deliver over his own son, was sent to Kala Tul to endeavour to induce his brother to give up Hussein Kuli. He urged the chief to comply with the Matamet's demand, in order to save his country from invasion and to avoid bloodshed. Although Mehemet Taki Khan had ample experience of Persian perfidy, and feared for the safety of his child when once in the Matamet's power, he was still unwilling to bring a war upon his people. Again listening to the counsels of his brother, he endeavoured to reconcile himself to the sacrifice. But Khatun-jan refused to part with her boy, and denounced Ali Naghi Khan as a traitor to his

brother, and as having been the cause, through his evil advice, of the misfortunes which had befallen her husband and the Bakhtiyari tribes. There was weeping and wailing in the enderun—all the women joining in her lamentations. Mehemet Taki Khan was overwhelmed with grief, for he greatly loved his son, and it was long before he could muster sufficient resolution to surrender him. It was with greater difficulty that he could overcome the almost frenzied opposition of his mother. When Hussein Kuli was placed on his horse, ready to leave the castle, she dragged him off again, and, clinging to him, refused to let him go. He was at last taken by force from her by the attendants. When she found that her efforts to retain him were of no avail, she consented to his departure on condition that I accompanied him to Shuster and watched over his safety, as she believed that my presence would prevent the Matamet from treating the boy with cruelty. I consented to do so to satisfy her, but with little hope of being able to protect him, should there be any intention on the part of the Matamet to commit so gross an outrage as to injure the innocent child who had been placed in his hands.

When at length we rode through the castle gate, Mehemet Taki Khan, unable to control his feelings, seated himself in the porch, sobbing like

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

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

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

We stopped for the night at the tents of Shefi'a Khan, where we found the women bewailing with piteous lamentations the treacherous seizure of their chief, whom they believed already doomed to the most cruel tortures and to death. The men of the tribe, hearing that Mehemet Taki Khan's son had arrived, gathered round us in the evening, cursing the Matamet and all Persians, and vowing that none of the race who fell into their hands should

escape alive. Their looks and gestures seemed to show that they would be as good as their word. We met with no adventures on our road, and reached Shuster on the fifth day, early in the afternoon.

An Isfendiar and his companions, fearing to put themselves into the Matamet's power, remained at Boleïti, a village near Shuster, on the Ab Gargar, an ancient canal derived from the Karun. I crossed the bridge leading into the town with the two boys and their 'Lala' or tutor. The Matamet was living in the castle, an ancient and much-ruined stronghold built upon a rock overhanging the river. He received us at once. He could not conceal the smile of satisfaction and triumph which passed over his bloated and repulsive features when the children stood before him. I saw at once that he had no intention of keeping the oath he had taken, to renounce the expedition against Mehemet Taki Khan now that he had secured his son as a hostage. He was seated on a carpet spread on a terrace overlooking the Karun, which wound beneath. In a small plain on the opposite side of the river were the tents of his troops. Horsemen belonging to the tribes of Jaffer Kuli Khan and Ali Riza Khan, two Bakhtiyari chiefs at enmity with Mehemet Taki Khan, were engaged in mimic fight, pursuing each other and

discharging their guns and pistols. He addressed Hussein Kuli sternly in his thin, shrill voice. 'Why,' he asked, 'have you not brought your father with you? Is he not coming to Shuster to see me?' 'No,' replied the boy, with an undaunted air, his hand resting on his gun. 'What if I were to send those soldiers' (pointing to the horsemen careering in the plain beneath) 'to fetch him?' rejoined the Matamet. 'Let them go to Kala Tul,' answered Hussein Kuli, grasping his dagger. 'They will all come back naked, like this,' putting his forefinger into his mouth and then withdrawing it and holding it up, a significant gesture employed by the Bakhtiyari to denote that they have stripped a man to his skin.

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

not tell you, and if I were compelled to do so he would not let you have it.'

The Matamet, finding that he could get nothing out of the brave boy by threats, ordered a Shusteri chief, one Au Mohammed Zamaun, to keep him and his cousin in close confinement with their 'lala.' I was as astonished at the courage and extraordinary self-possession of Hussein Kuli, as I was disgusted with the brutality and treachery of the Matamet. Even some of the Persian officers who had witnessed the scene I have described, accustomed as they were to the eunuch's perfidy, showed their pity for its innocent victims. They followed the children when they were led out of his presence and covered them with kisses.

After exchanging a few words with the Matamet I retired, resolved to return at once to Kala Tul to inform Mehemet Taki Khan of what had taken place. Without acquainting any one with my intention, fearing lest it might become known and that I might be stopped, I hurried out of the town, and putting my horse to a brisk pace made the best of my way across the plain, without following the beaten track, in the direction of the mountains. Although the country was now in a very disturbed state, and bands of marauders were plundering travellers and caravans, I was not molested. The Bakhtiyari at whose tents I stopped at night ex-

pressed the greatest indignation when they learnt the manner in which the son of their chief had been treated, but were enthusiastic in their admiration of the courage and daring of the boy, making me describe over and over again the scene between him and the Matamet. One old lady threw her arms round my neck, exclaiming, 'No true Bakhtiyari ever died in his bed. Hussein Kuli will not bring shame upon his tribe.'

When I reached the castle and informed Mehemet Taki Khan of what had occurred, he no longer doubted that the Matamet had all along intended to deceive him, and was determined to get him into his hands, to depose him from his chieftainship, and to send him a prisoner to Tehran. Resistance was now too late, and he bitterly repented that he had listened to the advice of his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, and had not either prevented the Persian troops from entering the mountains, or attacked them when entangled in the narrow defiles and difficult passes where they would have been in his power. He was very proud, however, of the behaviour of his son, who, he declared, was worthy of his race.

Khatun-jan Khanum made up her mind that her boy was for ever lost to her, and broke out into touching lamentations, reproving her husband for having trusted a cruel and treacherous eunuch

—a 'Kafir' who held no oath sacred, and did not even respect the innocence of childhood. It was impossible to console her.

My anticipations were well-founded. The very day on which the Matamet had the hostages in his power, he commenced preparations to leave Shuster at the head of his troops, to march against the Bakhtiyari chief. At the same time he sent Mohammed Hussein Khan, one of the Bakhtiyari chiefs whom he had also treacherously seized, to inform Mehemet Taki Khan that, unless he surrendered, the two boys would be put to death.

The force under the command of the Matamet had now been increased by two regiments of 'serbâz' and some artillery which he had received from the northern districts of Luristan, and by a large number of horsemen and matchlock-men who had been furnished to him by Mehemet Taki Khan's enemies and rivals, and by the chief of the Faili—a Lur tribe inhabiting the mountains to the north of the Bakhtiyari country—and by some Arab sheikhs within the government of Shuster. In the meanwhile several of the tribes had been detached by bribes and intrigues from Mehemet Taki Khan, whilst others, fearing to be attacked by the Persians, were unwilling to send their armed men, who were required for the defence of their families, to his assistance. He was consequently

no longer in a position to offer an effective resistance. Still hoping that by temporising and negotiating he might avoid war, he sent his brother, Au Kerim, to Shuster to offer fresh terms to the Matamet, proposing to follow him in a few days with such a force as he could collect for his protection against a surprise. I accompanied Au Kerim. The country between Kala Tul and Shuster had been almost deserted by its inhabitants, and we were obliged to take precautions—concealing ourselves during the greater part of the day, travelling by night, and keeping away from beaten tracks—to avoid being discovered.

Whilst Au Kerim was carrying on his negotiations with the Matamet I availed myself of the opportunity to make an excursion to the district of Akili, in which I had been told there were some ancient ruins. The road to it from Shuster is by a narrow defile, through which the river Karun forces its way. Along its banks there are traces of a causeway, apparently of great antiquity, cut in the rocks and carried through them in places by tunnels. High up on the cliffs are many excavated chambers, apparently tombs, such as are everywhere found in these mountains. Near the entrance to this defile are the remains of an ancient bend, or dam, of stone masonry carried across the river, known as the Bendi-Dukhter—

the Maiden's Dyke. In the plain, into which this gorge leads, there is a large 'tapeh,' or artificial mound, near a village called Rodeni. Whilst taking some bearings with my compass from the summit of it, I was suddenly surrounded by a number of horsemen belonging to the tribe of Rahi, under a chief named Ali Saleh Khan, at enmity with Mehemet Taki Khan. They were out on a 'chapou,' or plundering expedition, and it was with no little difficulty and only after a long parley that I succeeded in inducing them not to rob me of my clothes and my horse. After they had left me I could see them driving away sheep and cattle from the villages. The inhabitants offered some resistance, and there was a great deal of firing and shouting on both sides, but the marauders were able to carry off the greater part of their booty.

The cuneiform inscription which, I had been assured, existed near the mound proved to be a stone covered with some almost illegible Persian writing, near an Imaum-Zadeh. Beyond, on either side of the river, near a village named Turkeloki, I discovered the ruins of which I was in search. They were called by the inhabitants Kala Rustem, the castle of Rustem, and were believed by them to be of the highest antiquity. But they were of the Sassanian period, and

appeared to be the remains of a castle which defended the entrance to the defile.

The district of Akili had once been very flourishing, and had contained fourteen villages; but at that time only eight remained. Oppression, bad government, and the constant raids of the Lurs, who descended upon it from their mountains, had reduced it to poverty and ruin. It was occupied by the Gunduzlu, an Afshar tribe, which had migrated to it at some former period. Nadir Shah is said to have found them established there, and to have transferred them back to the country whence they came.[6] But they returned after his death to Akili.

I passed the night with Murad Khan, their chief, who resided in the village of Boleïti. As his followers were in the habit of spending the spring and summer among the Arab tribes who encamp in the plains near Shuster, they had adopted in a great measure Arab habits and the Arab language. They had been for some years under the protection of Mehemet Taki Khan, and under his mild and equitable rule had regained much of their ancient prosperity. Villages were being rebuilt and the deserted lands brought again into cultivation. The tribe, which at one

[6] Gunduzlu is Turkish, the language of the Afshar tribes, and means 'day-lighters'—compare 'moon-lighters.'

time could only muster about forty horsemen, were then able to bring between four and five hundred, and a considerable body of matchlock-men, into the field.

On the following morning, Murad Khan, who had entertained me very hospitably, sent me, with his brother Lufti Aga, to the pasture-grounds of his tribe, to the east of the Ab Gargar, an ancient canal excavated in the rock which divides the waters of the Karun into two branches. I was very kindly received at the different encampments at which we stopped, and was able, under the protection of Lufti Aga, to reach, the day after our departure from Boleïti, the spot where the Ab Gargar again joins the Karun, about twenty-four miles to the south of Shuster. It is called Bendi Kir, from an ancient dam said to have been constructed with bitumen (kir), which is said to have once existed there. Near the junction of these two streams with a third called the river of Dizful, from the town through which it passes[7] on leaving the mountains, I found the site of an ancient and very extensive city, marked by the remains and foundations of buildings of sun-dried and kiln-burnt bricks, and by mounds

[7] This river may perhaps be identified with the Coprates of the ancient geographers. The Karun before its junction with the river of Dizful may be the ancient Eulæus, and the two rivers, after their junction, the Pasi-tigris. See my memoir published in vol. xvi. of the *Geographical Society's Journal*, p. 91, &c.

strewn with potsherds. It was that of Askeri-Mukram, one of the most celebrated settlements of the Arab conquerors of Persia, built upon the remains of a much earlier city, known as Rustem-Kowádh, said to have been founded by one of the Persian kings of the Kayanian dynasty. A miserable Arab village stood among the ruins.

The three streams, after their junction, form a broad, navigable river, which falls into the Shat-el-Arab, or united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris. It was spring-time, and their banks and the plain between Bendi-Kir and Shuster were clothed with grass and flowers. Arab tents and flocks and herds feeding on the luxuriant pastures were to be seen in all directions. The country watered by these rivers is singularly fertile, but misgovernment and oppression have so completely put a stop to its cultivation, that after the herbage brought forth by the winter and spring rains has been dried up by the sun, it becomes a parched and arid desert. In former times a scientific system of irrigation rendered the soil productive throughout the year. The remains of innumerable ancient canals and watercourses, now dry, are still to be traced. Security for life and property, and an industrious, settled population are only required to restore to the rich alluvial earth its former productiveness.

CHAPTER XII.

Mehemet Taki Khan leaves the mountains—Plan to carry off Hussein Kuli—Leave Shuster—The naphtha springs—Join some dervishes—Return to Shuster—Description of the town—Descend the Karun—Robbed of my money—Leave Ahwaz for Fellahiyah—Alarm and flight of the Arabs—Construct a raft—Float into the musif of the Cha'b sheikh—Sheikh Thamer—My companions in his musif—A homicide—Arrival of Mirza Koma—The capture of Behbahan.

Soon after my return from this excursion, Mehemet Taki Khan, who had been induced to leave Kala Tul on the promise that if he would enter into personal communication with the Matamet war might still be avoided, moved with his followers into the plain about nine miles to the east of Shuster. But before entering the town, or approaching nearer to it, he required some sufficient guarantee for his safety in the event of his being sent to Tehran to make submission to the Shah, and that he should not be treated as a prisoner, but should be allowed to return to his mountains.

The Matamet, however, refused to give a pledge which would satisfy the Bakhtiyari chief.

Ali Naghi Khan then advised that his brother should occupy the 'diz,' or hill fort, of Mungasht, which the Bakhtiyari deem impregnable, or should betake himself to the Tangi-Chevel, a mountain stronghold which, it was believed, could be successfully defended by a small body of men against any number of troops that the Matamet could bring against it. But Mehemet Taki Khan, still wishing to spare his tribes a war in which their crops then ripening would be destroyed and their country devastated, whatever might be its issue, decided upon taking refuge with the Cha'b Arabs, whose sheikh was in alliance with him, and who were in the habit of encamping within his territories. He believed that in the marshes in which they dwelt, near the Shat-el-Arab, he would be safe from pursuit. Hearing that he had failed to come to an understanding with the Matamet, and was returning towards Kala Tul, I determined to join him.

Before leaving Shuster I had agreed with some Bakhtiyari, who were there, to make an attempt to rescue Hussein Kuli and to take him back to his father. There would have been no great difficulty in doing so, and all our arrangements were completed when, at the last moment, the boy's 'lala,' who was in the plot, fearing either for his own safety or for that of his charge, refused to let

him leave the house. The child was to have been disguised as a girl, and to have been taken out of the city with the help of one of the servants of Au Mohammed Zamaun, in whose custody he had been placed by the Matamet.

There were several Bakhtiyari horsemen in Shuster who had accompanied Au Kerim, and who, like myself, were anxious to rejoin the chief. It was arranged that they should leave the city early one morning, one by one, so as to pass through the gates without attracting the attention of the guards, and meet at a small village not far distant, belonging to Mehemet Taki Khan. This plan was carried out successfully, and when we had assembled we took the road to Kala Tul. We had not proceeded far when we perceived that we were being followed by a party of horsemen. As they were gaining upon us we put our horses to a gallop, and striking into the hills managed to evade our pursuers by hiding ourselves in a ravine.

We reached about midday some naphtha, or bitumen, springs, where there was a small building serving, in peaceful times, for the guards placed over them by Mehemet Taki Khan, to whom they belonged.[1] In consequence of the disturbed state

[1] I believe that these springs produced the 'mumia,' a sort of mineral pitch highly prized by the Persians for the healing qualities ascribed to it.

of the country, this spot, which was well concealed in the hills, was frequently made a place of meeting for parties out on forays. My horse, which had been ill-fed and was very weak, could proceed no further. I could not detain my companions, who unwillingly left me, as they could not remain without running great risk of being discovered. I resolved to rest my horse for a few hours and then to endeavour to find the tents of my friend, Lufti Aga, the Gunduzlu chief, who was encamped on the Ab Gargar. Fortunately no one came near the place during the day, and I was not disturbed. When I left the springs, soon after sunset, my horse, although it had fed voraciously upon the grass which grew in abundance near the springs, was still too weak for me to remount, and I had to lead it by the halter. I knew the direction of the track, but my progress was very slow, as I was obliged to use great caution and watchfulness, there being much danger of my falling into the hands of robbers. It was nearly midnight when the bark of dogs and the light of fires in the distance showed me that I must be near an encampment. It proved to be the one of which I was in search, and Lufti Aga, whom I disturbed in his sleep, received me with his wonted hospitality.

I had hoped that a good feed of barley and

some hours' rest would have enabled my horse to proceed on the following morning, and as three Arab horsemen were going to Ram Hormuz, I left the encampment with them. We had ridden a few miles when my horse fell and could carry me no farther. I returned on foot, leading it, to the tents.

By the help of Lufti Aga, I managed to exchange my wearied horse, with the addition of three tomans, for a strong mare. The Aga having found a man to accompany me on foot to Ram Hormuz, I made a fresh start in the evening, my host urging me to travel by night to avoid the Lur and Arab marauders, who were scouring the country. My guide was as much in dread of lions as of robbers. In the grey of the morning we perceived in the distance a number of men coming towards us. My companion immediately took to his heels and made for the hills, where he could conceal himself. I thought that it would be useless for me to attempt to follow him on horseback over the steep and stony ground. As I must have been already seen, and could scarcely hope to escape if pursued, it appeared to me that my most prudent course was to make the best of matters, and to continue on my road without showing any hesitation.

As I approached the party I perceived that it

consisted of some fifteen men on foot. As I was well armed and on horseback, I had no reason to fear a meeting. I, therefore, rode up to them, and found that they were dervishes who had been living on the charity of Mehemet Taki Khan, and had been wandering among the tribes. The country being now deserted and in a very unsafe state on account of the departure of the Bakhtiyari chief from Kala Tul, they were going to Shuster. With them was one Mohammed Reshid Khan, a ghulâm, who had been sent by the Matamet with letters to Mirza Koma. He and his servant had been robbed of their arms and horses and stripped of their clothes on the plain of Ram Hormuz. They were walking in their shirts and drawers, overcome with fatigue and in great distress.

I learnt from the dervishes that Mehemet Taki Khan had not returned to Kala Tul, but had passed through Ram Hormuz on his way, they thought, to Fellahiyah, the residence of Sheikh Thamer, the chief of the Cha'b Arabs. The country, they assured me, was overrun with Arab horsemen, who had already plundered most of the villages, and through whom it would be impossible for me to make my way in safety.

As I had no longer any object in continuing my journey to Kala Tul—Mehemet Taki Khan being neither there nor in the neighbourhood—I

determined to join the dervishes and to return with them to Shuster. They were a picturesque and motley crew. One or two were what the Persians call 'luti,' young men with well-dyed curls, long garments, and conical cloth caps embroidered in many colours—debauched and dissolute fellows, who, under the guise of poverty and affecting abstinence and piety, were given to every manner of vice. Others were half-naked savages, with long hair hanging down their backs, and the skins of gazelles on their shoulders—barefooted, dirty, and covered with vermin. They carried heavy iron maces, and seemed more disposed to exact than to ask for charity. As they went along they shouted, 'Yah Allah! yah Mohammed! yah Ali!' One of the party was a hideous negro, with enormous projecting lips and of most ferocious mien. He wore nothing but a lion's skin, and carried a huge hatchet in his hand. They all had slung from their shoulders the carved cocoanut-shell which is indispensable to the dervish, and serves for carrying food and for drinking purposes. Round their necks they wore charms and amulets, with beads and coloured strings and tassels.

I joined this strange and forbidding company. They were going to a deserted castle called Darabeed, in which they intended to conceal them-

selves during the day, as they feared to meet one of the 'chapous,' or plundering parties, that were known to be on the look-out for travellers and caravans. The ghulâm, who had been walking all night with bare feet, having been robbed of his shoes and stockings, was so footsore that he could scarcely crawl along. He seemed to suffer so much pain that I gave him my horse to ride whilst I walked. We soon reached the ruined castle. The dervishes had a little bread and a few onions, which they invited the ghulâm and myself to share with them, and, the konar trees being in fruit,[2] we managed to make a sufficient meal. We then laid down to sleep, my horse having first been picketed in the luxuriant grass which had sprung up in the courtyard of the building.

My guide, who had been watching my movements from a distance, carefully keeping himself out of sight, had made up his mind that I had fallen among robbers and had been made prisoner. He joined us, however, later in the day, but, not fancying the company into which I had fallen, soon afterwards disappeared, and I saw no more of him.

We continued our journey in the evening to

[2] The Jujub, Zizyphus lotus vulgaris, or Jujuba, or heterogenea. It was called 'Connaros' by the Greeks. The fruit is a large elongated berry, of a reddish-yellow colour when ripe, slightly acid and pleasant to the taste.

the naphtha springs, and took possession of the deserted guard-house. We had no food but the stale bread and onions and the konar fruit.

The following day I again lent my horse to Mohammed Reshid Khan, and went on foot with the dervishes. Notwithstanding their misfortunes and fatigues my companions were a merry set. The 'luti' danced and sang lewd songs, to the accompaniment of a noise made by snapping the forefingers of both hands together. The others related legends of Hazret Ali and the Imaums, and recounted their adventures. They showed no desire to avoid my society, although as a Christian I was unclean to them, but were ready to eat with me, declaring that they were 'sufis,' or free-thinkers, and that all men, whatever their creed, were brothers. Most Persian dervishes, although they have great pretensions to sanctity, by which they impose upon the people, high and low, are without any religion. They are, however, credited with working miracles, and with being able to give efficacious charms. They are consequently always welcome in house or tent. There is invariably a woman who wants a child, or a girl a husband, or an old man a philter, or a youth protection from wounds by sword or gun, or a whole family with sore eyes—they all come to the dervish, who is ready to prescribe a remedy

for every ill, or to give an amulet which is warranted to preserve the wearer against every accident. In return he receives from the poor food and entertainment, and from the wealthy presents in money as well as in kind. Although these dervishes are rank impostors, and generally arrant scoundrels, they maintain their influence over the ignorant and superstitious Persians of all classes, who greatly fear, and do not dare to offend, them. Consequently no one ventures to refuse them admission into their houses, and even into the enderun, or women's apartments, where those who go stark naked, and are looked upon as specially holy and protected by Allah and Ali, can enter with impunity. Sometimes they will demand a specific sum of money from a rich man, and if he refuses to pay it will establish themselves in the gateway or porch of his dwelling, or outside close to it, and, enclosing a small plot of ground, sow wheat or plant flowers, and remain until what they ask for is paid to them, howling hideously night and day, calling upon Mohammed, Ali, and the Imaums, or blowing on a buffalo's horn so as to disturb the whole neighbourhood. The owner and inmates of the house are helpless. They do not dare to remove by force the holy man. If they attempted to do so they would excite a commotion which might lead to fatal conse-

quences amongst a fanatical population who look upon the dervishes as under the particular protection and inspiration of Ali. They are consequently under the necessity of satisfying their unwelcome guest or of submitting to the nuisance as long as he chooses to remain—which is sometimes for many months—watching his growing corn, tending his flowers, blowing his horn, heaping imprecations upon the head of the owner of the house, and prophesying every manner of disease and calamity for him, his wives, and his children. It is the fear that these prophecies may be fulfilled that generally leads his victim to submit to the extortion practised upon him.

Before nightfall we came upon some families of the Gunduzlu tribe who were moving into the hills. They gave us such food as they possessed; but they were unable to afford us shelter, as they had not yet pitched their tents, and we were obliged to sleep under the sky. As it rained heavily during the night we were soon drenched to the skin. The next day we reached Shuster, and I parted from my dervish companions. Although they were a reckless and debauched set they treated me with kindness, shared the little food they had with me, and entertained me by their proceedings. I learnt something from them of dervish life, and consequently of Eastern manners and

habits little known to Europeans. When they reached the town the company broke up and they separated—some of the party quartering themselves, unbidden, in the manner I have described, on the wealthier inhabitants; others going to the caravanserais, or wandering about the bazars, trusting to charity for their living. I went to the house of one Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, whom I had met at Kala Tul, and who was much esteemed by Mehemet Taki Khan. This excellent man, who received me with the most generous hospitality, proved subsequently a very true and useful friend to me.

During my several visits to Shuster, and owing to my acquaintance with some of its principal inhabitants, who, probably on account of my friendship with Mehemet Taki Khan—the Bakhtiyari chief being much esteemed by them—treated me with singular kindness and confidence, I had exceptional opportunities for obtaining information concerning the population and political condition of the town.[3] It was, at one time, a prosperous and wealthy city, as is proved by the many substantial and well-built houses which it contains, for the most part, however, deserted and falling

[3] Some account of Shuster will be found in my paper on the province of Khuzistan, published in vol. xvi. of the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society.*

to ruins. The plague, the cholera, and bad government had reduced it to a very poverty-stricken and desolate state. The plague alone, which had desolated the province of Khuzistan in 1831 and 1832, had, it was said, carried off nearly 20,000 of its inhabitants. The bodies of those who died of it were often allowed to rot before they were hastily buried in the streets or in the courtyards of the houses, and by corrupting the air added to the ravages of the disease. Many of the principal families had since fled from the town to escape the extortions and tyranny of Persian governors, such as the Matamet, and had taken refuge in the plains among the Arab tribes, or in the mountains among the Bakhtiyari, where they were always kindly received and protected by Mehemet Taki Khan.

The trade of Shuster, which had at one time been considerable, as it was the capital of Khuzistan, whence the inhabitants of the province obtained their supplies, and where its produce was sent to market, had been so greatly reduced in consequence of the corrupt administration and oppression of the Persian officials, and by the transfer of the seat of government to Dizful, that the extensive bazars were almost empty. Situated on two navigable streams—the main body of the river Karun and the ancient canal which receives

a large part of its waters—and at the foot of the mountains over which passes the highway to Isfahan and to the centre of Persia, the city is admirably fitted for the development of an important commerce.

The houses are mostly built of stone, and some are very spacious and handsome, and have been richly decorated after the Persian fashion. They are provided with extensive 'serd-âbs,'[4] or underground apartments, known in Khuzistan as 'shâdrewan,' which are excavated to a considerable depth in the rock, and are ventilated and kept cool by lofty air-chimneys. In these cellars the Shusteris pass the day during the summer months, when the great heat renders the rooms almost uninhabitable. At night they sleep on the flat roofs. The houses have generally two stories, and have large courtyards in which are 'iwans,' or halls, entirely open to the air on one side, used as 'diwan-khanas,' for the reception of guests. The habitations of the poorer classes are for the most part mere hovels—dirty and in ruins.

The climate of Shuster is considered very healthy, and the water the best in Persia. But the heat in summer is very great, proving not unfrequently fatal to those who are exposed to it. Ophthalmia is very prevalent, and the narrow

[4] Literally 'cold water.'

streets, filled with filth and with open drains running through them, are the source of disease, and contribute to the spread of the plague, cholera, and pernicious fevers.

Shuster is known for the number of its seyyids, or descendants of the Prophet and the Imaums. Almost every man one meets wears the green turban—their distinctive mark. They have the reputation of being very bigoted and fanatical, and very intolerant of Christians; but I saw no proofs of it in my intercourse with them. On the contrary, they treated me with great kindness and hospitality. They are rigid, orthodox Shi'as, and consequently cordially detest the Turks and others of the Sunni sect.

The Shusteris, or inhabitants of the city and neighbourhood, are mostly of Arab descent, and speak the Arabic language, as well as the Lur dialect of the Persian. Their costume, too, is more that of the town Arab than of the Persian. They use for a turban the 'lung,' or brown striped cloth, with the ends falling down their backs, like the Bakhtiyari; but wear the long robe of chintz or silk, fastened tight at the neck and reaching to the ankles, called by the Arabs 'zibouu,' and the Arab 'abba,' or cloak. The women dress more in the Persian fashion, with gowns open in front, exposing the breasts and much of the

person. They cover their heads and shoulders with a kind of net of silk or cotton thread, which being usually of gay colours is very becoming. The older women tie a black silk kerchief tight round their foreheads, the younger, one of some coloured material. The children of both sexes among the lower classes are allowed to go stark naked. The Shusteri ladies are renowned for their beauty, but not for their virtue. They are strangely indifferent to that female modesty which is inculcated by the Mohammedan religion. I have seen them in crowds stripping themselves of their garments, and washing them or themselves in the Ab Gargar, under the windows of the house in which I was living. The men are tall, well-made, and handsome, but almost as swarthy as the Arabs of the surrounding plains.[5]

[5] I extract the following description of the position of Shuster from my paper on Khuzistan: 'Shuster is situated at the foot of a range of low sandstone hills running parallel with the great chain (of Luristan), and about eighteen miles distant from it. The Karun immediately above the town is divided into two branches; that to the north is the original channel of the river, that to the south is the celebrated Nahri-Masrukán, or artificial canal now called the Abi-Gargar, said to have been cut by Ardeshir Babiyan. The town is surrounded by this canal, the Karun, and a small canal connecting the two. They form its natural defences. The old walls are in ruins. The castle stands on a rock rising boldly from the river. This high ground falls rapidly to the level of the city, and the castle itself is commanded by higher positions. A subterranean watercourse has been carried through the rock, and supplies

Whilst the Bakhtiyari and other Lur tribes were committing depredations in the country outside Shuster, the Matamet's soldiers were plundering the bazars and robbing the inhabitants within. I had the misfortune to lose my horse, which was stolen the day after my return to the town. I was unable to recover the animal, and had not the money to purchase another. I could not, therefore, carry out my intention of resuming my search after Mehemet Taki Khan. As it was reported that the Bakhtiyari chief had succeeded in reaching the territory of the Cha'b Arabs, I resolved to find my way to Fellahiyah, the residence of their principal sheikh, on the river Jerrahi, which I had crossed near its source on my way to Behbahan. But I could not do so alone and on foot. Whilst in doubt as to the course I should pursue, I learnt that a boat was about to leave Shuster for Ahwaz, an Arab settlement on the Karun, between forty and fifty

the castle and the town with water. The Abi-Gargar is crossed where it leaves the Karun by a massive "bend," or dam, of dressed stone, which may be passed on foot in summer, six narrow openings only being left for the passage of the water. About half a mile below this dam is a second, forming a complete barrier to the stream, which, escaping through passages cut laterally through the rock, falls in cataracts into the bed beneath. The "bend" serves as a means of communication between Shuster and the plains on the opposite side of the Abi-Gargar. The Karun is crossed by a stone bridge of forty-four arches, built upon a massive dam or dyke, attributed to the Sassanian king Shapur D'hu Laktaf.'

miles below the town. I determined to take a passage in it, trusting to chance to find some means of reaching Fellahiyah from that place. As it was to descend the Ab Gargar, I should at the same time have an opportunity of examining that great canal, as well as the Karun below Bendi-Kir, and of ascertaining, as I was very desirous of doing, their fitness for navigation by the steamers then on the Tigris.

The boat, which was an undecked one, was moored near the village of Husseinabad, about five miles below Shuster. I had to walk to the place, having hired a boy to carry my effects, which were now reduced to a pair of saddle-bags, containing my books, maps, and notes, a small carpet, and a Persian saddle.

The boat belonged to an Arab of Ahwaz. It was chiefly used for carrying firewood for sale, and was small and dirty. There were already several persons on board, and I had some difficulty in finding sufficient space to spread my carpet. My fellow-passengers were two Bakhtiyari, one or two Persians, and some dervishes, amongst whom I recognised one of my late travelling-companions. They were all on the pilgrimage to Kerbela, intending to float down the river to its junction with the Shat-el-Arab, and to make their way thence through Basra to the holy city.

We began our voyage at sunset, and continued it through the night. I had secured a place in the fore part of the vessel, which was raised above that occupied by the other passengers. I had provided myself with a piece of lead attached to a string for sounding as we went along, which I could do in the darkness without being observed. We reached the Arab village of Weis on the Karun in the middle of the day, and remained there for some hours, resuming our voyage in the evening. During the night a high wind interfered with our progress, and we stopped for the greater part of next day whilst the crew cut wood, which was found in abundance on the right bank of the river, and loaded the vessel with it, to the great inconvenience of the passengers, who were compelled to seat themselves on the logs piled up in the middle of the boat.

We again floated down the stream, passing encampments of the Arab tribe of Anafeja, under one Sheikh Zendi, whose tent was pitched on the river-bank, and two small 'kúts,' or earth-built forts, constructed by him for the purpose of exacting blackmail from boats and rafts. We reached Ahwaz before daylight.

On landing, I tendered to the 'nâ-khudâ' the customary fare, which amounted to a few pence. It was indignantly rejected. As I was a Feringhi and an Englishman—supposed to be a person of

unbounded wealth—I was expected to pay at least as much as if I had hired the whole boat for myself. I refused to give more than my fellow-passengers. Having been treated exactly like them, I was determined to pay like them.

The dispute with the 'nâ-khudâ' and his crew led to high words. Their friends, who had come to the bank to receive them on their arrival, joined in it. At one time affairs became so serious that I was compelled to raise my gun in self-defence, as they menaced me with their swords and the heavy wooden clubs which Arabs are in the habit of carrying. Fortunately, before it became necessary for me to do more than threaten to shoot the first man who attempted to lay hands upon me, a friendly seyyid, whom I had known at Shuster, appeared upon the scene. He placed himself between me and my assailants, and restored peace. Through his intervention the money I had originally tendered was accepted by the 'nâ-khudâ,' who, however, retained my saddle, which he refused to give up.

As I knew no one at Ahwaz, a small Arab town, or rather village, of mud hovels and reed-built huts, I accompanied my fellow-passengers to the 'musif'[6] of the owner of the boat, who was a man of some

[6] The 'musif' is the part of a house or tent reserved for guests by all Arabs, except the very poorest.

importance in the place. When the time came for settling their accounts with him for their passage, the pilgrims to Kerbela declared that they were absolutely without money, as they had expected that, engaged as they were in performing the sacred duty imposed upon all shi'as of a pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Ali and the Imaums Hussein and Hassan, they could rely upon the charity and hospitality of good Musulmans during their journey. The owner of the boat did not view matters in the same light, but insisted upon the full payment of their fares.

Finding that they could not influence him by appeals to him as a true believer and by calling upon Hazret Ali, they sought to soften his heart by breaking out into lamentations and weeping aloud in chorus; but with no better result. This was probably not the first time that the crafty Arab had to deal with 'Kerbelayis.'[7] He thought that by remaining firm, and threatening to confiscate the little property they had with them, he would end by obtaining his due.

However, they continued to sob aloud in the most heartrending manner, until one of the party, apparently touched by their well-dissimulated grief, offered to pay not only their fares to Ahwaz, but

[7] Pilgrims to Kerbela are, as I have already mentioned, so called in Persia.

to bear the expenses of their journey as far as Basra, whence they could make their way on foot to the holy cities, depending on the hospitality of the Arabs they would meet on their way. This instance of generosity on the part of a Persian caused me some surprise, and led me to suspect that there must be something out of the common which had led to it. I bethought me of my own resources. Hitherto I had concealed the few gold pieces that I possessed in a wash-leather belt which I wore next my skin. As this belt had produced an irritation which inconvenienced me, I had taken it off before leaving Shuster, thinking that I had nothing more to fear from robbers, and had put it into my pocket. I now found that I had been robbed of it, and had absolutely nothing left except five 'kirâns,'[8] which I had carried loose about me.

I had no doubt whatever but that the generous Persian was the thief, and that he had picked my pocket whilst I was asleep in the boat. I accused him of the theft, which, of course, he indignantly denied. I was alone, and without friends to help me. There was nobody to whom I could appeal for justice. The sheikh in whose 'musif' we were lodged, and who, with a strange inconsistency not uncommon in the Arab character, had fed us

[8] The Persian kirân is equal to about one shilling.

sumptuously with pillaus and a sheep boiled whole, whilst he was wrangling with us for a few pence, had seized my saddle. He was one of the principal men in the place, and I could not expect to obtain redress from him, nor from the head of the tribe to which the town belonged, who was evidently in league with him.

There was nothing to be done but to hire a mule and a guide to Fellahiyah, where I hoped to meet Mehemet Taki Khan. But there was only one mule to be found, and for its hire I was asked an exorbitant price, which I was not able, had I been willing, to pay. As I was meditating in the evening over my somewhat forlorn position, and revolving in my mind how I could best extricate myself from it, I learnt that a Persian officer had arrived, and was in the 'musif' of the principal sheikh. I went to him at once. I found that he was one of the Matamet's principal ghulâms, who was returning from a mission upon which he had been sent to Sheikh Thamer, of the Cha'b Arabs. He had seen me in the Persian camp, and consequently knew that I had been treated with civility and attention by his master. He was surprised to find me there alone and in trouble. To allay any suspicions he might entertain as to my object in seeking to join Mehemet Taki Khan, who had now been proclaimed to be in open rebellion to the Shah, I

explained to him that I had left some of my effects with the Bakhtiyari chief, which I desired to recover. I had heard, I said, that he was at Fellahiyah, and I was on my way thither to him. The ghulâm at first protested that Mehemet Taki Khan had not taken refuge with the Cha'b sheikh, but had gone to the mountains with a large following of horsemen. Finding that I was bent upon continuing my journey, he declared that it would be impossible for me to pass through the country between Ahwaz and Fellahiyah, as the Arabs had fled from it in consequence of the rumoured advance of the Matamet's army, and as it was infested by robbers and marauders of all kinds.

Finding, however, that he could not turn me from my purpose, he undertook to obtain a mule to take me to Fellahiyah, and to compel the owner of the boat to give up my saddle and my carpet, which he had also seized. He accordingly sent for the sheikh of the town, and succeeded in doing both; but the sum asked for the hire of the mule, although not so exorbitant as that at first demanded, was still more than I was able to pay. Commiserating me in my difficulties, he professed himself ready to buy my saddle, and generously proposed to give me about one-fourth of its value. I could not bargain with so great a man, and, as I had no other course open to me, I was under

the necessity of accepting his offer. He paid me ten kirâns for my saddle, and the owner of the mule agreed, for that sum, half of which he was no doubt forced to pay to the ghulâm, to be ready at daybreak on the following morning.

At one time Ahwaz was a city of much importance—the capital of the province of Khuzistan and the winter residence of the Arsacid kings. It was celebrated for its sugar plantations, and carried on a large trade with India. All traces of its ancient prosperity had disappeared, and it had become a mere collection of Arab huts.

As the ghulâm had informed me, the country between Ahwaz and Fellahiyah had been abandoned by its usual Arab population, and during my long ride I did not see a single human being. It was fortunate that such was the case, as the only persons we were likely to meet were robbers and Arab horsemen taking advantage of the general disorder to plunder anybody they might fall in with. Both my guide and myself were armed, and I had no fear of single robbers, or of a small party of Arabs only carrying spears. The heat was intense, and we only found water to allay our thirst once during the day, in a pool in the bed of an ancient canal. It was brackish and scarcely drinkable.

The plains between the rivers Karun and

Jerrahi are generally deserted during the summer months. As they are without water, the Arabs are unable to find in them pasture for their flocks. They were now a parched and dreary waste, with occasional remains of ancient cultivation, and of former habitations, marked by low mounds strewed with bricks and potsherds. I had to ride about thirty miles, the owner of the mule walking by my side, and it was evening before we found ourselves at Kareiba, a large village of huts built of reeds and mats, on the banks of the Jerrahi. I dismounted at the 'musif' of the sheikh, who was a seyyid.

Before daybreak on the following morning a messenger arrived from Thamer, the chief of the Cha'b, upon whose territories I had now entered, with orders for the sheikh to abandon the village at once, and to move with its inhabitants and their property to the neighbourhood of Fellahiyah. Similar orders were sent to the Arab settlements higher up on the river. It was reported that Mehemet Taki Khan had crossed the Jerrahi on the previous night, about three miles above Kareiba, and that the Matamet had already left Shuster with a large force in his pursuit. But my host, the seyyid, pretended to be entirely ignorant on the subject, and maintained that not only had the Bakhtiyari chief not entered the Cha'b country,

but that he had turned back to the mountains. I was persuaded that such was not the case, and that he sought to mislead me.

The village now became a scene of great confusion and excitement. The men and women began to pull down the huts, and to bind together the reeds of which they were constructed in order to make rafts on which to float down with their families and their property to Fellahiyah. Domestic utensils, such as caldrons, cooking-pots, and iron plates for baking bread, with quilts, carpets, sacks of corn and rice, and the poultry, which had been in the meanwhile captured by the naked children, were piled upon them. The herdsmen were collecting their cattle and their flocks. All were screaming at the top of their voices, and sometimes the men, ceasing from their work and joining hands, would dance in a circle, shouting their war-song.

Already rafts similarly loaded began to float past the village, the orders of the Cha'b sheikh having been promptly obeyed by the Arabs on the upper part of the river. The inhabitants of Kareiba showed great activity in making their preparations, and early in the afternoon they had for the most part already departed on their rafts, and the village was nearly deserted. Those that remained were in great alarm, expecting every

moment that the Matamet's irregular cavalry would sweep down upon them.

The country between Kareiba and Fellahiyah had been placed under water by destroying the dykes and embankments of the river and of the canals, so that it was impassable by horsemen, and I could go no farther. Every one was too much occupied with his own affairs to attend to a guest and a stranger. The 'musif' had been pulled down, and the owner, not over desirous of fulfilling the duties of hospitality to a Christian, could with difficulty prevail upon his women to prepare for me a mess of boiled millet and sour curds, which was barely sufficient to satisfy my hunger after a long fast.

Rafts, with their loads of men, women, and children, and their miscellaneous cargoes of domestic furniture, provisions, and poultry, were leaving one by one. My guide informed me that, although he had engaged to accompany me to Fellahiyah, he could not, as the waters were out, reach that place. As he could not remain in the deserted village, he declared that he must make his way back at once with his mule to Ahwaz, and, mounting the beast, started off at a brisk trot across the plain.

At sunset the sheikh was ready to leave, his wives, children, and property having been already placed in a large flat-bottomed wicker boat,

covered with bitumen—the only one belonging to the village. As there was plenty of room in it, I expected that he would allow me to accompany him; but when I asked him for a passage, he curtly refused to permit an infidel Christian to be with his women, and to pollute his vessel. Then, turning sulkily away, he got into it himself and pushed it into the middle of the stream. He was the last to leave the village, which was now completely abandoned by its inhabitants, and I was left standing alone on the river-bank.

The only course left to me was to follow the example of the Arabs, and to make a raft for myself. As the moon would not rise for some time, I spread my carpet on some reeds and mats which I had collected together, hoping to get a little sleep, as I was much fatigued. But I was soon surrounded by hungry dogs which had been left behind and were howling piteously. It was with difficulty that I could keep them off with a long stick. The discordant cries of hundreds of jackals, seeking for offal amongst the remains of the huts, added to the frightful chorus. It was not impossible that lions, which are found in the jungle and brushwood on the banks of the rivers in this part of Khuzistan, and other beasts of prey might be attracted to the spot. But what I had more

reason to fear than the dogs and wild animals were the bands of horsemen, and especially the Bowi Arabs, who were scouring the plain in all directions in search of plunder. Had I been discovered by them I should at least have been stripped to the skin and left to my fate, if nothing worse had befallen me.

My position was by no means a pleasant one. I sat for some time in the darkness, keeping off the dogs and waiting for the moon. When she rose, I gathered together all the canes and reeds that I could find. There was no want of them, and I had soon collected a sufficient number to make, with one or two tent-poles which had been left behind, a raft sufficiently large to bear me. I had no difficulty in binding them together with withes and twisted straw taken from the roofs of the huts, as I had seen the Arabs do.

At length my raft was ready. I placed myself upon it, with a tent-pole to guide it, and pushing it from the bank trusted myself to the sluggish stream. The dogs followed me, barking and howling, until a deep watercourse stopped them. I floated along gently, keeping as well as I could in the centre of the river.

The river-banks presented a scene of extraordinary bustle and excitement. They were thickly inhabited, and there seemed to be an

endless succession of reed huts upon them. These their owners were now busy in destroying for the purpose of making rafts. The whole population was engaged in this occupation and in driving herds of buffaloes and camels and flocks of sheep through the mud and water, and swimming them across the stream and the numerous canals for irrigation which were derived from it on both sides. Some were floating across the river on inflated sheepskins, carrying their children on their shoulders and bundles on their heads. Even the women and girls, divesting themselves of their long blue shirts—their only garment—were helping to convey their goods and chattels to the opposite side of the river, which was considered safer from the hostile incursions of marauding horsemen than the western bank. There was a general flight. Everywhere men sent by the Cha'b chief were breaking down the dams in order to flood the country. The crops which were ripe had been set on fire, and on all sides clouds of smoke rose into the clear sky. A thickly peopled and highly cultivated region was thus utterly devastated in a few hours.

I passed almost unobserved among the numberless rafts, and unnoticed by the Arabs on the banks. At length I came to an extensive grove of palm-trees, where the river appeared to divide

itself into two principal branches. I asked some men who, like myself, were descending the stream, which of the two I should follow to reach Fellahiyah. They pointed to the one to the right. The other, which they called the Jungeri, would take me, they said, to the sea. Both were equally crowded with rafts, and their banks with Arabs preparing for flight.

The date grove through which I was floating extended for about two miles. The river then divided itself into three channels, the entrances to which were almost blocked up with rafts. I succeeded with some difficulty in forcing my way into the centre one, which being the broadest appeared to be the one most likely to lead to Fellahiyah. Its banks were thickly peopled, but the inhabitants of the reed huts seemed to consider themselves secure from attack, as they were not, like those on the upper part of the river, removing their property. They were surrounded by a deep marsh, through which an enemy could not pass. Early in the afternoon I found myself suddenly in the midst of a spacious enclosure formed by screens of reeds and matting. It was partly protected from the sun by mats raised upon poles. The stream, which had been much reduced in size by the numerous watercourses for irrigation derived from it, passed through the centre of this court. I

perceived on both sides rows of Arabs seated on carpets. Attendants were hurrying about with 'finjans,' or little coffee-cups, and with 'narghils,' or water-pipes, formed of the shell of the cocoa-nut, such as are usually smoked by the Arabs.[9]

Pushing my raft to the bank, I landed, and was informed that I was in the 'musif' of Sheikh Thamer, the chief of the great Arab tribe of Cha'b. The sheikh himself was seated, with some of his guests, at the upper end of the enclosure. When I presented myself to him, he invited me to be seated, making room for me by his side. In answer to his question whence I came and where I was going, I explained to him that I was an English traveller coming from Shuster on account of the disturbed state of the country. I deemed it prudent not to inform him before strangers of the object of my visit to Fellahiyah. He had known several officers in the navy of the East India Company, belonging to vessels of war which had been at Muhammera, and he was in correspondence with the Company's political agent at Basra, from whom he had received kindness and assistance on various occasions when in trouble. He was consequently disposed to be very civil to an Englishman, and he welcomed me cordially to his 'musif.' I related to him my adventures since leaving Shuster, which

[9] The Persian 'kaleôn.'

appeared to afford him much amusement; but he heartily cursed the Persian who had robbed me, and 'the dog, the son of a dog,' of a ghulâm, who had cheated me. Learning that I had eaten nothing during thirty-six hours except my light repast of millet and curds on the previous day, he ordered one of his attendants to fetch some food for me from the harem, and I was speedily served with some mutton boiled to shreds and with bread soaked in sour milk after the Arab fashion.

The countenance of Sheikh Thamer was not prepossessing. He was tall and had a somewhat commanding appearance, but his features were coarse and vulgar—unlike those of the generality of high-bred Bedouins. His forehead was almost as prominent as that of a negro, and he probably had black blood in his veins, like the descendants of many Arabs who had renounced their nomad lives, and had married slaves. He wore an 'abba,' or cloak, richly embroidered with gold, over a gown of figured muslin. In a girdle round his waist he carried a long gold-mounted pistol, and the sheath of his sword was ornamented with the same precious metal. His head-dress consisted of a 'tarbush,' or red cap, round which was twisted a 'lung,' or long shawl of Indian manufacture, one end of which was allowed to fall far down his back. This head-dress, which according

to tradition was that of the Prophet, is generally worn by the Arabs of Khuzistan, as well as by the Bakhtiyari. The sheikh's hands and feet were dyed almost black with henna. Like a true Arab he wore no drawers nor trousers, and went barefooted.[1] He maintained more state and ceremony than are usual among Arab chiefs. A space was set apart for him with large bolsters on a fine carpet, on which he sat alone, the crowd of petty sheikhs and armed retainers keeping at a respectful distance — some standing, others squatting on the 'nemuds,' or narrow felt rugs, spread along the sides of the 'musif.'

Sheikh Thamer was undoubtedly, for an Arab, a remarkable man. The country over which he ruled owed much of the prosperity which it then enjoyed to the encouragement which he gave to agriculture and commerce, and to the protection which he afforded to strangers and merchants in his territories. Canals and watercourses for irrigation, upon which the fertility of the soil mainly depends, were kept in good repair, and new works of the kind were frequently undertaken. He had declared Muhammera a free port, and it had become an important depôt for merchandise, not

[1] The Turks were in the habit of denouncing the Arabs as 'Kafirs' (infidels), 'without religion, without drawers, and without saddles' —the words rhyming in a jingling way.

only for the supply of the province of Khuzistan, but for the inhabitants of the adjoining Turkish territories. It had consequently greatly interfered with the trade of Basra, and the revenues derived by the Turkish Government from that port had seriously diminished. It was on this account that the Porte had sent an expedition against it, and had bombarded it—a proceeding which threatened to lead to a war between Turkey and Persia, who claimed the island formed by the Karun, the Hafar, and the Shat-el-Arab, on which the town stands, as Persian territory.

Although the sheikh was generally respected by his own subjects, over whom he exercised almost unlimited authority, and enjoyed considerable reputation for energy and wisdom in Turkish Arabia, he was known to be untrustworthy and treacherous, and to have upon his head the blood of more than one relation, whom he had murdered in order to attain the chieftainship. He was said to have invited the sheikh of the Bowi, a powerful tribe which had refused to submit to his rule, to Fellahiyah, and to have shot him dead whilst he was drinking the coffee presented to him after he had been feasted in the 'musif'—an act of treachery and a violation of the laws of hospitality odious to a true Arab, and condemned by every good Musulman. But he was very generous

to seyyids and mullas, who, in consequence, flocked to Fellahiyah and condoned his evil deeds.

After we had talked for some time about the events which had occurred in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, and I had answered many questions that he put to me concerning the movements and forces of the Matamet, he rose to depart. I followed him as he was leaving the 'musif,' and asked him to see me in private. He led me to the women's apartments, a spacious hut constructed of the finest matting and canes, and divided into several compartments by screens made of reeds bound together by twisted worsted of different colours worked into patterns. Jars for cooling water, of partly baked porous clay and of elegant shape, stood on stands and were suspended to the poles which supported the covering of the hut. The ground was covered with handsome carpets. There was an air of cleanliness and coolness about the place which was very pleasant.

When we were seated I informed the sheikh that the object of my coming to Fellahiyah was to see Mehemet Taki Khan, who, I had reason to know, had taken refuge in his territories. I asked him, therefore, to furnish me with a guide to conduct me to the Bakhtiyari chief. He called Allah to witness that Mehemet Taki Khan was not in the Cha'b country, and that he did not know where the

chief was to be found. It was true, he said, that Mehemet Taki Khan had thought of taking refuge with him, but he had turned back towards the mountains, and had probably reached a place of safety in them.

I was convinced that Sheikh Thamer was not telling me the truth; but, finding that it was useless to press him further, I returned to the 'musif,' determined to remain there until I could discover where Mehemet Taki Khan was concealed.

I spread my carpet in that part of it which was reserved for visitors of distinction. Among my fellow-guests were a sheikh and his son from the Hedjas. They were very communicative, and I learnt a good deal from them about their little-known and interesting country.[2] There was also among my companions a young seyyid, lithe and well made, with a bright, intelligent, but melancholy countenance, and black, restless eyes, and of distinguished appearance, although clothed in rags. I could not but feel interested in him, and soon getting on friendly terms with him, I asked him his history, as he was evidently not of the Cha'b, or of any Bedouin, tribe, but a person who had the habits and manners of the town Arabs.

[2] The very ancient tribe of Beni Kiab, corrupted into Cha'b, came originally from this part of Central Arabia, and settled on the banks of the Euphrates and Karun.

He showed no reluctance in telling it to me. He was, he said, a native of Baghdad and a shi'a. Whilst on a pilgrimage to Kerbela he had, by accident, killed a man. In order to pay the blood-money which was due according to custom and Arab law to the family of the deceased, and being very poor, he was wandering about on foot as a beggar, hoping, by appealing to the charity and compassion of good Musulmans, to collect in time a sufficient sum to satisfy the claim upon him, and thus to save his life, which would otherwise assuredly be taken by the relatives of the person whose death he had caused. His involuntary crime, he added, weighed heavily upon him, and as a penance, and to wipe out the stain of blood, he was fasting and subjecting himself to every kind of privation. He wore, in addition, a heavy iron collar round his neck, with a chain to which were attached some human bones. He expected to be a wanderer for several years, at the end of which he hoped to have saved enough to pay the blood-money and to be cleansed of his sin. He told his story in a very simple, touching way, and was evidently a devout and conscientious man.

In the evening I was not a little surprised to see my old friend Mirza Koma, the governor of Behbahan, enter the 'musif,' accompanied by one Muhammed Ali Khan, the chief of the Noui

tribe, whom I also knew. They had arrived in Fellahiyah accompanied by about fifty horsemen. The whole party, covered with mud and showing evident signs of having suffered great privations, had a wretched and forlorn appearance. Their horses, too, seemed to be nearly starved and could scarcely walk. The Mirza was glad to see me, and after supper related to me what had occurred since we parted at Behbahan, and how it happened that he found himself at Fellahiyah.

It appeared that one of the Shah's brothers, who had been named governor of the province of Fars—of which Shiraz is the capital—thought to take advantage of the confusion into which the mountain tribes had been thrown, by the invasion of the Matamet, to exact a considerable sum of money from Mirza Koma, whose territories were within his jurisdiction. As he was unable, or refused, to submit to the demand made upon him, the Prince furnished some regular troops and a large body of horsemen to his rival, Mansur Khan, and sent him to attack and plunder Behbahan and the Kuhghelu tribes.

Mirza Koma made preparations to meet the attack by putting his castle in a state of defence, and by deepening the moat surrounding it. He placed in command of it his son, a youth of sixteen, whilst he himself proceeded to collect horse-

men and matchlock-men from his tribes in order to meet the enemy in the field.

Mansur Khan, with three regiments of regular troops and two guns, and reinforced by Abd'ullah Khan, the chief of the Dushmanziori, a Kuhghelu tribe which had turned against the Mirza, advanced upon Behbahan and laid siege to the castle.

His fire, which was returned by the few rusty guns on the walls of Kala Nareng, had little effect, and he was under the necessity of abandoning his position and occupying the town, which had been deserted by its inhabitants. He then opened negotiations with the besieged. The 'mujtehed,' or chief priest, was sent, with the Koran in his hand, to Mirza Koma's son, and offered to swear upon it that the object of Mansur Khan's expedition was none other than to regulate equitably the amount of tribute to be in future paid by the governor of Behbahan. Hostilities were consequently suspended on both sides. Friendly relations were established between the besieged and the Persian soldiers, and after a few days Mansur Khan invited the young chief to visit his camp, under an oath of safe conduct.

The invitation was accepted. A feast was prepared for the youth, but when he was about to return to the castle he was treacherously seized and thrown into chains. Mirza Koma, who had by

this time assembled his followers, attacked Mansur Khan. One or two engagements followed, in which both sides claimed the victory and suffered some loss. But a tribal dispute having arisen between the chiefs of the Bahmehi, some of them deserted Mirza Koma, who found himself no longer in a condition to oppose the Persians. He made an unsuccessful attack on their camp by night, and then, sending away his followers, sought with a few faithful attendants the protection of the Cha'b sheikh. He had been pursued in his retreat, and after numerous escapes, and after concealing himself in the hills for some days without food, had reached Fellahiyah.

On my condoling with him upon his misfortunes, he replied with his usual good-humour, 'God is great! This is the fifth time that I have been driven from Behbahan, a fugitive, without wife or family, and naked. When those dogs of Persians have stripped the flesh off the bone, they will leave it to me to gnaw.'[3]

It was late before the inmates of the 'musif'

[3] The Baron de Bode, in his *Travels in Luristan, &c.*, vol. i. p. 288, writes: 'Mirza Koma had fled into the Cha'b country, but his wives and grown-up daughters were distributed among the soldiery of Mansur Khan's victorious troops, with the exception of one of his daughters, who, to escape the degradation of falling into the hands of such an enemy, had thrown herself into a deep well inlaid with stone, and was dashed to pieces.' It is possible that this may

could compose themselves to sleep, for Arabs never tire of chattering. I had not slept the previous night, and the events of the day had added not a little to my fatigue. I was not sorry when I could stretch myself upon my carpet, to take the rest of which I was so greatly in need. I sank at once into a profound sleep.

have been true, as the Persians were in the habit of thus treating the wives and female relations of a conquered enemy, but I did not hear of this occurrence whilst in Khuzistan. Shortly after the capture of Behbahan by Mansur Khan a fatal sickness appeared in his camp. Within a few days he, with two of his sons and seven hundred men, fell victims to its ravages, and the remainder abandoned the place, to which Mirza Koma eventually returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

Discover a Bakhtiyari—Join Mehemet Taki Khan—His flight from Kala Tul—The Bakhtiyari encampment—Fellahiyah fortified—The sheikh's artillery—Mir Mohanna—Arrival of Arab warriors—Attempts to obtain surrender of Mehemet Taki Khan—He leaves for the Matamet's camp—Is betrayed and thrown into chains—Negotiations with Sheikh Thamer—Night attack upon the Persian camp—Release of Au Kerim—The Matamet withdraws—Sufferings of Mehemet Taki Khan's family—Muhammera—The Bakhtiyari fugitives depart—Attacked by Arabs—Mission of Au Kerim to the Il-Khani—The Bahmehi chief—Au Kerim and the author made prisoners—Our escape—Au Kerim captured—A grateful seyyid—Reach Shuster—Murder of Au Kerim.

I SLEPT until I was awoke at daybreak by my fellow-inmates of the 'musif.' who had risen to say their morning prayers. After I had partaken of coffee, which, as is customary, was handed round to the guests, I went for a stroll through the bazar—a long lane formed by open booths of reeds and matting, in which were displayed, for sale, the produce of the country, such as fruits of various kinds, dates, rice and corn, with bread newly baked, and hot 'kebâbs,' and a fair supply of

English cotton prints, cutlery and hardware. It was crowded with Arabs who were wrangling over their morning purchases, and with women who had brought from a distance butter, sour curds, and clotted cream made from buffalo's milk.

As I was wandering about, watching the busy scene, I was accosted in the Bakhtiyari dialect by a man wearing an Arab dress. Notwithstanding his disguise, I recognised at once Au Azeez, Mehemet Taki Khan's relation, with whom I had the adventure with the Baron de Bode. I asked him where I could find the chief. He appeared unwilling to say anything on the subject, but proposed that we should leave the crowd for some retired spot where he could speak with me without being overheard or watched. I followed him into one of the palm-groves outside Fellahiyah. When he saw that we were alone, he told me that Mehemet Taki Khan had sent him to the bazar to make some purchases, and that the chief and his family were not far distant, but that the place where he was concealed was difficult to reach, as it was in the middle of a marsh—the country having been flooded by the destruction of the dams and dykes. It was some time before he consented to show me the way to it. He first declared that the water was everywhere so deep that I could not wade through it, and when I insisted that where he had

passed I could pass also, he said that the strictest orders had been given that no one was to be told of Mehemet Taki Khan's hiding-place, or to be allowed to go there, and that he had been made to disguise himself as an Arab before visiting Fellahiyah, so that it might not be known or suspected that there were any Bakhtiyari in the neighbourhood. At length, seeing that I was determined to find out the chief myself if he would not take me to him, he promised that, after having finished his business in the bazar, he would return to me and show me the way

I waited for him for some time, scarcely expecting that he would return; but he was as good as his word. He came back as he had promised, and we set off together. After passing for some distance through the palm-groves which surround Fellahiyah we came out upon the open country, and soon found ourselves on the edge of a marsh. We had to wade through it for a considerable distance—constantly sinking deep into the mud, and having frequently to swim over water-courses, or to cross them with the water reaching to our arm-pits. Weak from fever, I was almost exhausted by the exertions I had to make under a burning sun, when I perceived a white tent in the distance. It was that of Mehemet Taki Khan. It had been pitched upon some dry ground on the

bank of a small canal called the Nahr Busi, and was only accessible through the marshes surrounding it.

I was wet through and covered with mud when I reached the encampment, which consisted of a number of black Arab tents and of huts of mats and reeds. I was at once recognised by some Bakhtiyari friends, who cried out, 'Sahab ovaid!'[1]—(the Sahib has come)—and men and women ran out to meet me. I found Mehemet Taki Khan living, in consequence of the heat, in one of the booths built of matting and a kind of dry grass, over which water was constantly thrown to cool the air within. He was dyeing his hair and beard, which were plastered with henna. My unexpected appearance gave him and his wife Khatun-jan unfeigned delight. They overwhelmed me with questions about little Hussein Kuli, their son, whom I had left at Shuster in confinement with his cousin, and about Au Kerim, the chief's brother, who, although he had gone on a mission of peace, relying upon a safe-conduct from the Matamet, had been thrown into prison. I was made to relate all my adventures since we parted, and they both declared that, notwithstanding the

[1] 'Ovaid' is a Bakhtiyari corruption of 'omad' (is come). I was called by Mehemet Taki Khan and the mountaineers 'Sahab,' a corruption of Sahib—sir or master—and by my Persian friends 'Sahib Khan Bakhtiyari.'

reliance which they placed upon my friendship, they had been convinced that they were never to see me more, as they could not believe that I would go through so many hardships for their sakes.

Mehemet Taki Khan then informed me of what had passed with respect to himself. Although unwilling, he said, to bring war upon his country, which of late years, under his rule, had attained to some prosperity, and to appear in open rebellion against the Shah, he could not trust himself in the hands of the Matamet without a valid guarantee that he should not be sent in chains to Tehran, and there deprived of his life, or of what was even worse, his sight. Such had been the fate of every one who had confided in the word of the eunuch and his like. He denounced the Persian court and the Persian authorities in general as a perjured and infamous race, who were bringing Persia to ruin, and who were jealous and suspicious of every one who like himself endeavoured to govern justly. They feared his influence and authority over the tribes, and had determined to destroy him. He deeply regretted that he had yielded to his brother's counsels, and had not opposed, when he could have done so with certainty of success, the passage by the Persian army over the mountains. When once the Matamet

had descended into the plains and had reached Shuster, it was too late to have recourse to arms, for the cunning eunuch had succeeded in detaching from their allegiance to him some of his most powerful adherents, and in sowing dissensions amongst the tribes, which would no longer unite with him in fighting the common enemy.

Such being the case, he had determined upon taking the only course left to him—that of seeking refuge with his friend and ally, Sheikh Thamer. But he wished those who had remained faithful to him to withdraw to the stronghold of Munghast, where the Persians were not likely to follow them. They had insisted, however, upon remaining with him, and between four and five thousand families, with their flocks and herds, had abandoned their tents and were prepared to emigrate to the Cha'b country. The season was unusually late, and there had been much rain, so that the rivers and torrents were almost impassable. Some of his followers had crossed the river Kurdistan, when, in consequence of a storm, it rose suddenly, and the rest were unable to join their companions. Mehemet Taki Khan and his family were among them. The Matamet and his troops were already in pursuit of the fugitives, and his irregular horse, which attacked them, were with difficulty held in check until the waters had subsided. They had

scarcely crossed the river when it rose again and cut off their pursuers. They had, however, been compelled to abandon many of their horses and mules, and much of the property which they had carried with them in their flight. As, at the same time, they had lost the greater part of their provisions, Mehemet Taki Khan at last succeeded in persuading his followers to leave him and to make their way back to the mountains.

His wives and family, and those of his brothers, and his immediate attendants and retainers, with three of the principal chiefs and some horsemen, had remained with him. On their way to Fellahiyah they had been attacked by the Sherifaut Arabs, who had succeeded in plundering them of the greater part of the little property that remained to them.

Mehemet Taki Khan, like a good Musulman, was resigned to his fate; but he could not reconcile himself to the heat and monotony of the plains, and sighed for his mountains. 'We shall, Inshallah!' he said, pointing to the snowy peaks of Munghast just visible on the horizon, 'drink snow up there together before the summer is over.' He was, however, unable to restrain his indignation and anger when he spoke of the treacherous treatment of Au Kerim.

Ali Naghi Khan was not so calm under his mis-

fortunes as his brother. He cursed the Matamet and his own folly for having allowed himself to be duped by the crafty and unscrupulous eunuch. Speaking of his son he exclaimed, 'I sacrificed my only child for him'—pointing to Mehemet Taki Khan—'and had I a thousand sons they should all be his now. That boy was his soul! Ah, Sahab! those were right who said at Mal-Emir that we were being betrayed by that "gourum-ság" of a Persian, and that we ought to fall upon him and his "ser-bâz." It was my fault that he was spared; but the time for my revenge may come yet!'

Khatun-jan Khanum called me to her tent and gave me a few things which I had left at Kala Tul, and which, even in her flight, she had carefully kept for me. She wept bitterly as she related all the sufferings that she and her children had undergone since I had seen her. She was inconsolable for the loss of her son. 'Ah, Sahab!' she said, 'the Khan now repents him that he did not take my advice and refuse to give up Hussein Kuli, for he loved that boy better than his life, and he will never be happy again now that he has lost him.'

I passed the greater part of the night in visiting my friends, and hearing from them over and over again the story of the hardships and dangers to which they had been exposed in their retreat. The wives of the chiefs and the younger women, who

had been brought up with as much luxury as could be found in an Iliyat tent, had suffered most from hunger and the privations they had undergone. They were all plunged in grief, as there was scarcely one among them who had not lost some one dear to her. Sitting together in groups on the bare ground they rarely ceased from that melancholy wail of 'Wai, wai!' which the Bakhtiyari women are accustomed to make when some great calamity has befallen them.

On the following morning I returned, wading as before through the marsh, to Fellahiyah with a letter from Mehemet Taki Khan to Sheikh Thamer, asking him to treat me with confidence and to communicate to me the state of affairs. The sheikh was somewhat ashamed of himself for having called Allah to witness that he told the truth when he denied that the Bakhtiyari chief had taken refuge in the Cha'b country. He excused himself by saying that, in order to save his country from a disastrous invasion by the Persians, he had endeavoured to conceal even from his own people that Mehemet Taki Khan had sought his protection and was actually in the neighbourhood of Fellahiyah. If the Persians, he added, should attempt to enter his territory with the object of seizing Mehemet Taki Khan, or thinking to compel him to surrender his guest, he would defend

himself to the last, counting upon the fidelity and devotion of his tribe. To render Fellahiyah inaccessible to the Persian troops and artillery he had flooded the whole of the surrounding plain.

He explained to me the further measures he was taking to place the district of Fellahiyah in a state of defence. He was repairing the mud wall with equidistant bastions which surrounded the town, but which had been allowed to fall to ruin. He proposed that I should ride with him and some of the sheikhs to examine the earthworks which he was throwing up to defend the approach to the place, and upon which he intended to mount a few pieces of artillery. He lent me a mare, and we left the town accompanied by a number of horsemen, armed with their long spears tufted with ostrich feathers, and by a crowd of matchlock-men on foot. We passed through the palm groves, and after fording a marsh and several watercourses, came to an open space where a swarm of half-naked men were busily employed in constructing the earthworks, whilst others were filling canvas bags with a kind of grapeshot, and fashioning stones into balls, to be discharged from the cannon.

The Cha'b sheikh possessed three small English guns in fairly good condition and well mounted. They were served by some deserters from the

Persian army. He told me that these guns had been captured from a defeated British army. They may have fallen into the hands of some of the piratical tribes in the Persian Gulf, against which the East India Company, years before, had frequently sent military expeditions which were not always successful, as these Arabs were noted for their bravery and for the fanatical despair with which they fought.

In addition to the mounted artillery, he had a number of guns without carriages, some of large calibre, but all rusty, honeycombed, and unfit for use. One of them was about twelve feet in length, and had already been placed in position upon the earthworks. He owned, moreover, four mortars and a quantity of bombs equally useless.

The sheikh consulted me as to placing these guns. I advised that proper platforms should be constructed for them and that the old ones should be subjected to some kind of trial, as it was highly probable that one or two of them would burst on the first discharge, and kill more of his own men than of the enemy. My advice was taken upon this and other points, and I came to be looked upon as a great authority on artillery and matters connected with the defence of fortified places. But I suggested to the sheikh that he should place more trust in the marshes, and in

the innumerable canals, which on all sides impeded the advance of regular troops, than in his ancient guns. Indeed, owing to its position, surrounded by water, Fellahiyah was almost impregnable to any force that the Matamet could bring against it.

I was constantly passing to and fro between Sheikh Thamer's 'musif' and Mehemet Taki Khan's encampment, but I spent my time principally in the latter. I had thus occasion to see much of Mehemet Taki Khan, and to appreciate still more than I had even previously done his noble character and fine qualities. Had he been encouraged and supported by a wise and far-seeing Government, he would have done much towards civilising the wild tribes that he had brought under his sway, to put a stop to their lawless and predatory habits, and to introduce commerce and agriculture amongst them. But by attempting such things he had only incurred the suspicion and disfavour of the Persian Government, which had determined to destroy him.

The day after my first visit to Mehemet Taki Khan, a Cha'b sheikh, named Mir Mohanna, whom I had known at Kala Tul, where, in consequence of some tribal dispute, he had taken refuge, arrived at Fellahiyah. He invited me to reside in his 'musif.' As that of Sheikh Thamer was always crowded with guests, who were constantly arriving

by night as well as by day, and I could get little rest in it, I gladly accepted his invitation.

Mir Mohanna was the most renowned warrior of the Cha'b tribe, and his exploits were the constant theme of the Arabs of Khuzistan. He maintained his reputation by going out daily with a body of horsemen and engaging in skirmishes with hostile tribes and with the Persian cavalry, generally bringing back horses and mares and other booty.

Arabs from the neighbouring tribes came in large numbers to Fellahiyah, accompanied by the wild music of drums and oboes, displaying their flags and singing their war-songs. When they reached the town they danced in a circle round their sheikhs and standard-bearer, yelling their war-cries, and chanting, in chorus, some impromptu verses in defiance of the enemy, or in praise of Sheikh Thamer—such as, 'Let no one give his daughter to the Bowi' (an Arab tribe hostile to the Cha'b), 'Thamer is a burning fire,' 'Thamer is the lion of war'—accompanying the words with fierce gestures, brandishing their swords and spears, and discharging their matchlocks. This dancing, and yelling, and firing, never ceased night or day. The faces and limbs of these Arabs were almost black from constant exposure to the sun. They were nearly naked, and

their hair was plaited in long tresses shining with grease.

In addition to these armed auxiliaries the town, and the palm groves for a considerable distance around it, were crowded with men, women, and children, who, with their sheep, camels, and buffaloes, had taken refuge from the advancing Persians. It was a mystery to me how Sheikh Thamer could provide provisions for such a multitude.

One morning Shefi'a Khan arrived at Fellahiyah with some Persian officers on a mission from the Matamet. They were instructed to see Mehemet Taki Khan, and to make proposals which, if accepted by him, would, they said, lead to the suspension of hostilities and to the withdrawal of the Persian army. But Sheikh Thamer maintained that he knew nothing of the Bakhtiyari chief, and they had to return to the Persian camp without obtaining any information concerning him.

Jaffer Ali Khan, a Persian nobleman in the confidence of the Matamet, and a swaggering fellow, was next sent to attempt to intimidate Sheikh Thamer. I was in the 'mejlis'[2] when he addressed the assembled Arabs. He upbraided the sheikh for having denied that he had protected Mehemet Taki Khan. Who, then, he asked, had

[2] An assembly for the discussion of affairs.

enabled the Bakhtiyari chief to take refuge in the Cha'b territories? He threatened the tribe with the vengeance of the Matamet, who would utterly exterminate it if it did not at once submit to his authority, and deliver up a rebellious subject of the Shah.

Mir Mohanna thereupon replied to the vain-glorious Persian to the following effect: 'You ask,' said he, 'who conducted Mehemet Taki Khan into the Cha'b country? I will answer you. I conducted him. You ask the sheikh whether he was not aware of the chief's arrival? I reply that he was not. You now know, then, who brought the Bakhtiyari chief here and who protected him. When he left his mountains I was with him—a fugitive from my tribe and the enemy of Thamer. But in conducting him hither I acted as an Arab and as the sheikh of the Cha'b would wish every one of his tribe to act. Whether Thamer knew that Mehemet Taki Khan was seeking his protection or not, matters little, for had he known it he is not the man to refuse to receive one who claimed his hospitality. We accuse you Persians of violating your oaths, and of having acted towards the Bakhtiyari chief in a manner opposed to the teaching of Islam. We will not follow your example. Gratitude alone—to say nothing of the religion that we profess—would compel an

Arab sheikh to protect one who had, in times of danger, protected him. Such sentiments may be new to your race, or may be held in contempt by it, but they are in accordance with the law of the Arabs and of true Moslems. You ask us to deliver up Mehemet Taki Khan. You have seen our villages on fire, our crops destroyed, our lands deserted. Can you believe that after having made these sacrifices, and having sworn to defend our guest, we are prepared to betray him and to give him over to his enemies?' This speech, which was delivered with fire and eloquence, was greatly applauded by the assembly and by the crowd of armed men who had gathered round the 'musif.' They shouted and brandished their swords, and hurled defiance against the Persians. Jaffer Ali Khan, who was as cowardly as he was boastful—like most Persians—intimidated by the menacing language of the Arabs, made a hasty retreat, and returned to the Matamet's camp.

The Matamet having thus failed in his attempts to induce Sheikh Thamer to deliver up Mehemet Taki Khan, advanced with his troops to Kareita, a village about twelve miles from Fellahiyah. But it had been deserted and destroyed. He had been joined by the Wali of Hawizah, a district in the northern part of Khuzistan, with a considerable body of horsemen, and by the sheikh of the

Bowi, a large Arab tribe inhabiting the banks of the Shat el-Arab, to both of whom he had promised the chieftainship of the Cha'b should Sheikh Thamer fall into his hands. Notwithstanding this assistance he was unable to make any progress, as, the embankments and dykes having been destroyed, the country was under water. Some of the Arabs whose help he had secured were inhabitants of the marshes formed by the Euphrates, and were accustomed to warfare in them. They endeavoured to possess themselves of points which might furnish vantage-ground to the Persians, but they were not successful. There were skirmishes going on from morning to night, which I frequently witnessed; but the artillery was rarely required, the enemy taking care to avoid coming within range of it. The guns, of which they were in so much alarm, were loaded with bits of old iron and small balls of the same metal, like grapeshot, which had been made for the long wall-pieces with a wide bore, used by the Arabs for the defence of their small mud forts.

The Matamet, finding that he could not advance further, and that his troops were suffering severely from illness caused by the malaria of the marshes, and increased by the great heat which had now set in, resumed negotiations, and sought to obtain by fraud what he could not effect by force.

He again sent Shefi'a Khan to Fellahiyah with a letter for Mehemet Taki Khan. At first Sheikh Thamer refused to allow Shefi'a Khan to see the Bakhtiyari chief, but at last consented, in the hope that the further invasion of his country might be prevented. The Matamet in his letter reminded Mehemet Taki Khan that three of his family—his son, his brother, and his nephew—were still held as hostages, and threatened that in the event of his persisting in not obeying the commands of the Shah and in not presenting himself in the Persian camp, they would be put to death. If, however, he would submit, all would be forgotten and forgiven; he would be taken into the royal favour again and be confirmed in the chieftainship of the Bakhtiyari tribes, and be named, in addition, governor of the whole province of Khuzistan. If he would go to Tehran, ample security being given for his safety, he would be received with honour and be invested with a 'khilát,' or robe of honour, by the Shah himself, Ali Naghi Khan, his brother, being appointed to act for him during his absence. The Matamet ended his letter by saying that as he had been a convert from the Christian faith, and some might consequently doubt whether he was sufficiently impressed with the sanctity of a Musulman oath, he was prepared to send to Fellahiyah his nephew, Suleiman Khan, an Armenian

and the general of his army, together with a 'mujtehed,' or high priest of Islam, who would each take an oath, according to the forms of their respective creeds, that if Mehemet Taki Khan would surrender he would receive the treatment promised to him.

Shefi'a Khan was satisfied that in this instance the Matamet was sincere, and he succeeded in persuading Mehemet Taki Khan to receive Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed,' and to trust to oaths which had so often been broken. The two accordingly arrived next day. Sheikh Thamer made great preparations to receive them. His Arab horsemen and matchlock men were drawn up in long lines, and the mounted artillery placed at the entrance to the town. He hoped that this warlike display would have its due effect upon the Persian general. The 'mujtehed' arrived first, Suleiman Khan being unwilling to venture into the sheikh's power until he had received a proper safe-conduct, which was given to him through the 'mujtehed,' who from his sacred character did not require one. Two days were spent in negotiations —the Arabs dancing round the general, brandishing their swords and chanting their wild war-songs as he sat in the 'mejlis.' He was plausible and conciliating, and pleased the sheikh by praising his preparations for defence and exaggerating his

importance. At length Mehemet Taki Khan, who had come to Fellahiyah, was persuaded to yield, and consented to accompany Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed' to the Persian camp, on their taking the proffered oaths, and a further engagement that in three days the Matamet would leave the territories of the Cha'b sheikh.

When the negotiations had been thus concluded, Mehemet Taki Khan returned to his encampment, which had been brought nearer to the town in consequence of the approach of the Persian troops. I accompanied him and his brothers to bathe in a neighbouring canal. We had left the water and had seated ourselves in a palm grove when we perceived a number of Bakhtiyari men and women coming towards us, headed by Khatun-jan Khanum, closely veiled. They surrounded us, and, with tears, besought the chief not to leave Fellahiyah to place himself in the hands of the Matamet. His brothers joined in their entreaties, and declared that they would prevent him from doing so. Shefi'a Khan, who was the orator on all such occasions, pointed out to them the certain advantage of the step that Mehemet Taki Khan was about to take, and the favourable disposition of the Matamet towards him. Of this he was himself, at the time, firmly persuaded.

The women then turned upon him, accusing

him of having been the principal cause of their misfortunes. The men, too, charged him with having prevailed upon Mehemet Taki Khan to desert them.

'You have taken my son from me,' exclaimed Khatun-jan, addressing her husband, 'and now you would leave me and your other children without protection. Look at these families; they would not desert you in the hour of danger, and will you now desert them? How can you trust to one who has already over and over again foresworn himself? Remain here and fight like a brave man, and wallah! wallah! there is not a woman here who will not be by your side.'

The chief was much affected, and, undecided as to the course he should pursue, mounted his horse and returned to Fellahiyah. Sheikh Thamer was unwilling that Mehemet Taki Khan should trust himself in the hands of the Matamet. The Bakhtiyari chief, on the other hand, was reluctant to involve his host in a war, and believed that the Matamet was in this instance to be trusted. The representations of Shefi'a Khan, Suleiman Khan, and the 'mujtehed' in the end prevailed, and Mehemet Taki Khan consented to accompany them on the following morning to the Persian camp.

Next day Suleiman Khan breakfasted in the

Bakhtiyari encampment, and boats were prepared to take him and the chief to the Matamet's tents. After breakfast Khatun-jan Khanum, with the ladies and women veiled, came to him and besought him to respect the salt that he had eaten.[3] He endeavoured to comfort them, and made fresh protestations of the sincerity of the Matamet. At length Mehemet Taki Khan embarked in a boat which was in readiness for him. I accompanied him. His wife and her women followed us along the banks, sobbing loudly. They continued to do so for some time, and would not listen to the earnest entreaties of Mehemet Taki Khan to return to their tents. At length they were persuaded to leave the chief, foreboding the unhappy fate that awaited him. Some of his faithful followers who could not be induced to quit him followed us to the Persian camp. Even Suleiman Khan could not repress his tears, and his attendants were equally moved.

The sheikhs, seyyids, and mullas of the Cha'b tribe had met together and had remonstrated with Sheikh Thamer for suffering Mehemet Taki Khan to place himself, although of his free will, in the power of the Matamet, who, they were persuaded, would perjure himself, as was his wont. They protested that if any injury were done to the

[3] *I.e.* Not to betray one whose guest he had been.

Bakhtiyari chief disgrace and shame would fall upon the Cha'b tribe, as it would go abroad that they had violated the laws of hospitality, so sacred to the Arab, by surrendering a guest to his enemy.

The Persian camp was on the right bank of a broad and deep canal. In the midst of the tents was the splendid pavilion of the Matamet, with its gilded ornaments glittering in the sun. We landed and entered it, accompanied by Suleiman Khan and the 'mujtehed.' No sooner were we in the eunuch's presence than, addressing Mehemet Taki Khan in a loud and imperious tone, he accused him of being a rebel to the Shah, and ordered him to be put into chains. He was then dragged away by the 'farrashes,' without being allowed to speak, and taken to a tent near the park of artillery, where his brother, Au Kerim, was already confined as a prisoner.

Convinced as I had been that the Bakhtiyari chief had been decoyed into the hands of the Matamet, who would not respect his oath any more than he had done on other occasions, I was astounded at this shameful and audacious violation of it. Not having apparently been observed by him, I left the tent and followed Suleiman Khan, who had invited me to be his guest. He was downcast and seemed thoroughly ashamed of the ignoble part that he had been made to play

in this scandalous affair. He was a Georgian Christian and nearly related to the Matamet. He had lived at Tehran, where he had become acquainted with Englishmen in the Persian service. He had risen in the army disciplined by Major Hart, and other British officers, to the rank of 'ser-tip,' or general. He could not, therefore, but be aware of the disgust and indignation that I must naturally feel at the infamous breach of faith committed by the Matamet. He endeavoured to persuade me that he had himself been deceived and was an innocent victim in the matter.

I had no wish to remain in the Persian camp, and resolved to return at once to Fellahiyah. Without communicating my intention to any one, I left Suleiman Khan's tent at nightfall, and crossed the canal on a small raft belonging to an Arab, without being interfered with. I then took the direction of Fellahiyah. I did not reach Sheikh Thamer's 'musif' until late in the morning, as I was unable, not knowing my way, to make much progress through the marshes during the night, and had to stop for some hours on the first dry spot that I could find. The news that Mehemet Taki Khan had been betrayed and thrown into chains had already reached the sheikh, and I found him seated in council with a number of Arab chiefs and the elders of his tribe, who were discussing

with much excitement the conduct of the Matamet in violating his oath, and cursing him loudly as a 'Kâfir,' a dog, and a Persian. They were deliberating as to the course to be pursued in consequence of this outrage upon them and their religion, when a messenger arrived from the Matamet with a letter demanding the immediate payment of 12,000 tomans (about 6,000*l.*), as the condition for the withdrawal of his army, which had been considerably reinforced by the arrival of three more regiments of regular troops, with guns, and a large body of irregular Lur and Arab horsemen.

Sheikh Thamer and the 'mejlis' decided upon refusing to pay the money, and upon continuing, with energy, their preparations for defence. The Matamet, well aware of the difficulty of invading the sheikh's territories, owing to the nature of the country, considered it best to negotiate, and knowing that Thamer was a devout Musulman, sent a seyyid, who enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity among the Arabs, to treat with him. This holy personage succeeded in persuading the sheikh that if he would at once pay 5,000 tomans, the Matamet would withdraw on the following day, and would formally instal Ali Naghi Khan as governor of the Bakhtiyari country.

Although Sheikh Thamer and his councillors

were of opinion that Fellahiyah, owing to its strong position, could be successfully defended against any attempt on the part of the Persians to possess themselves of it, they considered that it would be more prudent and of more advantage to the Cha'b, who were already suffering grievously from the destruction of their crops and palm groves and the desertion of their villages, to avoid a continuation of hostilities. They therefore accepted the terms of the Matamet, and handed over the money to the seyyid.

The Matamet had no sooner secured it than he refused to retire until every member of Mehemet Taki Khan's family, and all his followers who had taken refuge with Sheikh Thamer, were delivered to him. The Cha'b would not consent to violate the first of religious duties by giving up a guest. Even the poorest and most barbarous Arab tribes have been known to resist, at every cost, an attempt to compel them to surrender those who had placed themselves under their protection and had eaten their bread. The sheikh having indignantly refused to comply with this demand, the Persian camp was moved nearer to Fellahiyah, to the side of a large canal called the Ummu-Sucker.

A council was held by the Cha'b elders, at which the Bakhtiyari chiefs who were still left

at Fellahiyah, including Mehemet Taki Khan's brothers, Ali Naghi, Kelb Ali, and Khan Baba, were present, to discuss the measures to be taken under the circumstances. It was unanimously decided to make a night attack upon the Persian camp, with a view to rescuing Mehemet Taki Khan and his brother Au Kerim. This resolution was no sooner taken than preparations were made to put it into execution. A spy was sent to ascertain the position of the tents in which the two chiefs were confined. Ali Naghi Khan took the chief command. Sheikh Thamer was to remain at Fellahiyah, being unwilling to compromise himself too deeply with the Matamet, and to appear in open rebellion to the Persian Government. The horsemen and matchlock-men were ordered to advance as far as they could without attracting the attention of the enemy; the latter were directed to conceal themselves in a marsh not far from the Persian camp, so as to be near at hand when the moment for action arrived. I accompanied Au Khan Baba to a ruined Imaum-Zadeh built a little above the level of the marsh. Au Kelb Ali was too ill to take any part in the expedition. His malady had made terrible progress under the privations he had suffered, and he was near his end.

Everything being in readiness for the attack, orders were given that upon a preconcerted signal

the horsemen and matchlock-men should move forwards so as to reach the Persian camp about an hour after midnight. We all advanced as it had been arranged, and, crossing the Ummu-Sucker canal without having been observed, awaited the moment to attack.

The camp of an Eastern army has rarely any proper outposts, and we were almost in the midst of the Persian tents before our approach was perceived. A scene of indescribable tumult and confusion ensued. The matchlock-men kept up a continuous but random fire in the dark. The Arabs who were not armed with guns were cutting down with their swords indiscriminately all whom they met. Bakhtiyari and Arab horsemen dashed into the encampment, yelling their war-cries. The horses of the Persians, alarmed by the firing and the shouts, broke from their tethers and galloped wildly about, adding to the general disorder. I kept close to Au Khan Baba, who made his way to the park of artillery, near which, he had learnt, were the tents in which his brothers were confined. I was so near the guns that I could see and hear Suleiman Khan giving his orders, and was almost in front of them when the gunners were commanded to fire grape into a seething crowd which appeared to be advancing on the Matamet's pavilion. It consisted mainly of a Persian regi-

ment, which, having failed to form, was falling back in disorder. It was afterwards found to have lost a number of men from this volley.

Before the Bakhtiyari and the Arabs could reach Mehemet Taki Khan, he had been taken from the tent in which he had been confined. The Persians, suspecting that the main object of the attack upon their camp was the release of the Bakhtiyari chief, had removed him as soon as the first alarm was given. I learnt afterwards that he had been led into the presence of the Matamet, who threatened to put him to death if the attempt to rescue him was likely to succeed. He was still heavily chained. The Matamet was surrounded by his 'ferrashes' and other attendants, several of whom fell by his side.

As the first onslaught had not proved successful, and the troops were now under arms and had formed under the command of their officers, it was evident that it was useless to continue the struggle. The Cha'b had already lost a good many men, and amongst them one of their principal sheikhs. They began to waver and to retire. The firing gradually slackened and ere long ceased. The Bakhtiyari under Ali Naghi Khan remained to the last. Fortunately, the darkness allowed them to withdraw with little loss. I made my way back to the ford by which we had crossed the canal, and which was already

crowded by the retreating Arabs. The Lur and other horsemen serving with the Persians had not pursued us, and we were allowed to pass over unmolested. The disorder and confusion were so great that, had we been followed and attacked, few could have escaped.

I was still with Au Khan Baba, with whom I had been during the whole of the affair, which must have lasted about a couple of hours, between the time of our first crossing the canal and our retreat. We had scarcely reached the edge of the marsh when we saw a group of Arab matchlock-men, who, instead of retiring rapidly like the rest, had halted. Riding up to them to inquire the reason, we found that they had with them Au Kerim, who had been so treacherously seized by the Matamet when sent by his brother, Mehemet Taki Khan, under a safe-conduct, to negotiate at Shuster. The Arabs had succeeded in penetrating to the tent in which he was kept before his guards had been able to remove him. As he was chained by the wrists and ankles, they had dragged him out of the camp, and had succeeded in getting him as far as the marsh; but he could go no further, as it was necessary to wade for a considerable distance in deep water. His liberators were endeavouring to free him from his fetters, but had failed to do so. As we could afford them

no help, not having any means of removing the iron rivets, and there being no time to lose, we placed him on a horse belonging to one of Au Khan Baba's followers, and after arranging his heavy chains so as to spare him as much pain and inconvenience as possible, we resumed our retreat.

We crossed the extensive marsh and the flooded country without accident, and reached Fellahiyah early in the morning. A blacksmith was immediately sent for, and Au Kerim's chains removed.

Although the attack upon the Persian camp had not the result hoped for, as Mehemet Taki Khan still remained a prisoner in the Matamet's hands, his brother, one of the bravest and most popular of the Bakhtiyari chiefs, had been released, Shefi'a Khan had effected his escape, a brother of Ali Riza Khan, whom the Matamet had recently appointed governor of the Bakhtiyari tribes, had been slain, and the Persians, having lost a large number of men, were greatly discouraged. After the night surprise the Matamet endeavoured to throw a bridge over one of the canals which separated his army from Fellahiyah, but he met with so vigorous a resistance from the Arabs that he was forced to abandon the attempt. Finding, after three days, that his troops were too much disheartened, even could he succeed in bridging the canal, to fight their way through the

marshes and flooded country between them and the capital of the Cha'b Arabs, he raised his camp and returned to Shuster.

During the events which I have described, Mehemet Taki Khan's unfortunate family, and those of his brothers and of such of his followers as had accompanied him in his retreat from the mountains, had remained near Fellahiyah. Khatun-jan Khanum was overwhelmed with despair at the fate which had befallen her husband—a fate which she had predicted for him when, trusting to the solemn promises and oaths of the Matamet, he consented to place himself in the eunuch's power. I was constantly in the Bakhtiyari encampment, and could not but be deeply moved by the grief and sufferings of its unhappy inmates. They had been reduced from a position of comfort and comparative wealth to absolute want, and were dependent for their daily food upon the hospitality of the Cha'b sheikh, under whose protection they were living. The wives and relatives of those who had been made prisoners by the Persians passed the days in lamentations. They could not doubt that the fate of the captives, if not death, would be one worse than death—the most excruciating tortures, deprivation of sight, and perpetual imprisonment at Tehran. They well knew the cruel and vindictive character of the Matamet, and his ingenuity

and delight in inventing new and exquisite sufferings for those who fell into his hands and were accused of rebellion against his authority.

Others, who had lost their husbands or their sons through the dissensions and conflicts which the Matamet's intrigues and treachery had brought about among the tribes, were loud and fervent in the curses which they invoked upon him and their enemies. The widow of a chief—an old lady from whom I had received much kindness, and with whom I had been in the habit of sitting of an evening asking questions about the history and habits of the Bakhtiyari—described to me how her only son had taken refuge in a tower from Jaffer Kuli Khan, his rival, and after defending himself until further resistance was hopeless, had blown it up and had perished with his followers. 'May Allah grant,' she exclaimed, lifting up her skinny hands to heaven, 'that Jaffer Kuli Khan may one day be my prisoner! I will cut open his body, tear out his heart, make kibâbs of it, and eat them!' And she would, I doubt not, have been as good as her word. I shall never forget her gesture and the expression of her face in the moonlight as she looked upwards and uttered this horrible threat in the most solemn tones, in which the despair of the mother and the vengeance of the savage were mingled.

The malarious exhalations of the marsh in which the refugees were encamped, and the summer heat, which in the Cha'b country is very hurtful even to the native population, had caused much sickness among the Bakhtiyari. There was scarcely one of them who was not suffering more or less severely from fever. The children, moreover, were afflicted with ophthalmia. My stock of quinine and other medicines was nearly exhausted. I had myself been exposed to constant attacks of ague, and the heat had become almost unbearable to me—the thermometer sometimes registering during the day about 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and above 100 at night in the black Arab tents, although open on all sides to catch the air. To have remained much longer in this stifling and unwholesome atmosphere would have been certain death to many of the fugitives.

As the Matamet had now retired, and it was believed that the road to the mountains was open, or, at least, that so strong a party of armed and desperate men as we could muster could succeed in making their way to them, Khatun-jan determined to leave the Cha'b territory, and to seek refuge with her children in the summer pastures of a friendly chief and near relation, upon whose protection she thought she could depend. Preparations were, therefore, made for their departure,

as soon as the scouts, who had been sent out to examine the state of the country through which the fugitives would have to pass, had returned.

I had resolved to accompany them; but I availed myself of the delay in their departure to accept an invitation from Sheikh Thamer to accompany him to Muhammera, a town—if a settlement of mat-built huts, with a bazar for the sale of provisions and a few European commodities, deserves the name—belonging to the Cha'b tribe. The position which it occupies is one of great importance, politically and commercially. The Karun, which after its junction with the river of Dizful becomes a wide and deep stream, continues its course towards the united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, known as the Shat-el-Arab (the river of the Arabs), to within a distance of between three and four miles of that great estuary, and about thirty miles from its mouth. It then divides itself into two main branches, one of which, turning abruptly to the southward, finds its way into the Persian Gulf by a channel known as the Khor Bahmeh-shire. In the early part of this century, as shown in maps of the time, the greater part of the waters of the Karun reached the sea by two, if not three, additional outlets which had been silted up.

The second branch, which now contains the

main body of the waters of the Karun, enters the Shat-el-Arab by a broad and deep channel called the Hafar, which, as its name denotes,[4] is an ancient canal constructed to unite the two rivers. The Persian Government, however, maintained that it was one of the original outlets of the Karun, or that the river at some remote epoch had deviated of itself from its original course, and had made its way to the Shat-el-Arab. Muhammera, built on the Hafar, may be said to command the entrances to the Euphrates and Tigris, which form this estuary, and to the Karun. It was consequently claimed by both the Turkish and Persian Governments, the right to it of either depending upon the disputed fact as to whether the Hafar was an artificial or natural outlet of the Karun. The position was one of so much importance to Turkey—as it might be made to command the navigation of the two great rivers which run through the heart of her Asiatic dominions—that she threatened to go to war with Persia unless her claim to the place was recognised. A Turkish force had, as I have already mentioned, attacked and taken Muhammera a short time before, but had subsequently abandoned the place. The territories of the Cha'b Arabs had been hitherto considered as part of the Persian province of

[4] It signifies in Arabic an artificial canal—one 'dug out.'

Khuzistan, and as subject to the Shah, although the tribe had virtually maintained a kind of semi-independence. They were not desirous of passing under Turkish rule, although Sheikh Thamer, alarmed at the threatened attack on Fellahiyah in consequence of his refusal to surrender Mehemet Taki Khan and his family, had entered into communication with the Pasha of Baghdad, whose jurisdiction extended at that time to the Persian Gulf, and had claimed his help and protection, as holding Muhammera of the Sultan.

It was probably the fear that, if further pressed, Sheikh Thamer might ally himself to the Turks and place Muhammera in their hands, that induced the Matamet to abandon his expedition against him and to retire to Shuster, now that its principal object had been effected by the capture of Mehemet Taki Khan. He was desirous of conciliating the Arab chief, and of detaching him from the Turkish cause.

Sheikh Thamer, in visiting Muhammera and inviting me to accompany him, wished to ascertain whether its defences had been placed in good condition, so that it would be capable of resisting an attack whether from Turks or Persians, as he was more desirous of maintaining his semi-independent position than of becoming the subject of either. I found that some batteries and earthworks had

been thrown up to command the Hafar and the approaches to the town from the land side. Upon them a few old guns, scarcely in a serviceable state, had been mounted. These defences might have proved effective against any troops which the Sultan or the Shah could, at that time, have sent against them, if held by resolute men, but would have been of little avail against a European force.

In those days the Porte was supposed to maintain a fleet in the Shat-el-Arab for service in the river and the Persian Gulf. For its maintenance an Admiral, who resided at Basra, and various Turkish officials at Constantinople and Baghdad, were periodically paid. This fleet consisted, in fact, of one corvette. The greater part of the bulwarks of this vessel having rotted away, and wood fit for repairing them being scarce in those parts, sun-dried bricks had been used for the purpose. On one occasion, when a British man-of-war arrived at Basra and saluted the Turkish flag, the Admiral, who was living in the town, at some distance from the river, excused himself for not returning the salute on the plea that there was no gunpowder on board his ship. But he afterwards admitted that, had he fired a gun, the old hulk would, in all probability, have fallen to pieces. Muhammera had, therefore, nothing to fear from a Turkish fleet, and the Persians had no navy.

My visit to Muhammera, and the opportunity I thus had of examining its position, and of learning from Sheikh Thamer the merits of the dispute as to the right to it which had arisen between Turkey and Persia, proved subsequently of great use to me.

On my return to Fellahiyah I found that Ali Naghi Khan had made the necessary preparations for the departure of the Bakhtiyari families for the mountains, and late one evening, after innumerable delays, we commenced our march. The women and the children rode horses and mules, seated on piles of carpets, coverlets, and cooking utensils. The men were only partly mounted, many being without horses. Mehemet Taki Khan's three brothers and Shefi'a Khan, with the horsemen, were to guard the front and rear of the caravan, and to send out scouts to warn it of the approach of an enemy, or of a marauding party.

One Mir Mathkur was to accompany us until we reached the mountains. He was sent with us by Sheikh Thamer, as he was related to the chief of the Sherifaut, an Arab tribe of notorious bad character, at whose tents we were to stop on our way, and would consequently, it was believed, be able to protect the fugitives during their passage through its territory.

The Sherifaut were encamped at a day's journey from Fellahiyah. We reached their nearest tents

long after the sun was up, and after a very fatiguing journey through the night—the women and children suffering greatly from thirst, as no drinking water had been found on our way. Such tents as we possessed were pitched, and the Arabs brought us bread and 'leben' (sour milk). Our reception appeared to be friendly, and we had no reason to apprehend that the sheikh of the tribe had any hostile intentions with regard to us. He himself was living at some distance, and Mir Mathkur rode off to see him.

He returned late in the afternoon. He was much dejected, and informed us that the sheikh had given orders that we were not to be allowed to proceed, and had sent to inform the Matamet that Mehemet Taki Khan's family were detained in his tents, and that he was ready to surrender them. Ali Naghi Khan and the other Bakhtiyari chiefs declared that rather than give themselves up they would cut their way through the Arabs or die in the attempt. He then ordered preparations to be made for our immediate departure. The women were placed with the utmost despatch on the baggage animals, and the men mounted their horses, the Arabs of the encampment in which we had sought rest not appearing disposed to interfere with us. Mir Mathkur, thinking that he might succeed in inducing the sheikh

of the Sherifaut to abandon his intention of giving up Mehemet Taki Khan's family, returned to that chief's tent.

We were provided with bread for two or three days, the water-skins had been filled, and the women had been told to conceal their gold and silver ornaments about their persons. The tents and the greater part of the heavy baggage were to be abandoned, for we had to pass through hostile tribes, and should probably have to fight our way. We started shortly before sunset—the women and children in front, the horsemen in the rear in case the Arabs should attack us. We had not gone far when some of the women insisted upon returning to look for jewellery which they had forgotten. This delayed us for some time. We had scarcely resumed our march when a large body of Arabs, on horseback and on foot, were seen coming towards us. It was evident that an attempt was to be made to stop us. Ali Naghi Khan, tearing open his dress and exposing his breast, as is the custom of the Bakhtiyari when they wish to show that they are bent upon some desperate enterprise, cried out to his followers: 'They come to seize your wives and your children. They will be given over to the "ser-bâz" to be dishonoured. Let us be men! Let us be men!'

The women were made to hurry on as fast as

possible; the horsemen and matchlock-men, who were about sixty in number, prepared to meet the enemy. Although some of our pursuers, who greatly outnumbered us, carried guns, they were, for the most part, only armed with the long Arab lance. They advanced towards us brandishing their swords, threatening us with their quivering spears, and shouting their war-cries. They were at once checked and driven back by a well-directed fire from the Bakhtiyari, which brought more than one of them to the ground. They then separated, and began to career around us in Bedouin fashion, but fearing to charge, and only occasionally discharging a gun at us. They continued these manœuvres for some time, following us as we slowly advanced — the Bakhtiyari only returning their fire when they came too near to us. At length, finding that we were determined and able to resist the attempt to stop us, they slowly withdrew and left us. Au Azeez and another horseman, one of Ali Naghi Khan's wives and two of the women, had been slightly wounded. The Arabs had shown the want of courage and dash of which they are accused by the Bakhtiyari. Although they greatly exceeded us in numbers, they had but few firearms, and an Arab never likes to expose his mare to the chance of being killed or wounded by a musket-ball.

After some rest in a ravine in which we concealed ourselves, we resumed our journey and reached in the night the Zeytun hills. The heat had been intense during the day, and the suffering from want of water very great. One of the women and two children had died on the way and were hastily buried.

The following day we passed through a country familiar to the Bakhtiyari, and we were consequently able to find water. By a forced march we reached an encampment near a small village called Kai Kaus. The tribe to which the tents belonged were the Taïbi, a branch of the Kuhghelu. Their chief was a young man of handsome appearance. He received us hospitably and supplied us with provisions, but he entreated us not to remain with him, as he feared that the Matamet might learn that he was harbouring the family and retainers of Mehemet Taki Khan, and he was not strong enough to protect them, however desirous he was of doing so. The Kuhghelu, he said, had declared for the Government, and would at once seize the fugitives and deliver them up. He advised them, therefore, to make the best of their way to the mountains, where in the 'yáylaks'[5] and

[5] The 'yáylaks' are the summer pasture-grounds of the tribes in the highest parts of the mountains.

fastnesses they would find a safe refuge from the Persian troops.

The object of Ali Naghi Khan and Khatunjan Khanum in endeavouring to pass through the country of the Kuhghelu, instead of making at once for the Bakhtiyari Mountains, was to place themselves under the protection of Khalyl Khan, a chief of the Bahmehi, a branch of that tribe. But our host warned us that it would be impossible for us to reach the castle of Khalyl Khan, as the Kuhghelu were in arms, and that we should undoubtedly be attacked and made prisoners by them if we attempted to do so. They were not, like the Arabs, armed only with spears, and were brave and daring warriors.

The chiefs held a council in which Khatunjan Khanum took part. After much discussion it was decided that we should renounce the attempt to reach the Bakhtiyari 'yâylaks'; as the tribes were now in the greatest disorder, having been detached from their allegiance to Mehemet Taki Khan, and being at war with each other, it was believed that their mountains would not afford us a secure place of refuge. It was determined, therefore, to send a messenger to the Il-Khani, the chief of the Kashgoi, a powerful tribe of Turkish origin inhabiting the mountainous country near Shiraz, and consequently not within the

jurisdiction of the Matamet, to ask his protection. If it were accorded the fugitives could then proceed to his tents, or at any rate the ladies and the women could be sent to them. It was thought that the chief would not deny hospitality and protection to the family of the head of another great tribe who were in misfortune, especially as the Iliyats of the Kashgoi and Bakhtiyari tribes encamped near each other during the hot season in the summer pastures, and had always maintained friendly relations. He enjoyed, moreover, the reputation of being a brave and generous man. Au Kerim was chosen to proceed to the Il-Khani on this mission. I offered to accompany him.

Au Kerim, who was well acquainted with the country through which we had to pass, struck at once into the mountains, in order to avoid the Kuhghelu, and the Arabs who were out on plundering expeditions in the plains. We learnt from our host where we were most likely to find the tents of the Bahmehi, who, Au Kerim thought, from the family connection between the head of their tribe and himself, would be willing to give us a friendly reception. To avoid observation as much as possible, we determined to travel by night and to conceal ourselves during the day.

As the tribes had left the low country, and

had driven their flocks and herds to the summer pastures, we kept in the mountains, following difficult and dangerous tracks. We passed many encampments of Iliyats, and were everywhere hospitably received. The Bahmehi, whom we had some cause to fear on account of their recent quarrel with Mehemet Taki Khan, showed us no hostility. We stopped at their tents, and they gave us such help as we required, furnishing us with guides through their rugged country, in many parts covered with forests.

On the third day we arrived in the evening at a small castle, standing on the spur of a mountain overlooking the plains between Behbahan and Shiraz. It belonged to Khalyl Khan, the brother of one of Mehemet Taki Khan's wives, and one of the principal chiefs of the Bahmehi tribe, whose protection it had been Khatun-jan Khanum's first intention to seek. Au Kerim had decided upon stopping there, as he believed that its owner, from his family connection with Mehemet Taki Khan, would help us by his influence to pass through the Mamesenni—a lawless tribe inhabiting the country which separated us from that occupied by the dependents of the Il-Khani.

The chief was from home, but was expected to return before nightfall. We seated ourselves in his 'lamerdoun,' or guest-room, and his wife sent

us such refreshments as are usually placed before guests on their arrival—fruits, cheese, curds, and thin cakes of unleavened bread. She soon afterwards came herself to speak with Au Kerim about the object of his visit, and expressed much sympathy for her kinswoman Khatun-jan Khanum, being herself a Bakhtiyari.

Late in the evening the chief himself arrived —a tall and rather handsome man, but with a savage, sinister expression, armed to the teeth, and shabbily dressed in the Lur cap and outer coat of felt. He was followed by a few horsemen as ill-looking as himself. We had already eaten our supper when he entered the 'lamerdoun.' After exchanging salutes with us very coldly, he retired into the 'enderun.' Au Kerim argued ill from this reception, and warned me that we had little civility to expect from our host, who, he said, was a 'ghurum-sag' and a notorious robber.

Shortly afterwards Khalyl Khan reappeared at the door, and beckoned to Au Kerim to follow him. They went out together, and I soon heard high words between them in an adjoining room. The discussion continued for some time, and ended in a violent quarrel, in which several persons joined. Then there appeared to be a struggle, and shortly afterwards Au Kerim was led back, held by two armed men, and followed by the chief himself.

On arriving at the castle he had hung up his arms in the 'lamerdoun.' I had done the same, but had we retained them any attempt at resistance would have been useless. Caught as we were in a trap, and surrounded by Khalyl Khan's retainers, had we sought to defend ourselves, and blood had flowed, we should have been instantly cut to pieces. There was nothing, therefore, to be done but to submit.

Au Kerim continued to protest loudly and energetically against the treatment that he was receiving, and against this flagrant breach of hospitality. The Bahmehi chief was equally vehement in accusing his prisoner of various misdeeds in justification of his conduct. Au Kerim was led into an inner room between the 'lamerdoun' and the 'enderun.' Khalyl Khan then directed me, in a peremptory tone, to follow my companion. I did not consider it prudent to make any remonstrance, or to declare my character of an Englishman. I was in the hands of lawless men, who would not have respected it, but who, on the contrary, would probably have considered it a duty to murder a European and an infidel, as they were as fanatical as they were ignorant. I thought it best, therefore, not to add to the irritation of our treacherous host by opposing him, and taking my saddle-bags, which con-

tained a few things that were precious to me—my medicines, my compass, and my note-books—I followed Au Kerim. We were no sooner within the room than the door was closed upon us and bolted from the outside. A pan of grease, with a lighted cotton wick in it, stood in a recess in the wall. The only furniture was an old felt carpet, worn into rags, upon which we seated ourselves, looking at each other somewhat disconsolately.

Au Kerim then denounced Khalyl Khan in the strongest terms that his vocabulary could afford, but in a low voice lest he should be overheard, for there are some insults which, among the Lurs, can only be washed out with blood. He related to me that some years before there had been a blood-feud between his family and that of the Bahmehi chief, but that it had been compromised by the marriage of his sister with Mehemet Taki Khan. Consequently there was no longer 'blood between them,' and although our host was known to be capable of any villainy, it could scarcely be believed that he had any other intention than that of taking our horses and little property, and leaving us to shift for ourselves in his inhospitable mountains. He would not dare to do us any bodily harm, at the risk of bringing upon himself the vengeance of the Bakhtiyari tribes. Au Kerim thought, therefore, that by the morning, after he

had got over the effects of the debauch in which he was in the habit of indulging, he would probably allow us to continue our way after having robbed us.

Knowing the bloodthirsty and savage character of the Bahmehi, I did not feel the same confidence as my companion as to our fate. I was labouring under too much anxiety, and overwhelmed by too many thoughts to be able to sleep. To be murdered in cold blood by a barbarian, far away from all help or sympathy, the place and cause of one's death to be probably for ever unknown, and the author of it to escape with impunity, was a fate which could not be contemplated with indifference.

We could hear the voices of the chief and his companions in the adjoining room, and the sounds of wild Lur music. They were evidently carousing. Khalyl Khan had the reputation of being given to arak and wine—a rare vice among the mountain tribes. At length all was quiet, and the carousers had apparently retired to rest.

It was some time after midnight when we were disturbed by the withdrawal of the bolt of the door. Au Kerim sprang to his feet, and I followed his example, not knowing who was about to enter and with what intent. The chief's wife, whom we had seen in the afternoon after our arrival, stepped

stealthily into the room. She denounced her husband to Au Kerim, in a whisper, as a ruffian who had no respect for the ties of family or the duties of hospitality. She would not, she said, have the blood of a kinsman upon her head, and she had come to release the guest whom he had treacherously seized. The gate of the castle was open. Khalyl Khan, after his debauch, was fast asleep, and Au Kerim could take his horse and depart, and God be with him! Then, addressing me, she said, 'What have we to do with you, a stranger, and what have you done to us that we should do you harm? Go with him, and let not your blood be also upon our heads.'

Our arms were still hanging up in the 'lamerdoun.' We took them and went down, with as little noise as possible, to the yard, where our horses, with their saddles on, had been tethered for the night. The chief's wife accompanied us to the gate, which had not been closed, and, wishing us again 'God speed,' left us when we had passed through it. Fortunately, with the exception of one or two attendants who were sleeping in the yard, and who, seeing their master's wife, did not attempt to interfere with us, there appeared to be no one else except Khalyl Khan in the castle, which was a small mud fort half in ruins, such as are frequently seen in the Lur Mountains. They

are inhabited by the chiefs, whose retainers live in reed huts or black tents at the foot of the mound upon which these buildings usually stand. Those who had shared in our host's debauch had retired to their homes in the village below, and were no doubt in a deep drunken sleep. The castle itself consisted of a porch serving as a gateway, in which ordinary travellers usually rest, and stables in the basement. On the first floor were the 'lamerdoun' for the reception of guests of more distinction, one or two rooms adjoining it, and the women's apartments. There was a round tower at each angle of the wall. The chief's horses had been sent away to grass. Our only fear was that the barking of the village dogs might cause an alarm.

As soon as we were out of the gate we led our horses down the precipitous natural eminence upon which the castle was built, in an opposite direction to the village. We proceeded as cautiously and noiselessly as possible, and when we were at a short distance from the foot of the mound we descended the mountain-side over rocks, loose stones, and bushes, as fast as we could.

Au Kerim, believing that after the outrage we had experienced from Khalyl Khan he could no longer trust the Bahmehi, and that without the protection he had expected to obtain from that

chief he could not venture among the Mamesenni, resolved to descend at once into the low country at the foot of the mountains. We could then follow the caravan track to Shiraz, on which we should find many villages, trusting to chance for arriving at some place whence we might at least communicate with the Il-Khani, and obtain his aid to reach his tents.

It was with great difficulty that we could drag our horses to the foot of the high mountain range. A stony, hilly country, at this time of the year uninhabited—the tribes being in the summer pastures, with their flocks and herds—still separated us from the plain of Behbahan. We were at some distance from the castle when, about midday, we perceived that we were being pursued by a party of horsemen. Au Kerim, who was mounted on a high-bred Arab mare, put her to full speed. Khatun-jan Khanum had lent me one of Mehemet Taki Khan's horses, which was strong and fast, and I was able to keep up with my companion. Both our animals were tired, and the heat on these bare and rocky hills, reflecting the burning rays of the sun, was intense.

We were following a long, narrow valley, through which ran the Tab, a small stream, one of the confluents of the Jerrahi, or Kurdistan river. It wound through the flat alluvial land

formed by the various changes in its course. We could, therefore, gallop our horses, and were gaining on our pursuers, when Au Kerim's mare stumbled and fell, throwing her rider over her head. I was a little behind him, and when I came up to him he was on the ground evidently in much pain and unable to rise. His mare had run away. I was about to dismount to help him, but he entreated me to leave him, and to fly as fast as my horse could carry me, as I could not be of any use to him, and he would be unable to protect me. He advised me to strike into the hills as soon as I could do so, and to conceal myself in some ravine during the rest of the day. If he escaped, and were able and allowed to follow me, he would, he said, find by the traces of my horse's hoofs the direction I had taken, and would rejoin me.

I saw that I could be of no assistance to him, and to remain with him would have been to risk my life unnecessarily. The horsemen who were in pursuit, and were rapidly approaching us, were too numerous to admit of the possibility of resistance. There was absolutely nothing to be done but to follow his injunctions. With a heavy heart and a sad presentiment of the fate which awaited him, I urged on my horse, and following Au Kerim's advice, turned into the hills by a track which led through a narrow defile.

After awhile, seeing that I was not followed, I endeavoured to discover some sheltered spot, well hidden in the hills, where I could find water and grass for my horse and shade for myself, as the mid-day heat and scorching rays of the sun were almost beyond endurance. I had not slept for nearly thirty-six hours, and had eaten nothing since the previous night. I was suffering from excruciating thirst, and I dreaded lest an attack of the intermittent fever, which had never left me, might come on, and that I should be delirious and helpless. My horse, greatly distressed from want of food and water, could scarcely carry me any longer. I was in despair, not knowing what to do or which way to turn, when I happily came to a retired place where there was an abundant spring, shaded by a few stunted konar trees. The soil around produced an ample supply of grass. I owed this welcome discovery to my horse, which suddenly began to neigh and to sniff the air—a sign that water was near. I gave it the rein and it turned immediately to the spot, which was so well concealed that I should not probably have found it but for the instinct of the animal.

I was beyond measure thankful when I found myself in this oasis and was able to take some rest. Fortunately I still had some thin cakes of unleavened bread and a few dried figs, which

Khatun-jan Khanum had crammed into my saddle-bags. As my small stock of provisions would not suffice for long, and as I could not foresee when I might reach tents in which I could safely trust myself, I ate sparingly. My horse had made a rush at the spring. After it had drank sufficiently I tethered it in the grass, and stretching myself in the shade of a tree, fell at once into a profound sleep.

The sun was setting when I awoke. My horse was still feeding in the long grass. No one had disturbed me in my retreat. I pondered over my position and the course which it would be most prudent for me to pursue. It would have been vain to seek Au Kerim, who must have fallen into the hands of our pursuers, whoever they may have been, whether the followers of the Bahmehi chief, who on discovering our flight had sent them to recapture us, or the horsemen of some hostile tribe. It would be equally useless for me to continue the journey upon which we had set out together. I could do nothing on behalf of my Bakhtiyari friends with the Il-Khani, to whom I was unknown, even if I could succeed in reaching his tents, which was very doubtful. I could not tell where Mehemet Taki Khan's family had gone, and to attempt to rejoin them through the country which intervened between us, inhabited by the

Bakhtiyari who had revolted against their former chief, would have been too great a risk. After well considering and weighing the alternatives, I came to the conclusion that my best course was to endeavour to reach Shuster, and there to present myself to the Matamet, who would not venture to do more than send me out of the country. I should thus be able to learn the fate of the Bakhtiyari chiefs and their families, and to decide upon my future plans.

In our flight Au Kerim had followed a valley in the direction of Behbahan. My horse, although still much fatigued, had been refreshed by food and rest. It was night before I resumed my journey. The heat had diminished, and a slight breeze from the mountains, from which I was not far distant, cooled the air. I was able to steer my course with the aid of my compass, which I had luckily preserved, and which I carried in a pouch attached to my belt—such as is used by the Lurs for holding grease, rags, and other materials for cleaning and keeping in order their guns. The hills among which I was wandering, although low, were so precipitous and stony, and so constantly intersected by deep ravines, that I had very great difficulty in making my way across them.

After four or five hours' alternate riding and walking, without meeting any human being or any

wild beasts—of which I was in some fear, as lions are frequently found in these hills—and only having been disturbed by an occasional hyena crossing my path, or by the jackals, which often set up their dismal howl almost from under the feet of my horse, I reached the plain of Behbahan. The distant barking of dogs told me that I was near tents or a village. I advanced cautiously, and could just distinguish in the dawn a few low huts. I disturbed a man who was sleeping on the ground, and who sprang up with his spear, evidently taking me for a thief. I gave him the usual Musulman salutation—which he returned, although still on his guard—and then explained to him that I was a harmless traveller who had lost his way, and was in search of hospitality.

He informed me that the village belonged to one of those half Lur, half Arab tribes which tend their herds of buffaloes in the plains and marshes near the rivers of Khuzistan. He directed me to the hut of the sheikh, who invited me to enter, and gave me and my horse some food, of which we were both much in need.

After I had been allowed to take a little rest, I had to answer the many questions that he put to me as to my object in travelling alone in those parts, whence I came, and where I was going. I told him that I was a friend of Mirza Koma, of

Behbahan, and that I was seeking to reach that place, having been obliged to leave the mountains in consequence of the disorders that had broken out there since Mehemet Taki Khan had been deposed from the chieftainship of the Bakhtiyari. He was satisfied with my explanation, and as his small tribe belonged to Mirza Koma, he offered to send a guide with me, if I wished for one.

I spent the day in the hut of the hospitable sheikh, and resumed my journey at nightfall. He warned me that there were roving parties both of Kuhghelu and Arabs in the plain, and advised me to keep among the hills. He sent a man with me as a guide, who professed to be in mortal fear of lions, which, he declared, abounded at this season of the year in the ravines, and frequently attacked solitary travellers at night. However, we neither saw nor heard any, and in the early morning I could see, at no great distance, the gardens and palm trees of Behbahan.

I thought it desirable not to enter the town and present myself to Mirza Koma's successor, for things had changed since my visit there in the winter. As it was known that I had been with Mehemet Taki Khan, who was accused of rebellion against the Shah and was now in chains, he might have considered it his duty to arrest me and to send me a prisoner to the Matamet. At any rate,

I thought it better not to run the risk. Keeping, therefore, in the gardens on the outskirts of the town, I spent the day in the hut of a gardener.

In the evening I was again on horseback, and, passing round the town in the open country, joined the main caravan track from Shuster to Behbahan and Shiraz, over which I had twice travelled, and with which I was consequently acquainted. Noting carefully the direction, I kept at some distance from it.

In the morning I stopped at a small village near Sultanabad and the so-called gardens of Anushirwan, where I found my old friend the seyyid, whose eyes had been almost cured by the lotion which I had given him on my former visit. He was surprised to see me back again, and I had to explain how I had been with Mehemet Taki Khan to Fellahiyah, and had accompanied his wife and family to the mountains, whence I was now returning. He professed the greatest affection for the Bakhtiyari chief, whose generous charities to seyyids and other holy men he loudly extolled, bewailing his unhappy fate. As the country between Ram Hormuz and Shuster had been entirely deserted by its population, and was infested by marauding parties of all kinds, it would be impossible, he said, for me to pass through it with safety. He, therefore, pressed me

to remain as his guest until I might find an opportunity of joining a well-protected caravan going to that city.

I was not sorry to avail myself of his offer of hospitality for two days, in order to rest myself and my wearied horse. I passed them pleasantly with this good old man, stretched for the most part of the time in the shade of his orange trees, and listening to his stories about the mountain tribes. He was very loth to let me depart, as he was persuaded that I was incurring an almost certain risk of being robbed and murdered. However, as it was very improbable that any caravan would be going to Shuster in the then disordered state of the country and in the heat of summer, and as I might have to wait an indefinite time before hearing of one, I determined to continue my journey alone, notwithstanding his friendly remonstrances. Seeing that I was resolved to go, he insisted upon replenishing my saddle-bags with bread and dried fruit, declaring that I would find neither tents nor villages on my way, and consequently would have nothing to eat. Indeed, he advised me to avoid them as much as possible.

I gratefully acknowledged his kindness and took my leave of him. He sent his son to put me on a track which led through the hills to the south of the plain of Ram Hormuz, and which

he considered much safer than that through the plain. He also described to me—a matter of great importance at that time of the year—where I should find water; but advised me not to remain at pools after sunset, for it was then that lions and other beasts of prey, having slept all day in their lairs, came at night to drink. The youth rode with me for about two hours, when, showing me the track which his father had indicated, he turned back.

I was now alone again, and left to my own resources. Following the advice of the seyyid, I avoided as much as possible the plain, and kept in the broken ground and in the hills to the south of it, travelling by night and concealing myself in ravines and hollows during the day. Fortunately, owing to his directions, I was able to find water near which I could stop—and where there was water there was grass for my horse. There were also trees, generally the konar, in the shade of which I could protect myself from the scorching sun. The fruit of this tree, and a kind of wild garlic, with the bread and dried figs with which the good old seyyid had provided me, were sufficient to appease my hunger.

With the exception of an occasional hyena or jackal I did not see a single living creature until, on the third morning, I perceived in the distance

some flocks which I conjectured must belong to the Gunduzlu. A shepherd informed me that I was at no great distance from the tents of Lufti Aga, my former guide to Bendi-Kir. I rode to them and received a warm welcome from him. He informed me that the Matamet had returned to Shuster, that Mehemet Taki Khan was kept by him in chains, and that Ali Naghi Khan had been made prisoner and sent to Tehran. The heat, he said, had for the present stopped all military operations. The greatest disorder and anarchy prevailed amongst the Bakhtiyari and the Arabs, as, without a chief whom they respected, and who was able to maintain some authority over them, they were fighting among themselves, and were plundering and maltreating the peaceable inhabitants of the province.

I was only about eight miles from Shuster. Some Gunduzlu horsemen were leaving the encampment for the city in the night. I accompanied them, and crossing the bridge over the Ab Gargar passed through the eastern gate as the sun rose, not a little thankful that I had performed my journey in safety. When I related my adventures to my Bakhtiyari and Shusteri friends, they declared that I must have been under the special protection of Hazret Ali, as without it no single horseman could have passed

through the country which I had traversed without being murdered by robbers or devoured by lions.

It was not until long after that I learnt the fate of my unfortunate friend, Au Kerim. He had been captured by Khalyl Khan and his horsemen, who were our pursuers. The Bahmehi chief, fearing that if he were to put his kinsman to death there would be a perpetual blood-feud between himself and the Bakhtiyari, had given over his prisoner to Ali Riza Khan, Mehemet Taki Khan's rival, who had been appointed chief of the tribes in his stead by the Matamet. There was 'blood' between the two chiefs and their families. Ali Riza Khan led Au Kerim to Baghi-Malek, and told him to prepare for death. The unhappy youth covered his face with his hands and was immediately shot dead.

Had I fallen into the hands of Khalyl Khan I might have shared the same fate. The death of Au Kerim caused me sincere grief. Of all the brothers of Mehemet Taki Khan he was the one who possessed the most estimable qualities, and for whom I entertained the greatest friendship.

CHAPTER XIV.

Interview with the Matamet—A relative of Suleiman Khan—His character—The seyyids of Shuster—I determine to return to Baghdad—Mulla Feraju-Allah—Leave for Hawizah—An inhospitable desert—The Kerkhah—Arab buffalo-keepers—Sheikh Faras—His 'musif'—The Hawizah Arabs—Taken for a Georgian—A Sabæan — Reach Hawizah — Renounce journey through the Beni Lam country—Hawizah—The Sabæans—Join caravan to Basra—Cross the desert—A lion—Reach the Euphrates—An English merchant-ship—Arrive at Basra.

LEAVING the horsemen who had accompanied me from the Gunduzlu tents, I rode at once to the castle where the Matamet was residing. There was little difficulty then in appearing before any Eastern official, however exalted his rank. The eunuch was already holding his morning reception, listening to complaints, administering justice, ordering the bastinado, and attending to other business—for he kept early hours. He was seated on his gilded chair in a large chamber excavated in the rock, and not much above the level of the Karun. It was a kind of 'serd-âb,' or underground summer apartment, in which he took

refuge from the great heat which prevails at Shuster during this season of the year.

I was permitted to enter, and he at once perceived me. He inquired whence I came, and where I had been since he had seen me in his encampment near Fellahiyah. I told him that having received great kindness and hospitality from Mehemet Taki Khan's family, and having left some property with them, I had returned to them and had accompanied them to the mountains; and that, being no longer able to pursue the object of my visit to Khuzistan, which was to examine its ancient monuments, as the tribes were at war and the country in a state of dangerous disorder, I had resolved to return to Shuster in order to find the means of reaching some place whence I could continue my journey eastwards.

He observed that I had run great risks, and that had I been killed the British Government would, as usual, have held that of the Shah responsible for my death. 'You Englishmen,' he added, in an angry tone, 'are always meddling in matters which do not concern you, and interfering in the affairs of other countries. You attempted to do it in Afghanistan, but all your countrymen there have been put to death; not one of them has escaped.' He then described the ignominious manner in which the corpse of Sir William Mac-

Naghten had been treated at Caubul, and the insults heaped upon the bodies of other English officers.[1]

After greeting me in this fashion he directed a ghulàm to conduct me to the house occupied by Suleiman Khan, the Armenian general, whom I had seen at Fellahiyah. He requested me not to leave Shuster without his permission, as he could not answer for my safety outside the walls. I might go about the town as much as I pleased.

Suleiman Khan himself was living in the camp with his troops on the opposite bank of the Karun. But a relative, who was in charge of his establishment, received me very politely. He was a youth of about seventeen years of age. His appearance

[1] On my return to Baghdad, when writing to Colonel Hennell, who was still with the British troops at Karak, I mentioned what the Matamet had told me concerning the massacre of the English in Afghanistan. In his reply, dated September 9, he said: 'You will, before this, have heard from Colonel Taylor that the reports of the English having been put to death throughout Caubul are equally veracious with those of the unsuccessful attempt (by the English) to bombard Bushire alluded to by you. I need not say that both are equally false. Whatever may be the real inclinations of the Shah and his worthy Wuzir, they certainly want the means to equip an expedition against Afghanistan.' The murder of Burns, which preceded that of the other English in that country, took place at the beginning of November, 1841. It would consequently seem that the Matamet, who was in the secrets of his Government, had some information which led him to know that the extermination of the English was contemplated, and to induce him to believe that it had already been effected.

was more that of a handsome girl than of a boy. He was tall, slender, gentle, and almost feminine in voice and manner. His dress was that of a Persian of rank and fashion—flowing robes of silk, bright red shalwars of the same material and a precious Cashmere shawl wound round his waist, in which he carried a jewel-handled dagger. On either side of his face was the usual 'zulf,' or long ringlet of hair, dyed with henna, as were his finger and toe nails.

He assigned me a room in the large but half-ruined house which he occupied. It had been the residence of one of the principal families of Shuster, which had, at one time, been powerful and wealthy, but had been reduced to poverty by the Persian governors of the city. It was substantially built of dressed stone, and contained a lofty 'iwan,' entirely open on one side to the air, with a courtyard in front containing flower-beds and a fountain. On either side of this hall and opening into it were a number of small rooms, in two stories, and lighted from it. The walls and ceilings of all these rooms had been profusely ornamented with carved wood-work and with elegant designs in colour and in gold, but these decorations had greatly suffered from time and neglect. Apartments for the servants and attendants, stables, and various outhouses formed a kind of quadrangle

enclosing the main building. A wall separated this outer from an inner court, in which were the women's apartments. The roofs of these buildings were flat, and upon them the inmates passed the night during the hot weather. Such appears to have been the general plan of Persian houses and public edifices from very early times—certainly from those of the Sassanian dynasty, as it is to be traced in the ruins of the magnificent palace of Chosroes, at Ctesiphon, and in other remains of the period.

I lived in one of the small rooms leading out of the 'iwan' on the ground floor, in a corner of which I spread my carpet, which served me to sit upon during the day and to sleep upon at night. I had no other bed or bedding. I remained for nearly a month with my host. Suleiman Khan rarely came into Shuster, being occupied with military matters in the camp. The house was frequented by officers of the regular troops and by persons employed in the service of the Matamet. They were a dissolute and debauched set of fellows, and feasted, drank arak, and spent most of their time, half-drunk, in listening to music and watching dancing boys and girls.

Although my young host had some good qualities, and was not wanting in intelligence, he had acquired, even thus early, some of the vices of

his Musulman fellow-countrymen, and took part with them in debauches, which were undermining his health He was, in addition, cruel and heartless. His father was in the habit of sending persons who had incurred his displeasure, or who were suspected of crime, to be punished and tortured under his son's superintendence. The sticks were always ready and were in constant use. The day I left Shuster two servants of Suleiman Khan, accused of having stolen a gun, but who protested their innocence, were brought to the house to be put to torture in order to extort a confession. The unfortunate men were first subjected to a cruel bastinado on the soles of their feet, which was continued until they fainted. When they had been revived by buckets of water poured upon them, they were burnt in the most sensitive parts of their bodies with hot irons. They still maintained their innocence, and only admitted that they were guilty when unable to resist the excruciating agony of having packing-needles forced under their finger-nails. The cries of these wretched victims of Persian cruelty were ringing in my ears when I escaped from Shuster.

The young Khan belonged to a family of rank, several members of which held high offices in the State. He was of Georgian descent, and a Christian of the Armenian rite, and was supposed to

have had some kind of education. It is not surprising that men thus early accustomed to show the greatest indifference to human suffering, and to be utterly insensible to justice and right, should become tyrannical, corrupt, and inhuman rulers, and that the country which they were called to govern should have been reduced to the condition into which Persia had then fallen.

It was the more deplorable that the instigator of the acts that I have described was a Christian. But there was then in Persia little, if any, difference in this respect between a native Christian and a Musulman. The Christian, indeed, was in some respects more contemptible, and if possible more vicious than the Mohammedan. He appeared ashamed of his religion, which the Mohammedan was not, excused himself for professing it, and sought to assimilate himself as much as possible in outward forms with the followers of Islam and to participate in their vices. The Armenian priests were uneducated, bigoted, and licentious, and kept their flocks in the most complete ignorance. The contempt with which the native Christians were treated by their rulers, and by Musulmans in general, who regarded them as unclean, and would neither eat nor drink with them, except when they were associated in vice, added to their degradation. Many of them abandoned their religion for that

of the dominant race, as the only means of entering and rising in the service of the State. When I was in Persia several of the most prominent government officials were renegade Armenians. Suleiman Khan, being nearly related to the Matamet, who then enjoyed great influence and power, had contrived to attain to high rank in the army without abjuring his faith. But he was, I believe, a solitary exception.[2]

The scenes that were constantly occurring in Suleiman Khan's house disgusted me so greatly that I passed as much of my time as possible with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, and in visiting with him the principal inhabitants of Shuster, who were also for the most part seyyids. From them I received great kindness, and learnt much concerning the history of Shuster and the province, and its resources, and other matters which were of interest to me. The principal and most influential family in the city was that of Seyyid, or, as he was usually called, 'Mirza' Sultan Ali Khan, who inhabited a large and handsome palace built on the edge of the cliff overlooking the Ab Gargar. His family at one time ruled over the greater part of the city; but the extortions of successive governors sent

[2] As I have stated in the introduction to my narrative, I have described the Persians as I found them nearly half a century ago. Great changes may, and I trust have, taken place for the better since that time.

from Tehran had almost reduced them to poverty. Their palace was fast falling to ruins. But its owners were still renowned for their hospitality and charity to the poor and needy, and their 'musif' was always crowded with guests. In the time of his prosperity Mirza Sultan Ali Khan was allied with Mehemet Taki Khan, and the little property the latter possessed in the shape of money, shawls, and jewels, had been deposited with the Mirza, in whose keeping it was believed to be secure.

The Matamet was chiefly engaged in screwing money out of the unfortunate inhabitants of Shuster and Dizful, and of the surrounding districts, and out of the Arab tribes which had remained in the province. With this object the leading inhabitants of the towns, the 'ket-khudâs' of the villages, and the Arab sheikhs who had fallen into his hands had been imprisoned in the castle and underwent almost daily tortures. The sticks were constantly in use, and men of the highest character and the greatest repute in Khuzistan were ignominiously subjected to the bastinado. The merciless and brutal eunuch had even devised new tortures for those whom he accused of withholding or concealing their property, and consequently of being in rebellion to the Shah. Some poor wretches, principally petty

Arab sheikhs who had joined the Cha'b in resisting the Persian troops, or had endeavoured to fly to avoid paying the money demanded of them, were, it was said, bound up in wool soaked in naphtha, which was then set on fire. They were thus left to suffer a lingering and horrible death. Those who could escape from the Matamet had taken refuge in the mountains, or amongst the independent Arab tribes beyond his jurisdiction, and a large tract of country previously thickly peopled and well cultivated had become a wilderness.

The account which I had received from the Matamet of the defeat of the British troops, and of the massacre of my countrymen in Afghanistan, was sufficiently precise, although it afterwards proved to be premature, to induce me to consider whether it would be wise for me to persist in my intention of endeavouring to pass through the Seistan, and of reaching India through Kandahar. The capture of Mehemet Taki Khan had put an end to the schemes I had formed for the development of British trade in Khuzistan, but I had been able to collect much political, geographical, and commercial information which I believed might prove useful. I desired, therefore, to make use of my notes as soon as possible, and whilst what I had heard and seen was still fresh in my memory, in order that the results of my labours might

not be altogether lost. I was still not without hope that I might persuade some English merchants at Baghdad, who were seeking to find, in the regions watered by the Euphrates and Tigris and their confluents, new outlets for British trade, to enter into commercial relations with the Bakhtiyari and Arab tribes of Khuzistan, and that in this case the little influence I had acquired among them might prove of advantage. These and some other considerations of a more personal nature made me determine, after mature reflection, to return to Baghdad. There I could communicate with my friends in England, ascertain how far my views as to the establishment of a British trade with Khuzistan could be realized, and obtain authentic information as to the state of affairs in Central Asia which would enable me to decide upon my future course. I may mention that I had no intention of embarking in any commercial enterprise. I had neither the special knowledge nor the means which would have enabled me to do so. But I resolved to return to Khuzistan for the purpose of collecting further commercial and other statistics, if, on communicating with Colonel Taylor, the political Resident of the East India Company at Baghdad, and my acquaintances in that city, I found that I could promote the object I had so much at heart.

Through Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan I had made the acquaintance of Mulla Feraju-Allah, the Wali, or hereditary chief, of Hawizah, and of the Arab tribes inhabiting the district of that name. He had been summoned to Shuster to settle his accounts with the Government and to pay the arrears of his tribute, which extended over several years. He had succeeded in coming to an arrangement with the Matamet, who had confirmed him in his chieftainship, and whom he had furnished with a body of Arab horsemen for the invasion of the Cha'b territory.

The Wali was descended from an illustrious family of seyyids, which migrated from Medinah about the year of the Hegira, 751 (A.D. 1350), and subsequently settled at Wasit, a town on the Haïh, a branch of the Tigris flowing into the Euphrates, where they became the chiefs of some Arab tribes of buffalo herdsmen. Later on they crossed the former river to the site of the modern Hawizah, where one Mulla Mohammed founded a town called Jemaniyeh. His son, Mulla, or Wali, Sultan Hussein, built the castle of Hawizah on an island formed by the river Kerkhah. He was the first to bring all the Arab tribes of Khuzistan under subjection, and to assume an important position in the province. His grandson, Mulla Bedr, headed an expedition into Arabia, and

reached Mecca, after having defeated the Arabs of the Hejaz in many engagements. He brought the tribe now bearing the name of the Sherif, or holy, from that city, and established them in Hawizah. The Walis now acquired considerable power. The cities of Shuster and Dizful, the whole of the low country as far as Behbahan, including that occupied by the Cha'b Arabs, and a considerable extent of territory to the west of the Tigris and Euphrates, were subject to them. According to an existing tradition, they were able to bring one hundred and thirty thousand men into the field, and possessed a body-guard of eighteen thousand horsemen, who were always ready for war, and slept under their castle walls! Their power, however, rapidly declined, and only the ruined town of Hawizah and a few Arab tribes recognised the authority of Mulla Feraju-Allah. But he was still looked upon by the Arabs as a kind of royal as well as sacred personage, fully entitled to the distinction of wearing the green turban as a descendant of the Prophet, and their chiefs did not sit in his presence unless invited to do so.[3] In consequence of his refusal to acknowledge the authority of the Persian Government, his territories had been more than once invaded and laid waste

[3] See my Memoir on Khuzistan in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, p. 34.

by Persian troops, and he himself had been kept a prisoner for some six years.

Having made up my mind to return to Baghdad, I thought the opportunity a good one of visiting Hawizah and the surrounding country under the protection of Mulla Feraju-Allah. I should thus be able to explore a district then unknown, and to trace the course of the Kerkhah, conjectured to be the Choaspes of the Greek geographers. The region to the west of this river, then a blank on our maps, was believed to contain ruins of a very early period. But its inhabitants, the Beni Lam Arabs, who neither recognised the authority of the Porte nor that of the Persian Government, were reputed to be the most treacherous and lawless of all the tribes in Turkish Arabia. The Wali, however, promised me such recommendations to their sheikhs as would insure my safety whilst passing through their territories. I determined, therefore, to take this route, which, although the most direct and shortest to Baghdad, was never followed by caravans or travellers, on account of its danger.

Three horsemen belonging to Mulla Feraju-Allah being about to return to Hawizah, he suggested that I should accompany them as far as that place. I accordingly made my arrangements as secretly as possible to go with them. The horse

lent to me by Khatun-jan Khanum had been taken from me by the Matamet as part of Mehemet Taki Khan's property. I was without money to buy another. Through the help of my good friend Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, I found a Shusteri who was willing to take my gun in exchange for a horse.

I was in no need of money, as the inhabitants of the country through which I had to pass would not expect payment for that hospitality which even the most degraded Arabs consider it a religious duty to extend to a traveller. It was, indeed, better to be without money, so as not to excite the cupidity of the Beni Lam, and thus to increase the chance of being robbed or murdered.

As I wished to leave Shuster without being observed, it was arranged that I should join Mulla Feraju-Allah's horsemen outside the southern gate of the city—in the 'Miyandâb,'[4] as the district between the Karun and Ab Gargar is called. Late one afternoon I left the house occupied by the relative of Suleiman Khan without informing any one of my intention of quitting the city. I passed through the bazar and streets without interruption, and found my companions waiting for me at the place appointed for our meeting—a small village at a short distance from Shuster. They were two

[4] A corruption of Miyan-doo-Ab—between the two waters or rivers.

Arabs and a black slave belonging to the Wali, well mounted and armed with long spears tufted with ostrich feathers.

It was the month of August—the hottest time of the year—and the heat in the plains, now scorched and without a blade of grass, was very great. When I had crossed the Miyandâb in the spring it was a vast green meadow, gorgeous with flowers of every hue. We rested for a short time at an Arab encampment. My companions gave out that I was a Georgian, in the service of the Matamet, going on his business to Hawizah. I did not think it necessary to contradict them, and I assumed this character until I reached that place. As they wished to get over as much ground as possible during the night, we left the tents after having eaten. We reached Bendi-Kir, at the junction of the Karun and the river of Dizful, early in the morning, and remained there until after midday, when, although the sun was still high and the glare and heat most oppressive, my guides thought it necessary to continue our journey, as the nearest Arab tents that we could hope to reach were many hours distant. We crossed the two rivers by fords, and entered upon the desert plains between them and the Kerkhah, which were without water, and consequently uninhabited. In the dry season the deep sand in parts of them, and in

the rainy season the mud, renders the passage across them difficult for horsemen.

This arid waste during the summer months is much dreaded by the Arabs, in consequence of the simoom which frequently blows across it. This pernicious wind has been known to overwhelm and destroy a whole caravan of travellers with their beasts. We were now in the season of the year when it prevails, and my companions having heard that only three days before some inhabitants of Shuster, overtaken by it, had perished, professed to be much alarmed at the prospect before us. However, we filled our water-skins, and entered upon this desert, apparently without a single elevation or landmark to guide us.

The Arabs who were with me were not familiar with the track, and when night came on they admitted that they had lost their way. Dismounting from their horses they tasted the earth and examined the stunted bushes which we occasionally found on our path, hoping thus to ascertain where we were. We had only the stars to guide us. We soon found ourselves among low hills, or rather mounds, of drifted sand, in which our horses frequently sank up to the saddle-girths, and were constantly falling. We thus wandered about for two or three hours in the darkness.

Our horses, having had neither rest, food, nor

water for many hours, could scarcely drag themselves along. I proposed that we should wait until daylight to continue our journey; but my companions were afraid of lions, which they maintained abounded in this desolate country, although it was scarcely likely that such could be the case, as there was nothing for them either to eat or to drink. They were persuaded that the Kerkhah could not be far distant. We therefore struggled on foot through the deep sand, leading our horses. When nearly exhausted from fatigue, we suddenly heard the distant noise of running water. No sound could have been more welcome. The night had been unusually oppressive, on account of a hot wind—happily not the simoom. Our water-skins had been long emptied, and our animals, as well as ourselves, were suffering from intense thirst.

We soon reached the river-bank, and, stretching ourselves at full length on the ground, drank copiously of the delicious stream. The water of the Kerkhah—presuming this river to be rightly identified with the Choaspes—appeared to me well deserving of its ancient renown. Herodotus states that the Persian monarchs would drink of no other, and golden vessels filled with it were sent to them by special couriers to the furthest parts of their empire. This custom of sending water known for its purity to great distances, for the use of kings

and great personages, has lasted to our times. Burckhardt relates how the celebrated Mehemet Ali Pasha of Egypt, when engaged in war with the Wahabees in Central Arabia, had the water of the Nile brought to him daily for his use. That of the Kerkhah is still so highly esteemed by the Persians that it is thus forwarded to persons of high rank, such as the Matamet.

Our horses rejoiced no less than ourselves when we reached the banks of the river. After we had refreshed ourselves we resumed our journey, as we were still at some distance from any human habitations. The night was nearly spent when, after toiling and struggling through jungle and brushwood, the barking of dogs led us to an Arab encampment. As its inmates were still asleep, we lay down outside the tents to take a little rest, of which we were sorely in need.

When, soon after daybreak, I was awoke by the Arabs preparing for their day's work, I found that the tents and reed-built huts belonged to some poor families of buffalo-keepers, who were unable to furnish us with either corn or grass for our horses. They told us that the nearest encampment where we could obtain what we so much needed was at least two farsaks, or six miles, distant.

Although our horses were by this time com-

pletely exhausted, we could not remain where we were. Dragging them along as we best could, we at length reached, about two hours after sunrise, a large Arab village. The river divided itself at this place into a number of small streams, upon the banks of which were clusters of huts built of mats and reeds. We rode at once to the 'musif' of the sheikh. We were hospitably received, our horses were plentifully supplied with cut grass, and we were served with a breakfast consisting of fish, curds, and buffalo cream.

We were still at some distance from the encampment of Sheikh Faras, the chief of the principal tribe in the district of Hawizah, to whom I had been specially recommended by the Wali, and who was directed to send me, with proper guarantees for my safety, to the sheikh of the Beni Lam Arabs. After a short rest, and our horses being somewhat refreshed, we remounted, and rode for three hours through a thickly peopled and well-cultivated country, offering a strong contrast in the bright green of its vegetation to the yellow, parched, and sandy tract which we had crossed since leaving Bendi-Kir. Numerous watercourses derived from the river irrigated a large tract of country. There was an almost continuous line of huts on their banks. Half-naked men and women, and entirely naked children, were hurrying to and fro, wading

through the marshes and rice-fields deep in water, and tending herds of buffaloes and camels, and flocks of sheep. They were a wild people, almost as black as negroes from constant exposure to the sun. From all sides came the discordant yells with which the Arabs are accustomed to address their cattle, and sometimes the distant sound of an Arab war-song. It was a lively and busy scene. As I had exchanged my Lur cap and felt outer coat for a 'kefliyeh' and an 'abba,' or Arab cloak, I passed with my three companions unnoticed by those whom we met on our way.

The palm trees surrounding the town of Hawizah were visible in the extreme distance, but we turned from them and rode to the encampment of Sheikh Faras, occupying both sides of a branch of the Kerkhah, which, although broad, was fordable. It consisted of a large number of the usual black goat-hair tents, and of reed and mat huts. When we reached the 'musif' of the sheikh we found that he was sleeping. I was so much fatigued by my long journey that I was not sorry to follow his example. It was nearly sunset before I awoke. In the meanwhile the black slave, having delivered the letter from the Wali to Sheikh Faras, had left the encampment with the two Arab horsemen for Hawizah. I was thus alone again among strangers.

The 'musif' of the sheikh was the most re-

markable of similar temporary constructions which I had seen for its excessive neatness and cleanliness, and its size. It was built entirely of rushes, reeds, and mats, and was about forty feet long, twenty broad, and fourteen high. The entrances were formed by clusters of long canes fixed in the ground, and united at the top so as to form bent and pointed arches. These fluted columns, as it were, were about six feet apart, and between them, serving as a kind of screen, were trellises made of reeds, joined by twisted worsted of bright colours worked into fanciful designs. Above them were suspended mats, beautifully made and of the finest texture, which could be raised or lowered at pleasure so as to admit the air or to exclude the sun. At the side of each column was placed the trunk of a tree shaped into a kind of pedestal, upon which stood a jar of porous clay, such as are used in Arabia for cooling water. These jars, of very elegant form, were constantly replenished from the river, and nothing could be more refreshing than a draught from them. Above them were shelves, upon which were earthen cups for the use of those who desired to drink. The floor was covered with fine carpets and matting. Comfortable cushions and bolsters were ranged along the sides of the 'musif' for the guests to recline against. In order to cool the temperature of the air within

the 'musif,' black slaves were constantly throwing water over the mats which were hung up around it and formed its walls. A more delicious place in which to pass, idly, the mid-hours of a summer's day in that intolerable climate could not be well imagined. The remarkable elegance of its construction did infinite credit to the taste and skill of its Arab builders, who were true architects in the best sense of the word.

There were many similar habitations, although inferior in size, in the encampment, which extended continuously for nearly two miles along the bank of the stream. On the roof of many of them, formed of rushes, cut grass was piled for feeding the owner's buffaloes; they had, consequently, very much the appearance from a distance of haystacks.

When evening drew near, Sheikh Faras begged me to mount my tired horse, and to follow him to a large black tent which was some way off, and in which his family resided. It was of great size, and supported by thirty-six poles distributed in three parallel rows, those of the centre row being higher than those on the sides.[5] It also contained a 'musif,' which was separated from the part occu-

[5] I was told that this tent, made entirely of goat-hair, and one of the largest I ever saw among the Arabs, was worth about fifty pounds, a large sum for an Arab to spend upon his habitation.

pied by the chief's wives by screens made of reeds, bound together by coloured worsted.

The Arabs of Hawizah, although not strictly to be classed among the nomad tribes, move their settlements according to the time of the year and the nature of the cultivation in which they may be engaged. In the winter and spring, when, in consequence of the rains, there is grass for their flocks and herds, they pitch their tents and erect their reed huts in the plains, which during the remainder of the year are a naked desert. When they no longer find pasture in them, they move to the banks of the river Kerkhah and of the innumerable channels into which it is divided, and, by means of irrigation, raise rice, which serves them for food, and is exported to Shuster, Basra, and elsewhere. Their wealth consists principally in their herds of buffaloes, which furnish them with the clotted cream known to the Turks as 'kaimak,' and with 'ghee,' or butter, which, stored in skins, forms a very valuable article of trade throughout Persia, where it is always very dear and in great request, as it plays an essential part in Persian cookery. When I was in the Persian camp I constantly saw officers and persons in high public employment advancing money to the Lur and Arab chiefs, to be repaid in 'ghee.' This always proved a very profitable transaction to the money-

lender, as the butter was valued at its local price, and frequently much lower, according to the necessities of the borrower.

As the plains of Hawizah are destitute of firewood, almost the only fuel used by the Arabs who inhabit them is the dried dung of the buffalo, which is collected by troops of little girls. Here, again, I was surprised at the complete absence of all sense of decency, so unusual amongst Musulmans, shown by both men and women, who stripped themselves without the least concern of their blue shirts, their solitary garment, to cross the numerous streams which traversed the encampment or to wade after their animals in the marshes. The women when young were finely formed, and although bronzed, almost blackened, by the sun, to which they are exposed without clothing to almost the age of puberty, and tattooed all over, are very handsome with their large black eyes and pearl-white teeth. They would furnish splendid models to the sculptor. Almost as soon, however, as they have borne children, they lose their figure rapidly, and become hideous old hags. This is not the case with the Bakhtiyari women, who preserve their beauty and figure much longer.

From the strong letter of recommendation in my favour which Sheikh Faras had received from the Wali, he was convinced that I must not only

be in the Matamet's service, but related to him. I did not think it desirable in my position, without money and requiring all the protection possible to enable me to traverse in safety the dangerous country into which I had entered, to endeavour to remove this impression. The old sheikh was profuse in his civilities and in his offers of service, and ordered the best dinner his tent could afford to be prepared for me.

In the 'musif' was a man in the Arab dress who spoke a little Persian, and who occasionally joined in the conversation between the sheikh and myself, interpreting for me when I was unable to make myself understood. When we were alone he began to cross-question me as to my religion. I then discovered that he was a Sabæan, or 'Christian of St. John,' the name by which this very interesting and ancient religious sect is generally known.[6] He had heard of my having been at Shuster, where I had become acquainted with several Sabæan families, and had been able to be of some service to them in remonstrating with the Matamet against the ill-treatment and persecution to which they were constantly exposed, on account of their faith, by the Mohammedans. He expressed much gratitude for what I had done for his brethren, and

[6] The Sabæans call themselves 'Mendaï,' or sometimes 'Mendaï Yaghia.' The Persians term them 'Sabi.'

offered to be of use to me. He told me that he had suspected that I was the Englishman he had been told of as soon as I entered the 'musif,' but he urged me to retain my character of a Georgian connected with the Matamet as long as I remained with the Hawizah Arabs, otherwise, were I known to be a European, my life would not be safe amongst a horde of ignorant and savage fanatics. He endeavoured to dissuade me from attempting to pass through the Beni Lam country, which he described as being in the most complete disorder, and in which the protection of the Wali would be of no avail to me.

My Sabæan friend was a travelling silversmith, who went from encampment to encampment making or repairing the gold and silver ornaments worn by the women. The Sabæans mostly followed this trade, and as they were very useful to the Arabs, were well treated by them and hospitably received in their tents. But they were shamefully oppressed by the Turkish and Persian authorities, both to compel them to embrace Mohammedanism and to extort money from them. The sect had consequently been reduced to about three or four hundred families, which, notwithstanding all efforts to convert them, had retained their ancient faith, bearing with resignation the cruelest persecution. They were found in Shuster and Basra,

and among the Arabs in the country watered by the Shat-el-Arab and the Karun, and their confluents. Wearing the dress and speaking the language of the Arabs, they could scarcely be distinguished from them. But they would not eat with them, nor partake of the flesh of any animal which had not been killed by one of themselves. The Sabæans have their sacred books, for which they claim a very great antiquity, speak a Semitic dialect, and have a written character of their own.

My horse had suffered so much that I could not attempt to cross the Beni Lam country without giving it a few days' rest. I consequently made up my mind to go to Hawizah, and to remain there until it had sufficiently recovered to enable me to continue my journey. When I informed the old sheikh, my host, of my intention, he opposed it vehemently, declaring that the orders he had received from the Wali were to forward me direct to the principal sheikh of the Beni Lam tribe, and that he had already made preparations for doing so, having selected some trustworthy horsemen to accompany me. The Wali, he said, had left his wife, whom he called the 'Bibi,' in charge of the government, and when she came to know of the change in my plans she would believe him to be in fault, and would accuse him of having disobeyed the commands of her husband.

It was only after I had affixed my seal to a written declaration, that it was upon my own responsibility and at my own request that I went to Hawizah, that he consented to furnish me with a guide to that place. Before I left him, however, he warned me that to pass through the Beni Lam tribes at that time would be a very perilous undertaking, as two rival chiefs, Sheikh Mathkur and the Mutsellim, were at war, and had both, moreover, declared their independence of the Pasha of Baghdad. With one of these chiefs the Wali was at enmity, and, consequently, he could not guarantee my safety if I fell into his hands or those of his followers. He earnestly advised me, therefore, to renounce my intention of proceeding to Baghdad by that route, adding that if, nevertheless, I persisted in it, he was still ready to assist me, and, God being great, Inshallah, I should surmount all difficulties and dangers.

Having provided me with a guide, he accompanied me himself to some distance from his tents, entreating me on the way not to compromise him with the Bibi, of whom he seemed to stand in great awe, but to make her fully understand, if questioned on the subject, that I had gone to Hawizah of my own free-will, and that I had no cause to complain of his want of readiness to forward me on my journey through the Beni Lam country.

It took me five hours on my wearied horse to reach the town. During the greater part of the way we had to wade through morasses and to cross streams with the water up to my saddle-girths. Hawizah stands in a deserted plain, traversed in every direction by the dry beds of canals and watercourses. The Kerkhah in the year 1837 suddenly changed its course, in consequence of the breaking down of a dam which had been built across it for purposes of irrigation, about five farsaks, or fifteen miles, above the town. One morning the inhabitants discovered that the river which had hitherto flowed through their midst had left them. The lands around, which had been very rich and fertile, having been thus deprived of water soon fell out of cultivation.

During my ride my guide pointed out many tracks of lions, the impression of their footsteps being quite fresh, but we did not meet with any. They abound in this part of Khuzistan, hiding during the day in the brushwood and jungle on the banks of the Kerkhah and in the rice-grounds, and prowling about after dark in the neighbourhood of encampments, whence they constantly carry off horses and cattle. The Arabs are in great dread of them, and can rarely be persuaded to travel at night. Even during the day they will not go far alone and without arms.

On reaching Hawizah I went at once to the 'musif' of the Wali, where I was hospitably received, the Bibi sending to inquire after my health. There were several strangers, besides some of the notables of the town, assembled in it. When they learnt that I was on my way to Baghdad through the Beni Lam country, they all declared that the state of it was such that I could not go without the greatest risk. The Beni Lam, they said, were not Arabs, but 'Kafirs' (infidels), who neither respected the laws of hospitality nor behaved in any sort as good Musulmans. They were as treacherous as they were savage and cruel, and would cut the throat of a guest for a trifle. The information and advice thus given me was, I had reason to believe, trustworthy and disinterested. I was revolving in my mind what course I should take when a man from Shuster came into the guest-room, and entering into conversation with me, informed me that he was on his way to Basra with a party of traders, who would leave Hawizah the following day. My best plan, I considered, would be to accompany them. Once at Basra I should have little difficulty in reaching Baghdad.

But my horse was not in a condition to perform the journey without several days' previous rest. I determined, therefore, to sell it for what it would fetch. Early in the morning one of the Wali's

attendants, to whom I had spoken on the subject, went to the bazar to find a purchaser for it. He returned with an Arab, who, after examining the animal, offered me two tomans (about £1) for it, including my saddle, which alone was worth more. I endeavoured to get a better price, but in vain. The would-be purchaser and the Wali's man were evidently in league, and no one dared to bid against them. The day was advancing, and the caravan was preparing to start. I had, therefore, to choose between accepting the money or being left behind. The horse was handed over to the Arab, and I received the two tomans.

The Shusteri, when I joined the caravan outside the walls of the town, offered me a mule, for the use of which I agreed to make him a small present at the end of our journey.

Hawizah was then a heap of ruins and almost deserted. It had, at one time, been a place of considerable importance, and was said to have contained 24,000 inhabitants. At the time of my visit it could scarcely have had 400. Situated on a navigable river falling into the united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, near Korna, it once carried on a considerable trade, large Arab boats being able to reach the town. A part of the population, finding itself, in consequence of the change in the course of the Kerkhah, without

the means of irrigating their lands, migrated to the banks of the many streams into which the river had been divided, and of the marshes which it had formed. Those that remained found water by digging wells in its dry bed. A short time after the destruction of the dyke the plague, which had decimated the population of Mesopotamia, reached Khuzistan and added to the disaster caused by the flood. Most of the inhabitants who survived left Hawizah, and established themselves in the tents and reed huts which I had seen about fifteen miles off, and took to the cultivation of rice, for which the flooded plain was especially well suited. This produce had become a source of wealth to them. They exported it in large quantities to the towns in Khuzistan and to the adjacent Turkish territories. The change in the course of the river and its great overflow had not, therefore, been an unmixed evil. Hawizah having been almost abandoned, its mud-built houses were rapidly crumbling away. The dry soil, dissolved by the great heat of the sun into dust which was carried about by the wind, was rapidly covering them, and nothing would remain in a short time of the town but mounds of earth, such as mark the site of ancient cities in Babylonia and Assyria. The process by which these mounds were formed is thus explained.

The only large and well-built house in the

ruined town was that belonging to the Wali. But it was, like the others, falling to ruin. His 'musif' was nothing but a shed constructed of matting.

Hawizah was at one time the headquarters of the Sabæans, and contained, I was assured, about three hundred families of this sect. But after the Kerkhah had changed its course the greater number of them abandoned the town, as they were unable to obtain running water, which is absolutely necessary to them for their ablutions in religious ceremonies and for cooking their food. Their principal sheikhs and priests, however, still remained in the vicinity, and as the presence of three of them is required for the celebration of marriages and for other rites, the Sabæans of Shuster and Dizful, and of other places in Khuzistan, were compelled on such occasions to have recourse to them.

I called upon the principal sheikh and had some interesting conversation with him. He collected in his hut all the Sabæans that he could bring together, and I heard from them a melancholy account of their sufferings and the oppression to which they were exposed from the Persian authorities, although they had little to complain of as regarded their treatment by the Arabs.[7]

[7] These poor people addressed a touching letter to the Queen, describing their sufferings and unfortunate condition and asking for her protection, which they placed in my hands. It was after-

There were no Christians in Hawizah, nor were Christian communities to be found in any

wards forwarded to her Majesty, through Lord Aberdeen, by Sir Stratford Canning. On my return to Baghdad I appealed in their behalf to Colonel Taylor, then the East India Company's political Agent there, whose jurisdiction included the greater part of Mesopotamia, and the adjacent Turkish territories as far as the Persian Gulf. He was a man of much learning and an excellent scholar, acquainted with various Eastern languages, amongst which was that of the Sabæans, whose books he had studied under one of their priests, and in whose history and condition he took the most lively interest. I received from him the following letter in answer to my appeal :—

'Baghdad, June 7, 1842.

'My dear Sir,—I think it would be an act of undoubted charity to endeavour to mitigate the sufferings of the unfortunate Sabæans.

'They are, I believe, the remnant of the oldest people of Chaldæa; they are industrious, moral, and of an humble, quiet deportment; and yet, notwithstanding their favourable character, they are, from the weakness of their tribe, more exposed to the tyranny of Islam than others not of the dominant religion of the country. . . . We should be the means of relieving them from injustice, and placing them in a position to enjoy in security their faith and the honest results of their industry.—I am, my dear Sir,

'Yours faithfully,

(Signed) 'R. TAYLOR.

Many years later, when I had the honour of being the Queen's Ambassador at Constantinople, her Majesty most generously sent me a sum of money for the relief of the Sabæans. I was able at the same time to obtain from the Sultan—who never refused me a request of this kind, but on the contrary gave me very frequent proofs of his humane and kindly disposition—orders to the authorities in Turkish Arabia to protect the Sabæans from ill-usage and oppression, and to insure them full liberty in the profession of their faith and in the performance of their religious ceremonies. I trust, therefore, that their condition is improved, and that they are no longer subjected to the cruel ill-treatment to which they were formerly exposed.

part of Khuzistan. They had long been driven out, or exterminated, by its fanatical Arab population.

The chief of the 'kâfila'[8] which I had joined was a member of an ancient and highly respectable family of Shuster, which, like many others belonging to the same place, had been reduced to want by the extortions of Persian officials. His name was Aga, or Au, Suleiman, and he was the brother of Aziz-Ullah Khan, a notable of the city with whom I had become acquainted. In consequence of his poverty, he had commenced trading, in order to obtain a livelihood, and was taking for sale to Basra reeds for pens from Dizful, rice, a little cotton, and some woollen 'abbas,' or cloaks, manufactured at Shuster and much prized by the town Arabs. His return loads were to consist principally of dates, which always find a ready market in Khuzistan.

The loads were placed on horses and mules. A number of donkeys carried skins filled with water, as there was none to be found, except at one spot, on our road. The distance between Hawizah and Nashwar, a village upon the Shat-el-Arab, for which the caravan was bound, was about fifty miles. A few pilgrims going to Kerbela accompanied us on foot. There were altogether

[8] The Arab term for the Persian 'karwan'—our caravan.

nearly three hundred beasts of burden, so that our caravan was a large one.

We began our march in the most complete disorder, the horses and mules being scattered over the plain. The Wali was entitled to levy a small tax upon every load leaving the town. One of his officers, assisted by two Arabs on horseback, came to collect the money, but, notwithstanding their exertions, he was unable to ascertain the number of loads to his satisfaction. He followed us for about two miles, protesting and using very bad language. He then left us, vowing that he would return with a sufficient force to stop the caravan, and compel Au Suleiman to pay the amount claimed from him. The owners of the animals, therefore, urged them onwards as fast as possible, and we soon lost sight of Hawizah and saw no more of the tax-gatherer.

It was three in the afternoon before we left the town. The heat was intense, and I have rarely suffered more from it than on this journey. We were travelling over a vast alluvial plain which extended without a single natural eminence to the Shat-el-Arab. The Arabs had nothing to guide them across it except the position of the sun during the day and the stars at night, and the taste of the earth, which, they pretend, tells them in what part of the desert they may be. For some dis-

tance it was intersected by the dry beds of canals and watercourses which showed that at one time it had been highly cultivated. In winter and spring, during the rains, it is one great swamp, which gradually dries up in the hot season, leaving the surface of the soil broken into innumerable crevices and holes. The horses and other animals were constantly getting their feet into them and falling with their loads. Riding was consequently excessively fatiguing, and I was not sorry when, after three hours' forced march, we came to a halt and rested.

We resumed our march after dark, and at daybreak reached a morass full of high reeds. This was the water which I had been told we should find on our way. Suffering much from thirst, and the water-skins having been emptied during the night, I eagerly stooped down to drink. To my great disappointment I found the water so salt that I could scarcely swallow it. The only protection I could find from the burning rays of the sun was under the scanty shade of a bale of goods. There I remained, panting and perspiring, until I was suddenly aroused by the firing of guns and by loud cries. I jumped up, thinking that we had been attacked by marauders; but I soon perceived a large lion trotting slowly away. He had been disturbed in his lair by the people of

the caravan searching for better water and gathering reeds for firewood, and had leapt out over some men who were sleeping at the edge of the swamp. The shots fired at him fortunately did not take effect, for had he been wounded he might have turned upon us and done no little mischief. As it was, he soon disappeared and we saw no more of him.

The swamp on the borders of which we had halted afforded excellent cover for lions, which were consequently numerous in this part of the plain. They found abundant food in the large flocks of gazelles and herds of wild boar which we saw during the day. The hardened mud everywhere showed the imprints of their feet.

Au Suleiman generously shared his provisions with me, but we had nothing but brackish water to drink. As we were at no great distance from Nashwar, it was not until nearly midnight that he ordered the animals to be loaded. It was with feelings of inexpressible delight that at dawn I saw before me the long dark line formed by the groves of palm trees which stretch for many a mile along the banks of the Euphrates. The great solitary plain which we had crossed, even as the surface of a calm sea, with its intolerable glare, reached to their very limits. There was not a human being to be seen; but in winter it produces

grass, and the Arabs then encamp upon it and find pasture for their flocks of sheep and their camels.

The loads were taken off our tired beasts in a garden on the banks of a small creek, where they were to be stowed in boats to be forwarded to Basra, which was still distant. As Au Suleiman required at least two or three days to embark his goods, I determined to push on alone by land to a spot where I could cross the river to the town. I could, I was informed, accomplish this before nightfall. But as I needed a horse and a guide, I sought the sheikh of the village. I found, to my surprise, an exceedingly handsome and stately Arab, with refined manners and polite address. His garments were of the best materials, and he had the appearance of an Arab gentleman, very different from that of the dirty, ill-clad, and ferocious-looking inhabitants of the marshes of Hawizah. His 'musif' was clean and well carpeted and cushioned, and in his mud-built hut I could perceive a mosquito-curtain of fine muslin suspended over a bed.

As soon as he learnt that I was an Englishman, and that I wished to proceed at once to Basra, he proposed, in the civilest way, that I should take his mare, adding that he had the greatest respect for Englishmen, with whom he had become ac-

quainted in their ships on the river, and especially for Mr. Barsac, an Armenian gentleman, then the agent of the East India Company at Basra, who was, he said, his particular friend. I accepted his mare and offered to pay for her hire, but he refused to receive any money, suggesting that I might give a small present to the man whom he would send with me as a guide, and who would bring back the animal.

After I had eaten an excellent breakfast of fresh dates, butter, and sour curds in his spacious 'musif,' built of reeds and mats, I mounted his mare, and accompanied by an Arab on foot left the village. We issued from the palm groves, and kept in the open country in a direct line for Basra. The distance was greater than I had expected. The heat was again intense, and water nowhere to be found, except in the gardens into which canals had been led for purposes of irrigation. We had to deviate a good deal from our course to reach them. The banks of the Shat-el-Arab in this part of its course are lined with villages, which are almost hidden among the palm trees. Their inhabitants appeared to be prosperous. In almost every hut I perceived a muslin mosquito-curtain. The women were well dressed, and wore ornaments of gold and silver coins. They were without veils, and, not recognising me as a European,

made no attempt to conceal their faces. Many girls I met were remarkable specimens of Arab beauty.

The sheikh's mare was a fine powerful animal, and walked at so brisk a pace that my guide had to run to keep up with her. At last, sorefooted and overcome by the great heat, he declared that he could go no further unless he rode behind me. As we were still some way from Basra, and I wished to arrive there before nightfall, I allowed him to do so. At sunset we entered a palm grove, and reaching the river-bank I perceived, to my great joy, a merchant-ship flying the English flag anchored in the middle of the stream. I hastened to discharge my guide, with a message of thanks to his master, and with the present which he had so well earned, and hiring a small boat had myself rowed to the vessel.

The sailor on guard at the gangway, seeing what he believed to be a poor ill-clad Arab approach—for my garments were by this time almost in tatters—warned me off. He was not a little surprised when I addressed him in English. The captain of the ship, which proved to be the 'Lord Elphinstone,' was away, but the first mate, Mr. Beaumont, received me most kindly. He invited me to remain on board for the night, as Basra was still distant, being about two miles from the river on an inland creek. I gratefully accepted his

invitation. After my long wanderings, no ordinary hardships, and constant perils, I found myself once more amongst English comforts and in English society. I sat up to a late hour in the night, talking with my host and learning from him the many important political events which had occurred since I had received a letter or seen a newspaper. For the first time for many months I could undress, and enjoy the pleasant sensation of sleeping between clean sheets. My bed had hitherto been my carpet or the bare ground. I slept soundly, as may be supposed, until the time for breakfast had arrived.

After I had eaten, Mr. Beaumont offered me one of the ship's boats to take me to Basra. Rather more than an hour's row across the river, here very broad with a sluggish stream, and up the creek in the midst of palm groves, brought me to the town. I proceeded at once to the residence of Mr. Barsac, who received me very courteously, and begged me to accept a room in his house.

CHAPTER XV.

Basra—Accompany Agayl postman to Baghdad—The Agayls—The mirage—Stopped by Bedouins—Chased by Bedouins—A sick companion—Kût-el-Agayl—Semawa—The Lemloom Arabs—An Aneyza detected—Approach site of Babylon—Hillah—The road to Baghdad—Robbed by Shammar Bedouins—Narrow escape—Arab thieves—Destitute condition—Reach Baghdad—Dr. Ross—Recover stolen property—Economy necessary—Descend Tigris in the 'Assyria'—The tomb of Ezra—Pass through the Hafar—The Bahmeh-Shir—Return to Baghdad—Sheikh Mathkur—Ruins of Ctesiphon.

I HAD hoped to find at Basra one of the armed steamers then employed by the East India Company in the navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris, which would have conveyed me to Baghdad. But I learnt that the 'Assyria' had recently left, and was not expected to return for some time. I had no wish to remain in the filthy, half-ruined, and fever-stricken town of Basra, with every chance of falling ill. Hearing, therefore, that an Arab employed by the Indian Government to carry the post between that town and Baghdad was about to leave, I asked Mr. Barsac's permission to accompany him. Whilst acceding to my request

he warned me that the journey was a dangerous one, that the postmen were not unfrequently robbed and even maltreated by the wild tribes, recognising no authority, through which they had to pass, and that the fatigue that I should have to undergo would be very great, as we were still in summer. I should have to ride day and night, without much rest, and on the road I should find little water, and should have to depend for provisions chiefly upon the bread and dates that I could carry with me. As I was by this time inured to heat and hardships, I trusted to my usual good fortune to get through the threatened difficulties and dangers.

I had to spend three days in Basra before the postman received his letter-bags. The town was at that time apparently in the last stage of decay. The recent outbreak of the plague in Southern Turkey—one of the most fatal and devastating that had occurred in the memory of man—had destroyed a great part of its population. The place had been almost deserted, as to escape this fearful disease most of the remaining inhabitants had encamped in the desert or in the palm groves on the banks of the river, where many of them still remained.

It was scarcely surprising that Basra had suffered so greatly from the plague. Its filth and

its stenches were indescribable. It stands at the end of a narrow creek, pent up on all sides by palm trees. The air is damp and unwholesome, and the heat in summer very great—the thermometer even reaching 115 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade during the day, and the nights being exceedingly sultry and oppressive.

Basra, or Balsora, as every reader of the 'Arabian Nights' knows, was in ancient days an emporium for the commerce between Europe, Western Asia, and the Far East, and was frequented by merchants of every clime. There are no remains to record its ancient prosperity and splendour. Low mounds marking the site of buildings, the usual potsherds and bricks scattered over the plain, and the foundations of walls. cover a considerable area once occupied by the city. It rapidly declined after the discovery of the passage to India round the Cape of Good Hope, when the trade between the West and the East no longer followed the ancient routes through Mesopotamia and by the Persian Gulf. At the time of my visit it exported little except Arab horses to Bombay, and some cotton and wool, which chiefly went to England round the Cape. A merchantman, such as the 'Lord Elphinstone,' with Manchester goods and other English manufactures for the supply of the Arab tribes and of

Baghdad, would occasionally anchor in the Shat-el-Arab, but had much difficulty in finding a return cargo.[1]

I left Basra soon after mid-day with the postman, who was accompanied by another Arab. They both belonged to the Agayl, a kind of mongrel tribe composed of Arab families from various parts of the desert. The men of this tribe were chiefly employed in conveying letters across Mesopotamia, and as guards and guides for caravans, as they were generally on friendly terms with the Bedouins, who recognised them as coming from the same stock, and consequently rarely molested them when passing through their territories. They were believed to be trustworthy and faithful, and

[1] As the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope ruined the trade of Basra, so the passage through the Isthmus of Suez promises to revive it. The Canal has led to the establishment of direct and periodical communications between England and Basra by steam-vessels of large size, and an English company for the navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris employs steamers which ply regularly between Basra and Baghdad. Unfortunately, owing to its jealousy of foreigners and short-sightedness, the Turkish Government do more to impede than to promote a trade which, if fully developed, would be of incalculable advantage to Turkey, both by adding to her revenue and to her resources, and by inducing the wandering Arabs who infest the banks of those rivers to settle in villages and to engage in the cultivation of the soil. The position of Basra upon a great estuary formed by the united waters of two navigable rivers, flowing through some of the richest and most fertile provinces of Asiatic Turkey, is especially favourable to commerce. The time may consequently come when she will rise from her ruins and enjoy at least a part of her ancient prosperity.

were frequently charged with considerable sums of money, at a time when merchants in Baghdad and Syria had no other means of remitting it.

We were mounted upon strong, sturdy horses, accustomed to the long stages, with little water and little provender, which the postman was compelled to make to avoid the Arabs who encamp near the river and in the marshes, and whose hand is against every one. I rode, like my companions, on a pack-saddle. Our saddle-bags were filled with barley for our horses, and with bread and dried fruit for ourselves. Each of us carried a water-skin. Under the barley I concealed my compass and watch, and a few silver coins, all the property that was left to me. My note-books I gave to Mr. Barsac, to be forwarded to me at Baghdad by the first safe opportunity. I wore the Arab dress, with the 'keffiyeh' kept in its place on my shaven head by the rope of twisted worsted. With this kerchief the Arabs protect the lower part of their faces from the sun, and conceal their features when necessary. The rest of my costume consisted of the 'zibboun,' or long chintz robe, and the 'abba,' or goat-hair cloak—white, with broad black bands—such as are worn by the Arabs of Mesopotamia. I was thus completely disguised, and could pass without notice as long as I held my tongue.

We had to wade through a marsh about three miles in breadth before we reached the site occupied by the remains of ancient Basra, called Zebir. We stopped for a short time at a small hut used as a coffee-house, and then, leaving the river and the morass, struck into the desert. We rode through a dreary arid waste, constantly on the watch for Arabs. All whom we were likely to meet or see were to be considered robbers or enemies until they proved not to be so, and consequently to be avoided as much as possible. But we saw no human being. About midnight the Agayl thought we might safely approach the marshes, which extend to a great distance from the main stream of the Euphrates, to water and feed our horses and to replenish our water-skins. We slept for a couple of hours, and our animals having eaten their barley and being refreshed, we continued our journey again, striking into the desert.

During the night my companions were in constant alarm. Every bush appeared to them to be a lion, and at every moment they declared that they could detect the sounds of distant horsemen. The continual watchfulness upon which they insisted kept me from falling asleep on my horse. The sun rose through the haze which precedes in the desert a burning wind and suffocating heat. The small shrubs of camel-thorn were transformed

by the mirage into stately buildings, or into great companies of horsemen, or we seemed to be nearing a transparent lake, reflecting groves of trees and magnificent palaces. They appeared to recede before us, and as the day advanced faded away.

As we suffered much from thirst, and had emptied our water-skins, we turned again at mid-day to the marshes, to fill them and to water our horses. But when I put my metal cup to my parched lips, I found the water to be so warm and brackish that I could scarcely bring myself to drink it. My companions, however, declared that it was wholesome, and especially good for horses, as they grew fat upon it.

We were returning to the desert when we came upon a great herd of camels, tended by fierce-looking men carrying heavy wooden clubs, and wearing no clothing except a short linen shirt scarcely reaching to the knee. My 'keffiyeh' was drawn, Arab fashion, across my face, leaving only my eyes exposed. My features were, consequently, concealed, and I hoped to remain undetected. We received and returned the salutations of the herdsmen, and had almost passed through the herd, when we were surrounded by a number of Arabs on foot. Suddenly they seized the man who had accompanied us from Basra by the leg, and jerked

him from his saddle. He fell to the ground, and was quickly despoiled of the scanty garments which he wore. They intended to play me the same trick, but I was on my guard. In the meanwhile the postman had commenced a parley with a man who appeared to be a sheikh and to exercise some authority over the rest. When it was explained to him that we were Agayls conveying despatches belonging to the English Government we were subjected to no further molestation, but he demanded black-mail for permission to pass through the territories of his tribe. Our saddle-bags were opened, but as they appeared to contain nothing but barley and our provisions, we were allowed to retain them. One Arab, however, put his hand into the pocket of my 'zibboun,' whilst my attention was occupied with what was passing, and stole one or two pieces of silver from it. With these and a few small coins which they had found on the Agayl whom they had stripped, they expressed themselves satisfied, and restored his shirt and 'abba.'

We were then informed that we might proceed. The Arabs who had collected together were still pressing round us, when the sheikh and another man, who had taken a prominent part in the attack upon us, beat them off with their clubs, and walked away from the crowd, desiring us to

follow. I suspected that it was their intention to lead us to some spot where they could plunder us of the little property we possessed on their own account. Resistance would have been useless, unarmed as we were and surrounded by above a hundred men. However, after leading us some distance they gave us the usual Arab salutation, and said that we might go our way in peace and without fear, as we were now under their protection. They told us their names and supplied us with a password, which would, they said, secure us from molestation from any of their tribe whom we might meet.

About an hour after they had left us we found ourselves among sandhills. On the top of one of them we saw two Arabs riding dromedaries, who were evidently watching our movements. When we perceived them we stopped, and they descended the hill towards us. As soon as they were out of sight, hidden by the inequalities of the ground, the Agayl endeavoured to outmanœuvre them by dodging among the narrow valleys formed by the sand-heaps. When we stopped to allow our horses to take breath, we found that we had left our pursuers a good way behind. However, they had seen us again, and were following us as fast as their dromedaries could carry them. We had put our horses to a gallop, when we suddenly perceived

two other Arabs, also mounted on dromedaries, in front of us, who joined in the pursuit.

Then commenced a most exciting chase. Our horses were weary, having been nearly twenty-four hours without rest. But they were sturdy beasts, and my companions evaded our pursuers with so much skill among the sandhills that after some time we had distanced them, and although we could see them occasionally, they finally disappeared.

We continued until about two hours after sunset without any further adventure, when we came upon a party of six men out on a 'gazou,' or marauding expedition. They were lying asleep on the ground between their three kneeling dromedaries, which were so placed as to form a kind of rampart round them for defence. They awoke as we approached them, but on hearing the names of the two Arabs who had furnished us with the password, they allowed us to proceed and composed themselves to rest again.

These Arabs, and those whom we had seen during the day, belonged to the tribe of Al Dhofyr, or Zefyr, as the name is pronounced in Mesopotamia. They came originally from Nejd, and wander about the great desert with their herds of camels, approaching in summer the marshes formed by the overflow of the Euphrates. They are notorious and inveterate robbers, and bear a

bad reputation amongst the Arab tribes which inhabit this part of Arabia.

We stopped for a short time to rest and to feed our tired horses, but mounted again at dawn. The man who had accompanied the postman now complained of being ill. He attributed his indisposition to the bad water he had been obliged to drink, and to the heat of the previous day, which, as the misty sunrise had portended, had been intense, with a burning simoom sufficient to suffocate man and beast. He could scarcely cling to his pack-saddle, and had great difficulty in keeping up with us. About three in the afternoon we saw in the distance an Arab encampment, and endeavoured to avoid it. But we had been perceived and several men ran towards us. Our horses were so much knocked up that we could not put them to a gallop. The postman, therefore, handed me his letter-bag and went to meet the Arabs coming from the tents. Fortunately, being of the Zefyr tribe, they respected the password with which we had been furnished, and invited us to eat bread with them. We dismounted and refreshed ourselves with camels' milk in huge wooden bowls, and with unleavened bread baked upon the ashes.

The postman agreed to pay a small sum for a guide to accompany us to Kût-el-Agayl, or the fort of the Agayls, a small village surrounded by

a mud wall, on the Euphrates, belonging to his tribe. As I continued to conceal my features with the 'keffiyeh,' and avoided entering into conversation with the Arabs—being very ingeniously seconded by the Agayl—I attracted no particular notice, and was not recognised as a European.

Our guide was a strong and active youth. His mother, who feared his going so far from his tents alone, lest he should fall into the hands of enemies, followed us for some time, sobbing and endeavouring to persuade him to return. However, he remained faithful to his engagement, and the poor woman, having received a little tobacco to console her, became reconciled to her son's departure.

After we had ridden about two hours our sick companion fell, utterly exhausted, from his horse, and was quite unable to go any further. We carried him to the edge of a marsh, where he could obtain water, and as there was an encampment of Montefik Arabs[2] visible in the distance, his companion believed that after a few hours' rest he would be able to reach it. I felt much concerned at deserting him thus, alone and perhaps dying. I endeavoured to prevail upon the postman to wait until we could move him to the tents. But he

[2] The Montefik is a large Arab tribe occupying the banks of the Euphrates above and below the junction of that river with the Tigris at Korna.

absolutely refused, declaring that if he ventured amongst the Montefik he would be without protection, and would be robbed of his letter-bag, which would bring him and his tribe into disgrace. It was useless for me to persist, and the sick Arab himself assuring us that when the heat of the day had passed, and the night came on, he would, he was convinced, be able to walk to the tents, we left him, the postman leading away his horse, which belonged to the contractor for the postal service between Basra and Baghdad.

At midnight we reached the main stream of the Euphrates, and I enjoyed the priceless luxury of a draught of sweet water. We soon afterwards came to an Arab encampment. Notwithstanding the barking of the dogs at the approach of strangers, the inmates did not seem disposed to be disturbed. We therefore dismounted at the first tent, and tying our horses to its pegs, lay down and slept soundly for the rest of the night.

At dawn we were awoke by the owner, who showed no surprise at seeing his uninvited guests. His wife lighted the fire of camels' dung and brushwood, and baked unleavened bread for us, which she placed before us with butter and curds. Our host was a Montefik, but neither he nor any one of his tribe asked us any questions, to the great surprise and satisfaction of the Agayl.

We were at a short distance from Kût-el-Agayl, which we reached about ten o'clock. Mohammed Ibn Daûd, one of the principal sheikhs of the Agayls, resided there. He was a tall, majestic Arab, with a prepossessing countenance. He recognised me at once as an Englishman. But he had been in very friendly relations with my countrymen at Baghdad, and especially with Mr. Hector, a British merchant there, who had employed him in escorting caravans of merchandise across the Mesopotamian desert, and in conveying letters and money. He consequently treated me in the most hospitable fashion, and gave me such delicacies as his harem could afford. These were principally a kind of pancake fried in butter, fresh dates, curds, and buffalo cream. However, we could only afford to take two hours' rest, as we had to hurry onwards.

We arrived in the evening at Semawa, a large walled village inhabited by sedentary Arabs. Although we had seen several bodies of horsemen in the distance, whom my companion declared to be Bedouins, we managed to avoid them, and were not molested on our way. The greater part of the male population of Semawa was seated on the ground outside the gate, enjoying the cool breeze of the evening after the intense heat of the day. The men wore long black cloaks, descending to

their ankles and completely enveloping their persons. Their 'keffiyehs' were of the brightest colours, red and yellow predominating, with long plaited fringes. They had altogether a very singular appearance when moving about with their slow and stately step. We entered the town and rode to the house of an Agayl. We avoided the inhabitants as much as possible, as the sheikh, I was told, was not to be trusted, and would probably endeavour to extort money from a stranger, and especially from a European.

At Semawa we changed our horses. It was full time to do so, as they were so completely knocked up by the heat, the want of water, and insufficient food and rest, that they could not have proceeded much farther. It was wonderful that they had been able to carry us so far. We had been a good deal delayed on our way in consequence of the illness of our companion, whom we had been compelled to abandon on the road, and by our adventures with the Arabs. The journey between Basra and Baghdad, under favourable circumstances, was usually performed by the post in five days. Dromedaries were not used on this service, as they were between Baghdad and Damascus, where the distances between places where water is to be found are much greater. The horses employed by the Agayls were well adapted to their work,

were able to bear great fatigue, and required little nourishment. Their pace was a pleasant amble.

In order to avoid some Arabs who lived in the marshes in the immediate neighbourhood of Semawa, and were notorious thieves, my Agayl hired a boat, which was tracked up the river for about five miles. I lay at the bottom of it, covered by an 'abba,' and almost suffocated, to escape observation. Had I been discovered we should in all probability have been detained with a view to extort money. The fresh horses were waiting for us at a ford by which they had crossed the river.

We mounted, and soon came to vast flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, chiefly buffaloes. They belonged to the Arab tribes which inhabit the Lemloom marshes, and whose low, mat-built huts were to be seen on all sides. We avoided them until we reached a broad and deep stream, which seemed to bar our further progress. We were seeking for a ford when we were surrounded by a crowd of half-naked Arabs, with their highly greased hair plaited in several long tails—in appearance scarcely more human than the buffaloes which they tended. They seemed disposed to seize our horses and little property; but after an animated discussion, carried on with guttural yells, in which I took care not to take part—keeping

during the time my features as much as possible concealed by my 'keffiyeh'—the Agayl succeeded in coming to an arrangement with them. On the payment of four 'shamees' (about six shillings) we were allowed to go on our way, and a guide was sent to point out a ford and to accompany us until we had passed through the tribe.

An Arab, wearing nothing but a tattered black camel's-hair 'abba,' had joined us and was accompanying us on foot. His cloak was drawn over his face, either to keep off the burning rays of the sun or to avoid detection. A man suddenly snatched it away, and the bystanders declared that he belonged to a tribe of the Aneyza Bedouins, and was consequently a blood enemy of the Lemloom Arabs. This he stoutly denied with the usual oaths—'Wallah! billah! tillah!' High words ensued which threatened to lead to blows, as swords were drawn. However, it ended by his word being taken, and he was allowed to go with us, being first warned that if he had lied and was found to be an Aneyza, his life would answer for it. When we were at some distance from the Lemloom huts he confessed that he was of that tribe, and begged a 'shamee' to enable him to pay his way back to the tents of Arabs who were not his enemies, which I willingly gave him to avoid further difficulties. He then made off for the desert as fast

as his legs could carry him. He had never been in this part of Mesopotamia before, nor had he ever seen any of the Arabs who had accused him of being an Aneyza. They had detected him by his appearance, and perhaps by some very slight peculiarity in his pronunciation of Arabic which marked him as a Bedouin of that tribe, and could only be distinguished by the practised ear of an Arab.

Our guide, after a short time, requested to be dismissed, to return to his tents. We allowed him to go, but before he left us he cut certain notches on the club of the Agayl, which would serve as a sign to any Lemloom Arabs whom we might meet that we were under the protection of the tribe, and had paid black-mail. It is the custom of the Arabs of this part of Mesopotamia to give passports of this kind. Each subdivision of a tribe has its particular mark, which is recognised and respected by all its other branches. However, we met no more Lemloom Arabs, and after making our way with much toil through the marshes and across watercourses, we at length found ourselves again in the open desert, in which, however, were innumerable remains of ancient civilisation—dry beds of canals between lofty embankments of earth, countless mounds covering the ruins of buildings, fragments of pottery and bricks scattered

over the soil, and all the other signs and relics of a great and flourishing population. We were in the plain of Babylon, and were approaching the site of that mighty city.

We spent the night in the house of a seyyid, who with his family and servants were then the sole inhabitants of the large village, or rather collection of villages, of Lemloom, which gives its name to the marshes formed by the Euphrates. That river having overflowed its banks, and no attempt having been made by the Turkish Government to retain it in its original bed, a vast tract of country once populous and highly cultivated had been covered with water. The great marsh thus formed extended from above Hillah, an Arab town built on the site of Babylon, to below the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris, at Korna. The seyyid killed a sheep for us, believing me to be an officer in the service of the Pasha of Baghdad, and the Agayl not considering it desirable to undeceive him, as we were still in danger of being stopped and robbed. He would not allow us to continue our journey before daylight, as several lions, he declared, had been seen and heard skulking round the place during the previous night. I wished to brave the danger, which, I was convinced, was much exaggerated, if it existed, and to avoid what I considered a more serious peril, the burning rays

of the mid-day sun; but my companion refused to stir, and it was not until dawn that we resumed our journey.

We stopped in the afternoon in a small village at a short distance from Hillah, on learning that a large party of Shammar were plundering the country in all directions, and that horsemen had been seen during the day on the road to that place. This great Bedouin tribe[3] was then at war with the Pasha of Baghdad, and was committing depredations in this part of the province. In the night we were alarmed by an attack upon the village. There was a great deal of firing; the men chanted their war-song, and the women made that piercing, quavering noise called the 'tahlel,' or 'kel,' by striking their open mouths with the palm of their hands, yelling at the same moment. After some time the enemy—whether Bedouins, or more probably thieves seeking to rob the date trees—retired, and I returned to my carpet which I had spread on the roof of a house.

Before daylight some travellers, who had walked from Hillah, arrived and told us that they had found the road clear of Bedouins. We consequently started at once for that place, which

[3] For an account of the Shammar Arabs I may refer my readers to my works entitled *Nineveh and its Remains* and *Nineveh and Babylon*.

was only four miles distant. On arriving there, I stopped at a coffee-house to obtain some refreshment, whilst the postman went to find a brother Agayl, in order to inform himself of the state of the country between the town and Baghdad. He was advised to proceed at once, as a considerable force had been sent out by the Pasha of Baghdad against a Shammar sheikh who, two days before, had attacked and plundered a rich caravan on this road. The Bedouins had probably, therefore, withdrawn to the desert, for the time, with their booty. As we should find, on our way, the Pasha's horsemen sent out against the marauders, there was no reason to fear any molestation from the Arabs.

My Agayl, acting upon the advice of his friends, decided upon pushing on at once, and after we had eaten some kibabs and rice in a cook-shop in the bazar, we mounted our horses. We soon left behind us the palm groves and the great mounds which cover the palaces of ancient Babylon, and found ourselves on the broad and well-beaten caravan track leading to Baghdad.

Parties of irregular horse were stationed at the caravanserais which have been built at regular distances on the much-frequented road between Hillah and Baghdad. Their officers assured us that the road was safe, as the Bedouins had retired to the desert, pursued by the Pasha's troops. We

had passed the third of these great buildings, when we saw in the distance, amidst a cloud of dust, a number of horsemen galloping towards us. We at first took them for 'hytas'—as the Bashi-Bozuks were called by the Arabs—in the service of the Government, sent out to patrol the road, but as they approached we heard the Bedouin war-cry. The postman, who was much alarmed, proposed that we should endeavour, by urging on our horses, to reach the nearest caravanserai before the Arabs could overtake us. But as they were rapidly gaining upon us, and it was evident that we had no chance in a race against their high-bred mares, I thought the most prudent course would be to remain where we were, and to trust to my character as a European.

The horsemen, who proved to be of the Shammar tribe, were soon upon us. One or two, galloping at full speed towards me, brought their mares up on their haunches when their long quivering spears were almost within a few inches of my body. In an instant, and before I had time to make myself known, the Agayl and I were thrown from our horses. When I fell my 'keffiyeh' dropped off, and exposed a red 'tarbush,' or fez, which I wore under it to protect my head from the sun. One of the Arabs cried out that I was a 'Toork,' and a man who had dismounted, seizing hold of me as

I lay upon the ground, drew a knife and endeavoured to kneel upon my chest. I struggled, thinking that he intended to cut my throat, and called out to one of the party, who, mounted upon a fine mare, appeared to be a sheikh, that I was not a 'Toork,' but an Englishman. He ordered the man to release me, and then told me to get up. He was a handsome young man, with a pleasing expression, the most brilliant and restless eyes, the whitest teeth, which he constantly displayed, and long tresses of braided hair falling from under his 'keffiyeh.' Looking at me for a moment he exclaimed, 'Billah! he tells the truth. He is the English "hakim" (doctor) of Baghdad, and he is my friend, and the English are the friends of our tribe.' Then, addressing himself to me, he asked me why I was there alone and without the protection of Sofuk, the great sheikh of the Shammar, who was known to be at war with that 'dog, the son of a dog,' the Pasha of Baghdad, and to have defeated his troops and occupied his country.

It was evident that he either took me for Dr. Ross, of Baghdad, who had more than once visited the celebrated chief of the Shammar, and was well known to the tribe, or that he desired to protect me, and had invented an excuse for doing so. I endeavoured to explain to him that I was

travelling to Baghdad, and that I was accompanying the Agayl, who was employed by the English 'balios,'[4] in conveying letters, and had consequently never been molested by the Bedouins. Moreover, as an Englishman, I had no fear of the Shammar, who, I knew, were the friends of the English, and that I placed myself under his protection.

He replied that it was fortunate that I had met with him, as he was a kinsman of Sofuk. Had I been a 'Toork,' my life would have been forfeited, as there was blood between the Shammar and the Osmanli. He then bade me continue my journey. But in the meanwhile his followers had torn open the letter-bags, and had scattered their contents upon the ground. They had also robbed the Agayl of the greater part of his clothing, and had emptied my saddle-bags, taking my watch and compass and the few silver pieces which I possessed. They appeared to be but little under the control of the young sheikh. I appealed to him to restore my property. He ordered the men who had plundered me to do so, but after high words had passed between them they not only refused, but compelled me to give them my 'zibboun,' or long Arab gown, my 'keffiyeh,' and my shoes and

[4] A corruption of 'Bailo,' the title given to the Ambassador of the Venetian Republic at the Porte. Consuls were generally known by the Arabs as 'Balios.'

stockings, leaving me only my 'tarbush,' Arab shirt, and 'abba.' They then, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Agayl, and his protests against the violation of the compact which, he maintained, existed between the Shammar and his tribe, took possession of our horses, the young chief being unable or unwilling to interfere further in our behalf.

We were left standing alone, almost stripped to the skin. I, however, considered myself fortunate in having escaped with my life. Had it not been for the interposition of the sheikh and for my having been taken for Dr. Ross, I should unquestionably have been put to death for a Turk.[5] The Agayl, who had not recovered from his fright, declared that he had only feared for me, as these dogs of Shammar, although they had robbed him, would not have dared to murder him, and have thus caused a blood-feud between the two tribes. But as for me, he said, they would have cut my throat as they would have cut the throat of a sheep.

We then began to collect the letters as fast as we were able. The day was rapidly drawing to a

[5] An almost similar adventure befell Dr. Ross himself five years before, when, in attempting to reach the ruins of Al Hadhr in Mesopotamia, he was attacked by a party of Shammar Arabs. See *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. ix. p. 456.

close, and in my utterly destitute condition I was anxious to lose no time in reaching Baghdad. We were still some hours distant from the city. Never having been accustomed to walk with bare feet, I suffered the greatest pain and inconvenience from the want of shoes and stockings. The ground was so heated by the sun that it almost burnt the soles of my feet, which soon began to swell, blister, and bleed. My companion, who had gone barefooted from his birth, did not suffer as I did, and took compassion upon me.

Notwithstanding the great suffering I experienced I hurried on as fast as I could, fearing lest I should not arrive at Baghdad before the sun rose. It was the beginning of September, and the summer heat had not yet diminished. I felt that I should die of thirst and fatigue if I had to cross the plain before us during the day, and I hoped that we might reach the city before morning. But the night was not to pass without a further adventure. We were suddenly stopped by two Arabs on foot, armed with short, heavy clubs. They demanded our clothes, and as we had no means of resistance, I was compelled to surrender my 'tarbush' and my 'abba,' for which one of the thieves generously gave me his own ragged cloak in exchange. My head was now bare, and as it had been shaved in order to complete my disguise, I had an additional

motive for wishing to avoid the scorching rays of a Mesopotamian sun.

My thirst during the night was almost more than I could bear. Only once I was able to quench it. Under the walls of the last caravanserai we found a small caravan preparing to depart for Hillah. With it were one or two Agayls who were known to my companion. They provided me a skin filled with 'leben,' or sour milk, and I drank until I could drink no longer. Thus refreshed, notwithstanding the tortures that I suffered from my feet, I felt fresh courage to continue our journey.

As the dawn drew near I could distinguish, with a joy and thankfulness that I cannot describe, the long line of palm groves which cover the banks of the Tigris above and below Baghdad. We soon reached the river, and as it was necessary to cross it, the Agayl went in search of a boatman whom he knew. He shortly returned with a 'kufa,' a circular boat made of reeds overlaid with bitumen, the owner of which quickly ferried us to the opposite bank. We landed in a garden outside the city walls, and near one of the gates. It was still closed and would not be opened until sunrise. I sank down on the ground, overcome with fatigue and pain.

A crowd of men and women bringing the produce of their gardens, laden on donkeys, to the

bazars, were waiting for the moment when they were to be admitted. At length the sun rose and the gate was thrown open. Two cawasses of the English Residency, in their gold-embroidered uniforms, came out, driving before them with their courbashes the Arabs who were outside, to make way for a party of mounted European ladies and gentlemen. It was the same party that, on my previous visit to Baghdad, I had almost daily accompanied on their morning rides. They passed close to me, but did not recognise me in the dirty Arab in rags crouched near the entrance, nor, clothed as I was, could I venture to make myself known to them. But at a little distance behind them came Dr. Ross. I called to him, and he turned towards me in the utmost surprise, scarcely believing his senses when he saw me without cover to my bare head, with naked feet, and in my tattered 'abba.'

Very few words sufficed to explain my position. He ordered a 'syce,' or groom, who was following him, to give me his horse, and helping me to mount, which I had much difficulty in doing, took me to his house.

My first thought was to go to the bath, and to rid myself of my filthy clothing. I found my old Lur friend Saleh, whom I met at Kermanshah, in the service of Dr. Ross. I sent him to the

bazar to buy me fresh garments. As I had determined to continue to wear the Persian dress, there was no difficulty in finding what I required ready made. After spending two hours in the bath, and feeling, as it were, new life in me, I returned to my kind host, clean, decently clothed, and thoroughly refreshed. A long sleep in an English bed, three or four days' complete rest, and the medical skill of Dr. Ross, aided by a vigorous constitution which had been by this time inured to privation and fatigue, soon restored me to my usual strength and health. It was, however, some time before I could walk without pain and discomfort; but my wounded feet were at last completely healed.

My friends at Baghdad had been long uneasy on my account. No news had been received of me since my visit to Karak in the winter. It was known that in consequence of the expedition of the Matamet against Mehemet Taki Khan, the Lurs and Arab tribes of Khuzistan were in revolt, and that the province was in a state of the utmost anarchy and disorder. As I had been with the Bakhtiyari chief, it was feared that I had either perished, or had been detained as a prisoner in the mountains.

On the very day of my arrival, Dr. Ross sent a messenger to Sofuk, the sheikh of the Shammar,

to whom, as to most of the Bedouin chiefs, he was well known, on account of the medical aid he had frequently given them, and the tact and generous kindness which he showed in dealing with the Arabs. In a letter he remonstrated against the treatment I had received, and requested the sheikh to restore the property taken from me and from the Agayl. The tents of the renowned Bedouin chief, who was at war with the Pasha, and whose horsemen were ravaging the country almost to the gates of Baghdad, were not far distant from the city. The messenger returned in a few days with my watch and compass, and all that had been taken from me except the few silver coins. The Agayl, too, recovered his horses. Sofuk wrote at the same time to Dr. Ross, expressing his regret that I should have been robbed and ill-treated by his people, and protesting his friendship for the English. If I wished to pass through the desert again, he said, I had only to ask for his protection. I had been mistaken for a Turk, and there being blood between his tribe and the Osmanli, the Shammar had a right to take the life of a Turk wherever he might be found. But if I would visit him in his tents he would send his own son for me, and with him I might journey from one end of Mesopotamia to the other 'with a tray of gold upon my head.' Some years after, when

among the Shammar, I met the sheikh whose followers had robbed me, and who had saved me from a worse fate. He had not forgotten me. 'Ya Bej!' he exclaimed, embracing me. 'You are now my brother, but had I not remembered the English hakim of Baghdad when you fell into our hands, by Allah! you would have been put to death as an accursed Turk.'[6]

Circumstances rendered it necessary that before deciding whether I should persevere in my attempt to reach Kandahar by Furrah and the Seistan, or whether I should go to India at all, I should communicate with my friends at home. It took nearly three months before an answer could be received from England to a letter from Baghdad. There was only one monthly mail across the desert to Damascus and thence to Beyrout. This mail was maintained by the East India Company. The Turkish Government had not yet established a postal service between Baghdad and Constantinople. The communications between the two cities were carried on irregularly by Tatars, or official couriers, occasionally despatched by the Pasha, or by messengers sent by private individuals. The English letter-bags were conveyed

[6] Some account of Sofuk, the renowned chief of the Shammar Bedouins, and of the manner in which he was treacherously slain by the Turks, will be found in my *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i. chap. iv.

across the desert by Agayl Arabs on dromedaries. This route was generally closed when the Arab tribes in Mesopotamia and Syria were at war with each other or with the Turks. It not unfrequently happened that the Agayls employed, notwithstanding the immunity from molestation on the part of the Bedouins that their tribe was supposed to enjoy, were attacked and plundered, or were detained for an indefinite time on the road.

Having despatched my letters I determined to remain at Baghdad, or in the neighbourhood, until I could receive replies to them. Although several of my hospitable friends had invited me to take up my quarters with them, I decided upon hiring a small Arab hut in a garden not far from the Residency occupied by Colonel Taylor. It consisted of nothing but bare walls; the only furniture was my small carpet, on which I sat during the day, sleeping on the flat roof on a wicker bedstead at night. It was necessary that I should live with the strictest economy, as I had hitherto done. The whole of my expenses since I had left England, more than two years before, amounted to less than 200*l.*, including the sums of which I had, on various occasions, been robbed, and which came legitimately under the head of travelling expenses when one lives as I had been living during this

period. When among the nomad tribes—whether Lur or Arab—I had no need of money. The laws of hospitality were respected by all of them, however barbarous they might be, and to say of a man that 'he had sold bread' would have been the gravest of insults. The good and honest Musulman Osmanli of Asia Minor were equally hospitable, and in every village there was an 'oda,' or guest-house (literally, room), reserved for travellers, in which they were gratuitously lodged and entertained.[7] This was not the case with the Christians, who were usually rude, grasping, and extortionate, and whom, consequently, when travelling in the Turkish provinces in Asia and Syria, I usually avoided.

As I continued to wear the Persian dress, I was able to go about the bazars and in all parts of the city unobserved. This I found to be a great convenience, as in those days the lower classes of Baghdad were not so much accustomed to see Europeans as they have since become, and were occasionally inclined to insult them. I engaged a 'munshi' to read Persian and Arabic with me, and occupied myself with writing the memoir on Khuzistan which was afterwards published in the

[7] Mr. Mitford and I calculated that our expenses whilst travelling together through Asia Minor and Syria amounted to about 1*s.* 6*d.* a day, and this included the keep of our horses!

'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.' I was much assisted by Colonel Taylor, who placed his valuable library, rich in manuscripts and rare works relating to Oriental geography and history, at my disposal.

There were still some questions connected with the course and navigation of the Karun that I was desirous of settling, and some important ruins in Susiana which I wished to explore. I had been prevented doing so when in Khuzistan in consequence of the disturbed state of the country. Lieutenant Selby, of the Indian Navy, who commanded the 'Assyria,'[8] offered to take me to Basra. I gladly availed myself of the opportunity to descend the Tigris from Baghdad to its junction with the Euphrates. I hoped further to prevail upon him to allow me to examine in his vessel the mouths of the Kerkhah and of the Karun, as well as that of the Shat-el-Arab, or united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris. We left Baghdad early in October.

We stopped on our way, for some hours, at the so-called tomb of the Prophet Ezra, about twenty-five miles from the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates at Korna. It is a place of pilgrimage for

[8] One of the two small armed steamers—the other was the 'Nitocris'—belonging to the East India Company's Navy, employed in the navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers.

the Jews, who flock there in large numbers at certain times of the year. The Musulmans also hold the place in great reverence; but the Jews claim the right to maintain and keep in repair the building, which is of comparatively modern date. It consisted of two chambers—an outer one which was empty, and an inner one containing the tomb believed to be that of the Prophet, built of bricks covered with white stucco, and enclosed in a wooden case, over which was thrown a large blue cloth fringed with yellow tassels, with the name of the donor embroidered on it in Hebrew characters. The building was crowned by a white oval cupola seen from afar, and surrounded by a wall. At the time of our visit it was falling to ruin, and the Jews of Baghdad were collecting money to restore it. There was no one there to take care of it, and we were told that it was so much respected by the Arabs that it did not require a guardian. There was, indeed, nothing in it for them to rob, and as good Musulmans they would not wantonly desecrate the grave of a prophet equally honoured by Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians.

The tradition that Ezra was buried on this spot is of very ancient date. Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the place in the twelfth century, mentions the tomb as existing in his time, and describes it

as being held in great veneration both by Jews and Mohammedans. The former had erected a large synagogue, the latter a mosque, near the sepulchre. No trace of either now exists, and it may be doubted whether the present building covers the tomb which was seen by the Hebrew traveller. We could find no ancient remains near it. As the Tigris is constantly changing its course, and was still eating away the bank of alluvial soil upon the edge of which the building stood, it is highly probable that the tomb seen by Benjamin of Tudela had long before been carried away by the river.

After entering at Korna the united streams of the Tigris and Euphrates, forming the fine estuary known as the Shat-el-Arab, the banks of which are clothed for many miles with dense groves of palm trees, we endeavoured to pass into the Kerkhah. We were only able to ascend this river for a short distance, as, after having deserted its ancient bed, as I have described, it was no longer navigable.

We then descended the Shat-el-Arab to Muhammera. We found its population in a state of great excitement and agitation in consequence of the rumoured approach of the Matamet, who had, it was said, determined to punish Sheikh Thamer for the protection he had afforded to Mehemet

Taki Khan. The sheikh himself was preparing to leave his country, and to take refuge in Turkish territory, as he did not believe that he could prevent the advance upon Fellahiyah of the Persian army supported by several powerful Arab tribes which had submitted to the Shah's Government.

We passed through the Hafar, which, as I have already mentioned, connects the Shat-el-Arab with the Karun, and ascended the latter river for a short distance. The examination that I was able to make of these streams convinced me that the Hafar was an artificial canal, constructed at some former period for the purpose of leading the waters of the Karun into the Euphrates. I further ascertained that of the several mouths of the Karun which still appeared in our maps, only one then existed—that known to the Arabs as the Bahmehshire, a broad estuary, through which we passed into the Persian Gulf.

As the Karun was at this season of the year at its lowest level, and the country through which it flows was in a very disturbed state, we considered it prudent not to attempt its ascent further than was necessary to ascertain where the Hafar commenced. Having settled this point, we returned to the Shat-el-Arab, reserving for another opportunity the further exploration of the river. I had, however, obtained information as to the

original course of the two streams, upon which the respective frontier claims of Turkey and Persia mainly depended.

On our way back to Baghdad we stopped for a night at the encampment of Sheikh Mathkur, the chief of the Beni Lam Arabs. It was on the left, or eastern bank, of the Tigris, and extended for about two miles in an almost continuous line of black tents. The plains beyond were covered with flocks of sheep and goats, and herds of camels and buffaloes. These Arabs, fearing an attack from the Matamet, had left their usual pastures at the foot of the mountains of Luristan, and had congregated on the borders of the river in Turkish territory, where, they believed, the Persians would not venture to follow them.

I landed with Lieutenant Selby at the tent of the sheikh. He returned our visit on board the 'Assyria.' As I was desirous, if time would permit me, to visit his territories, which were said to contain important ruins, and as the Beni Lam had the reputation of being lawless robbers, we did our best to establish friendly relations with him. He was well pleased with a few trifling presents that were made to him, and was especially interested in the machinery of the vessel, which was made to work for his amusement. I spoke to him of my desire to see his country and the ancient

remains of which I had heard. He promised me his protection, and invited me to be his guest. As, before undertaking the journey, I had to make some preparations, I parted with him, promising to return.

We stopped for some hours to allow me to visit the magnificent ruins of the palace of Chosroes, at Ctesiphon, which on a previous occasion I had not been able to examine thoroughly, on account of a severe attack of fever from which I was then suffering. I had now a most favourable opportunity, with the assistance of Lieutenant Selby and the crew of the 'Assyria,' to explore every part of this stupendous edifice.[9]

[9] I had, on my previous visit, been deserted by the Arab from whom I had hired a horse. Seeing from the ruin one of the English armed steamers in the distance ascending the Tigris, I determined to seek a passage on board of her to Baghdad. But a deep marsh separated me from the river-banks, and I could not reach them without wading through it. I succeeded in crossing it, and, signalling to Captain Felix Jones, who commanded the vessel, was taken on board. He used to relate how, seeing something white waving in the marsh, he looked through his telescope and perceived the head of a European just above the level of the water, which excited his curiosity, and how he had landed and had fished me out of the morass, drenched to the skin and shivering with ague.

CHAPTER XVI.

Leave Baghdad for Khuzistan—Sheikh Mathkur—Saleh the Lur—Abud—Story of Shapur's daughter—Tib—Misconduct of Abud—Robbed—Ruins of Kerkh—Enter Persian territory—Kala Haji Ali—Reach Shuster—Hatem Khan—Kala Dokhter—Bakhtiyari Ilyats—The Diz—Jaffer Kuli Khan—Denounces the Persians—Excursion to Shimbor—Pass for a ser-bâz—A difficult mountain ascent—The plain of Shimbor—The Puli-Neghin—Anecdotes of bears—The Tangi-Butun—Ancient sculptures—Return to the Diz—Leave for Shuster—Shapur's horns—The Musjedi-Suleiman—Traditions attaching to it—Ali and Rustem—Events at Shuster—Flight of Sheikh Taamer—Mehemet Taki Khan in chains—Interview with him—Khatun-jan—Her sufferings and adventures—Ali Naghi Khan—Hussein Kuli—Mirza Sultan Ali Khan—The Shuster seyyids—Take leave of Khatun-jan Khanum.

THERE were still sites of great interest in the Bakhtiyari Mountains and in Khuzistan which I had been unable to visit, owing to the disturbed state of the country, and some important geographical questions to be determined. I was also desirous of learning the fate of Mehemet Taki Khan and his family, and of my other friends of Kala Tul. As the principal sheikh of the Beni Lam Arabs had promised me his help and protection in passing through his tribe, which inhabits the plains to the

east of the Tigris, I determined to avail myself of the opportunity to reach Dizful and Shuster through a district then quite unknown, and which was said to contain the ruins of several ancient cities. I thought that I could not better employ my time whilst waiting for answers from England to my letters than in continuing my researches in Susiana, and especially in examining its rivers and ascertaining its commercial capabilities.

As Lieutenant Selby was returning to Basra, I availed myself of his offer to land me at the encampment of Sheikh Mathkur on his way. We left Baghdad on the last day of October, in the 'Assyria.' As the river was very low, we could not proceed after dark, and as we constantly grounded on sandbanks, it was November 7 before we reached the sheikh's tents. They had been much reduced in number since we had seen them a month before, many of the Arabs having returned to their pastures inland, as their fears of an attack from the Persian troops had ceased.

Sheikh Mathkur received us civilly and renewed his offer to assist me in my journey. Although he had the reputation of being treacherous and untrustworthy, and his tribe, the Beni Lam, of being one of the most lawless of those which encamp on the banks of the Tigris, I had no reason to doubt, after the assurances he had

given me, and after I had eaten of his bread, that he would fulfil his promises and see me safely through his country. Lieutenant Selby, who had been in friendly relations with him and had been able to render him some service in his relations with the Turkish authorities, was also of opinion that I ran no risk in trusting myself in his hands. He left me at the sheikh's tent, and, returning to his vessel, continued his voyage to Basra.

The 'Assyria' was scarcely out of sight when it became evident that Sheikh Mathkur, probably suspicious of the object of my journey, was determined to throw every obstacle in my way. He had promised to help me in buying two horses, but instead of doing so he contrived that those which were brought to me for sale were either quite unfit to perform a long journey, or that a larger price was asked for them than I was willing or able to give. I then endeavoured, but in vain, to hire mules to take me to Dizful. At length, finding that I could obtain no assistance from the sheikh, I addressed myself to a Turkish officer in command of a body of 'hytas,' or irregular cavalry, who had been sent to collect the tribute from the Beni Lam. He professed himself ready to be of service to me, but the day passed without my being able to obtain the horses I required. However, on the following morning I was able to buy

two belonging to one of the 'hytas' for about £8 10*s*. They appeared to be strong, hardy animals, capable of performing the journey, and well worth the sum I paid for them.

I had taken with me, as a servant and companion, Saleh the Lur. I knew him to be brave, faithful, and trustworthy, and as he had already travelled among the Arabs and had acquired some knowledge of their language, and as he belonged to the mountain tribes amongst which I should probably find myself, I had every reason to expect that he would prove very useful to me.

I was soon ready to start, and asked Sheikh Mathkur to send a horseman with me as a guide and for my protection as far as Dizful. He consented to do so, but only on condition of being paid a sum of money. When I expressed my surprise at this demand, after the promises he had made to me and the presents and civilities he had received from Lieutenant Selby and myself, he declared that he could not compel any one to accompany me, and that nobody would do so in the then dangerous state of the country without an adequate reward.

After a long and angry discussion I came to the conclusion that I would have either to give up my journey or to submit to the sheikh's demand. I therefore, in the end, agreed to pay him twenty-

two 'kirâns,'[1] as he affirmed that that sum was required to induce an Arab to go with me. One Abud, who was related to Sheikh Mathkur—the two no doubt sharing the money—then professed himself ready to accompany me. This negotiation had occupied the whole morning, and it was past mid-day before we left the encampment.

The plains to the west of Dizful had been deserted by the Arabs, owing to their recent invasion by Persian troops under Suleiman Khan, the Georgian general. One of the Beni Lam tribes had been surprised, and had lost, it was said, about 12,000 sheep, a large number of camels, horses, and other animals, their tents, and all their property. Many of their women had even fallen into the hands of the enemy, and had been given over to the Persian soldiery—a shameful outrage which Arabs never forgive. Owing to this state of things the country through which I had to pass was considered to be in a very dangerous state. If we met Arab horsemen on our road the presence of Abud would be a protection to me; but Sheikh Mathkur warned me that he could not insure my safety if I fell into the hands of the Faïli Lurs, who, taking advantage of the general disorder, occasionally descended into the plains from their

[1] The Persian 'kirân' was then worth about one shilling.

mountain fastnesses for the purpose of plundering the Beni Lam.

We stopped for the night at an Arab encampment. The sheikh received me very hospitably, killed a sheep, and placed before me a substantial 'tabak'—a mess of boiled meat and rice served in great wooden bowls—of which he and his people did not scruple to partake with me, dipping their fingers into the same dish, although they were shi'as, and knew me to be a Christian and consequently unclean. I was far better received and entertained by this chief of a few families than I had been by the head of the tribe.

Saleh, who was a skilful story-teller, and very ingenious in inventing explanations to satisfy inquiries with regard to my motive for visiting ancient ruins and wandering in foreign lands, held forth to a curious and attentive audience until a late hour in the night. The kings of Feringhistan (Europe), said he, send their subjects to travel in different countries in order that they may inquire into the histories of ancient monarchs, ascertain how they lived, and inform themselves of their good and bad actions. They are thus able to regulate their own conduct, and to govern their own countries with justice and wisdom. He then related how he had accompanied some English travellers to the city of Shapur, which he described as being between

Shiraz and Bushire. There they discovered figures sculptured on the rocks, amongst which Shapur himself was to be seen, with the king of India prostrate under the belly of his horse. Beneath was some writing, which they interpreted. It stated that the king of India had surrounded Shapur for many months in his capital, but all his efforts to capture it having failed, he was thinking to raise the siege, when the Persian monarch, hearing that such was his intention, collected all the provisions contained in the city together, and after setting apart sufficient for the nourishment of its inhabitants for three days, threw the remainder from the walls into the river. The stratagem succeeded. The king of India, believing that there could be no scarcity where there was so much waste, and that consequently the city could not be taken, made preparations to retire with his army. It happened that the daughter of Shapur, having seen the king from the battlements of her father's castle, had fallen in love with him. She therefore wrote on a piece of paper, 'O king, why do you abandon the siege of this city? Know that Shapur has destroyed his provisions to deceive you, and that in three days it must surrender,' and placed it in a casket which she threw into the river. The king of India perceived the casket as it was floating down the stream, and ordered it to be

brought to him. Having read the message of the daughter of Shapur, he invested the city more closely. In three days, as she had predicted, it surrendered.

Shapur escaped, but his daughter remained, and was taken to wife by the king of India. On their wedding night she was restless and could not sleep. On being asked the reason by her husband, she replied that there was a cotton-seed in the mattress which incommoded her. 'Where, then, did you sleep,' he inquired, 'when in your home, that so small a thing should have disturbed your rest?' 'On my father's breast,' she answered. 'How then, O lady,' exclaimed the king, 'could you have betrayed him whose love for you was so great, for one whom you had only seen from the castle walls?' Having further upbraided her for her perfidy, he caused her to be bound to a mule, which, being set free, galloped off to the mountains, and she was never heard of more. Shapur having collected together his followers, returned to make war against the king of India, whom he ultimately overthrew and captured. But in consideration of the punishment which his prisoner had inflicted upon his unnatural daughter, he spared his life, and gave him his liberty after compelling him to pass under the belly of his horse. The sculptures which the Feringhi had discovered

represented, Saleh concluded, this incident in the history of the great Persian monarch.[2]

Abud left his mare at the tents, and followed me next day on foot, but did not explain his reason for doing so. We kept for some time along the banks of the Hud, a broad, deep stream which issues from the Tigris and is lost in marshes. Upon it were numerous encampments of the Beni Lam Arabs. We found no means of crossing it, as it was not fordable, until we met with a poor seyyid who was tracking a boat containing his wife and children and little property. He very obligingly ferried us over. We then struck across a flat country, which, when flooded by the Tigris in the spring, is converted into a vast swamp.

In the afternoon, after we had stopped to eat at some tents belonging to a branch of the Beni Lam tribe called the Sa'ad, an Arab on foot joined us. Abud pretended that this man had been sent to accompany me, and that I must pay him. I refused, and he threatened to leave me; but seeing that I was determined to proceed alone, he remained. As he walked, our progress was very slow, and he soon declared that he was so foot-

[2] A similar legend, in different versions, will be familiar to my readers. Whence Saleh and the Lurs obtained it I know not. I often heard versions of well-known classical stories among these wild people.

sore that he could not proceed any further unless he rode. I was consequently under the necessity of making Saleh cede his horse to him. We fell in with a small 'kâfila,' or caravan, of donkeys laden with rice, on its way to Patak, a district of Luristan. It stopped for the night at a spot where there was no water, and as Abud would not travel after dark for fear of robbers and of lions, I was compelled to remain with it.

Although pressed to be his guest at Patak by a young Lur who accompanied the caravan, and by whose frank and manly bearing, contrasting so strongly with that of the Beni Lam Arabs, I was much struck, we separated from our fellow-travellers of the previous day, and leaving our resting-place two hours before dawn, reached at daybreak an Arab encampment and stopped for a short time to breakfast. I was desirous of exploring some ruins which were said to exist in the neighbourhood, and were supposed to mark the site of the very ancient city of Tîb, which, according to the Arab geographers, belonged to the Nabatheans, or Sabæans, and was founded by Seth, the son of Adam. It was renowned in the early history of Eastern Christianity and of the Arab conquest. These ruins had not been visited by any European traveller.

We crossed a small stream of brackish water

still bearing the name of Tîb. The ruins, which are at some distance from it, are called Shahr Tîb, or sometimes Shahritch, and consist of a number of mounds, the largest being between thirty and forty feet above the present level of the plain. They are enclosed by the remains of a quadrangular wall about three miles square. The space within and the country around were strewed with fragments of pottery, brick, and glass—the usual indications of the site of an ancient city—and I could trace the foundations of many buildings. But I could find no inscriptions nor sculptures. I was much disappointed after the wonderful accounts that had reached me of the ruins, and I received a fresh warning not to trust to the exaggerated descriptions of ignorant Arabs and Lurs. Excavations would have been necessary to ascertain whether the mounds of earth covered the remains of buildings, and I had only time for a hasty survey. It was evident, however, that a city of considerable extent once occupied the site, which is now without water, except such as is gathered in an artificial reservoir. The Arabs have a tradition that the river Tîb once flowed through it, and traces of its former bed may yet be seen.

During the remainder of that day and the following we made but little progress over a

barren country, and across low stony hills and sand-drifts. Saleh, in his turn, became sorefooted, but Abud refused to give up the horse which I had lent him, and caused me much annoyance by constantly asking for money, and by throwing difficulties in my way when I wanted to examine ruins. He and the Beni Lam Arabs at whose tents we stopped did not conceal their suspicions as to the object of my visiting their country. It was to spy it out, and to find by inscriptions where its ancient owners, who were Europeans, had concealed their treasures, which they were coming with an army to recover.

Then he pretended to be in fear of the Arabs, who, having been robbed of everything by the Matamet, plundered, in return, every one they met, and would have no respect for the protection that Sheikh Mathkur had accorded to me. He was continually pressing me to engage horsemen as guards, which I refused to do. However, three men, mounted on Arab mares and armed with spears, joined us at his request. One of them was a youth, who, after a time, declared that he must leave us to join his tribe, whose tents, he said, were near. Abud, for whom I had succeeded in hiring a horse, wished me to detain him by force, fearing, he pretended, that knowing the road we intended to take, he might return with others to

rob us. Saleh was about to seize him, but I peremptorily forbade him to do so, convinced that the whole was a trick to extort money. I was confirmed in my suspicions when, after communicating apart with Abud, he remained with us.

We came in the middle of the day to some springs of sweet water, the source of a small stream called Bogrib. Here we dismounted to prepare some food, and the Arabs lighted a fire with the dry dung of the cattle of an encampment which had recently been on the spot. Abud renewed his demands for more money. Suddenly two of the men who had joined us threw themselves upon Saleh, who was off his guard, pulled him to the ground, and deprived him of his pistol and dagger. Indignant at having been thus surprised and disarmed, he was about to throw himself upon his assailants, who had drawn their swords. I prepared to defend myself with my gun, which I had not allowed to leave my hand. However, resistance under the circumstances would have been useless, and had blood been shed by either Saleh or myself we should inevitably have been murdered. I thought it best, therefore, to parley and to endeavour to come to terms. But Abud's demands were so exorbitant that it was altogether out of my power to comply with them.

After some discussion, the Arabs directed me to

mount my horse, and led me with Saleh to another spring not far off. Here they again menaced to kill us unless I gave them all the money I had with me. I only had on my person sixty 'kirâns.' I had confided the remainder of the small sum I had brought from Baghdad to the care of Saleh, whom, fortunately, they did not search, not suspecting from his appearance and the state of his clothes that he was likely to possess money. There was nothing to be done but to yield, and I gave them what I had, threatening to lodge a complaint with the Pasha of Baghdad against Sheikh Mathkur and his relative, Abud.

After two hours' detention we resumed our journey over a broad plain, which in spring is covered with herbage and flowers. It was then uninhabited, the Arabs and Faili Lurs who usually encamp upon it having fled to escape from the Persian troops. Towards evening a thunderstorm, with incessant lightning and peals of thunder, broke over us, and as we could find no tents in which to take refuge, I was soon drenched to the skin. At nightfall we crossed some low hills, which are considered the boundaries of the Beni Lam territory, and consequently the frontier between Turkey and Persia. About five miles from them we passed through the ruins of the ancient Sassanian city of Kerkh, or Kerkha-Ladan, the

seat of an early Christian bishopric. They still retain the name of Iwan-Kerkhah. It was too dark for me to examine them, but I could see the lofty mounds and the remains of a vast building looming against the sky.

As the Kerkhah was divided into four channels near these ruins, we had no difficulty in fording it. Abud and his Arabs now left me, as they were no longer on Beni Lam territory, and could not, they said, venture beyond the river for fear of falling into the hands of the Persians. I rode on alone with Saleh until about midnight, when we heard the distant barking of dogs, which directed us to a small mud fort. The only entrance to it was closed. We knocked at it violently, but it was long before we roused a man who unbarred the gate, and then returned to his sleep in the vaulted porch, leaving us to shift for ourselves. As large loose stones had been placed in the gateway, we had some difficulty in getting our horses into the castle yard. Having at length reached it, we picketed them in an open space and closed the gate again. The place was filled with sheep and cattle, and as there was no one stirring we had to lie down supperless among them. We had been fourteen hours on horseback, and, although wet to the skin, I was soon asleep.

The little castle in which we passed the night

was called Kala Haji Ali. Its inhabitants rose at daybreak to send their flocks and herds to pasture. They were surprised to find two strangers in their midst, sleeping on the ground. They awoke us, and offered us such provisions as they had, consisting chiefly of newly-baked cakes of unleavened bread, dates, and various preparations of milk. Dizful was visible in the distance, about eight miles across the plain. The temperature of the morning, after the thunderstorm of the previous evening, was truly delightful. The outlines of the lofty mountains of Luristan, their summits covered with snow, were sharply defined against the cloudless sky. On all sides were seen villages surrounded by gardens and graceful palm trees. Sheep and cattle were scattered over the plain. The scene appeared to me all the more beautiful after my long and toilsome journey through the desolate and inhospitable country of the Beni Lam. I have never forgotten that morning ride, for, in addition to the exquisite enjoyment I experienced from the balmy air and the landscape, there was a feeling of thankfulness at having escaped with my life from the hands of Abud and his Arabs.

I forded the river of Dizful, the water reaching to my saddle, and rode to a fine house in a garden which I saw near. It belonged to one Mehemet Taki Khan, a chief of Dizful, whose

father had been murdered in the previous year. He received me very kindly, and I passed the day under his hospitable roof. I found with him a connection of the Bakhtiyari chief, his namesake, from whom I obtained some news of my friends of Kala Tul.

I was anxious to penetrate into a part of the mountains of Luristan which I had not yet explored, and especially to visit Jaffer Kuli Khan, the principal chief of the great Bakhtiyari tribe of Haft Lang,[3] in his renowned 'diz,' or hill fort, which had the reputation of being impregnable. I thought it best to do so before my presence in Khuzistan was known to the Matamet and the Persian authorities, who would, no doubt, prevent me from carrying out my intention. I therefore resolved to endeavour to make my way without loss of time to the residence of this chieftain. Accordingly I left my courteous host about midday, and avoiding the town of Dizful, rode across the country in the direction of Shuster. I reached in the evening a small village almost deserted by its inhabitants, where I could obtain but little food for myself or my horses. Nearly all the other

[3] The Bakhtiyari tribe is divided into two branches—the Cheher Lang, of which Mehemet Taki Khan was the chief, and the Haft Lang. The origin of these names, which signify the 'four' (Cheher) and the 'seven' (Haft) branches, is obscure. See my memoir in the *Royal Geographical Society's Journal* for 1846, p. 7.

villages on my road had been abandoned on account of the exactions of the Persian authorities.

I reached Shuster in the evening, and went at once to the house of Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, upon whose friendship and discretion I could rely. He received me with his usual kindness, and immediately set about making arrangements for my visit to the 'diz' of Jaffer Kuli Khan, procuring for me a letter to the 'ket-khudâ' of the district of Jalakun, who was requested to send me there in safety.

I left Shuster at daybreak next morning, and after a few hours' ride reached the principal village in Jalakun. I was received by Mulla Habib, the chief for whom I had the letter, very cordially. There was staying in his 'musif' one Hâtem Khan, a chief of the Bakhtiyari tribe of Mal-Ahmedi. As he happened to be going on some business to Jaffer Kuli Khan, he proposed that I should accompany him, an offer which I readily accepted, and we rode together to the village of Gotwand.

Hâtem Khan proved a very lively companion. He entertained me during our ride with stories about the Bakhtiyari, and especially about his own tribe and his ancestors, who had been taken by Nadir Shah to Herat, Kandahar, and the Seistan, whence, after that monarch's death, they had succeeded in returning to their native mountains.

He was full of information about Khuzistan and its various inhabitants, which he seemed to take pleasure in imparting to me. At night he drew the whole population of the village round him, and what with his tales, and with Saleh's loud, discordant singing, which appeared to be greatly relished, I could get but little sleep.

On the following day we entered a gorge in the mountains through which the Karun bursts into the low country. On either side of it were the ruins of ancient castles, which had been constructed for the defence of the passage, probably in the days of the Sassanian kings. The Lurs called them the Kala Dokhter, or the Maiden's Castles, and ascribed them, as they do most other great works, to Rustem, the popular hero of Persian romance. Near them were numerous rock-cut chambers, similar to those in other parts of the mountains, in which the fire-worshippers of old are said to have exposed their dead. We crossed a steep ridge into a deep valley well watered and with rich pasturage, where we found a number of Iliyat families who had just arrived from their summer pastures, and were preparing to pitch their tents. They immediately got one ready for us, and the women set to work to prepare our repast. To reward them for their hospitality Hâtem Khan recited, in a sing song way, verses

from the odes of Hafiz and the Shah-Nameh, and Saleh entertained them with stories to a late hour of the night. Many of the Bakhtiyari chiefs, as I have already mentioned, who could neither read nor write, and whose only occupation in life appeared to be to make war upon their neighbours, to plunder villages, and to rob peaceful travellers, could repeat from memory the works of the most popular Persian poets.

The next morning we passed many Iliyats with their flocks and cattle descending from the mountains to their winter pastures. It was a very animated scene. I was struck, as I had often been before when seeing a Bakhtiyari tribe on its march, with the fine features of the men and their commanding appearance, and the remarkable beauty of the women, who moved about without veiling themselves and conversed freely with strangers. Many of the children, too, although dirty and scantily clad, were strikingly handsome. Those who were not old enough to drive the flocks or to make themselves otherwise useful, were fastened upon the loads among the cooking-pots on the backs of horses, donkeys, and even cows, or stuffed into saddle-bags, from which their little heads peeped out.

We stopped for some of our party to say their prayers at a small Imaum-Zadeh much venerated

by the Lurs, as marking the spot where the Imaum Riza is said to have rested when flying from his infidel enemies. It was situated in a deep warm valley, and watered by a copious stream upon whose banks grew palm, fig, and pomegranate trees and vines. Whilst my friends were praying, a party of Bakhtiyari arrived with a corpse which they were about to bury in the sacred ground. The last ceremonies having been performed over the deceased, and the body washed and enveloped in its shroud and placed in the grave, we smoked a kaleôn with the mourners and then continued our journey.

The mountain stronghold of Jaffer Kuli Khan soon appeared in the distance—a huge mass of rock rising perpendicularly out of the valley. After a very difficult and dangerous descent, we found ourselves at the mouth of a cave at the foot of it. In this cave were seated several chiefs from a neighbouring tribe, who were waiting to see the Khan. He shortly afterwards appeared, and after giving me a friendly welcome, begged me to allow him to settle some business with them. When he had done so, and they had mounted their horses and had departed, he invited me to ascend to the top of the 'diz' with him. Taking hold of the shawl round my waist with a firm grasp, he almost dragged me up its perpendicular sides, evidently

much delighted with the impression which this extraordinary hill-fort could not fail to make upon me.

I had been very desirous of making the acquaintance of Jaffer Kuli Khan, but very doubtful as to the reception that awaited me, as he was known to be exceedingly suspicious of strangers and especially jealous of his stronghold, which he would allow only those in whom he had the most complete trust and confidence to ascend. I was consequently not a little surprised at the way in which he had received me, and his readiness to take me to the top of the 'diz.' From all I had heard of this chief I had formed the worst opinion of his character. He was said to be treacherous and bloodthirsty, to have no respect for an oath, nor for the laws of hospitality, nor for the sacred ties of family. He was reported, I believe truly, to have murdered no less than fourteen of his relations, including one of his own brothers, who stood in his way in obtaining the chieftainship of his tribe. As a freebooter he was notorious, and his name was feared far beyond his mountains—even up to the gates of Isfahan. The 'chapous,' or marauding expeditions, which he led with dauntless courage, were the dread of caravans and of the peaceful villagers of the plains. His followers were the most daring, turbulent, and savage, of all the Bakhtiyari clans.

He was in every way the type of the robber-chief who lived upon rapine and war. It need scarcely be said that he was constantly in hot water with the Persian Government, which had frequently sent troops against him. But he had always managed to escape by shutting himself up in his impregnable 'diz,' or by taking refuge among the Arabs.

At the time of my visit to him he was the chief, as I have mentioned, of one of the two great branches of the Bakhtiyari tribe. Since the fall of Mehemet Taki Khan, of whom he had long been the rival, and with whom he had been constantly at war, the Matamet had recognised him as the head of the Haft-Lang, and had placed several important districts of Khuzistan under his authority, on the understanding that he would renounce his evil habits, abandon 'chapous,' furnish a contingent of horsemen in the expedition against the Cha'b, and remit his tribute punctually to the royal treasury.[4]

[4] In my description of the province of Khuzistan (*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. xvi.) I gave the following account of Jaffer Kuli Khan: 'Since the fall of the great Bakhtiyari chief (Mehemet Taki Khan), Jaffer Kuli Khan, of the Haft-Lang tribe of Baïdarwand, or Bakhtiyariwand, has enjoyed the chief authority and power among these mountain tribes. Of all the Bakhtiyari chiefs he is the most daring and unprincipled. The large tribe of Baïdarwand, with the Raki, a subdivision of the Duraki, acknowledge him as their chief, and all those among the Bakhtiyari who seek for plunder and adventure have placed them-

I found on the top of the 'diz' an old friend from Kala Tul, Haji Hassan, the tutor of Mehemet Taki Khan's children. He was rejoiced to see me, and gave me a touching account of the misfortunes that had befallen him since we had parted.

Jaffer Kuli Khan was one of the few Bakhtiyari chiefs who were not particular in the observance of the commands of the Prophet as to intoxicating liquors. We had scarcely seated ourselves in the 'diwan-khana' when a large tray of sweetmeats

selves under his protection. He has thus frequently been able to assemble five thousand well-armed and desperate men. But his fortunes have been various, and he has more than once been compelled to seek for safety among the Arab tribes of the plains or in his celebrated hill-fort, or 'diz.' . . . With this stronghold in his possession he has been able to defy the Persian Government and the most powerful mountain chiefs for many years. He has raised himself to his present powerful position by a series of murders and acts of treachery of the most atrocious character. The slaughter of fourteen of his relations, including his own brother, was necessary to the full establishment of his authority, and he did not hesitate to accomplish it. Such a man can consider no oath nor obligation binding. His very name is a terror to the inhabitants of the provinces to the west and east of his mountains. Accompanied by his notorious chiefs and relations A'â (Agha) Khosrau and A'â Parviz, he has frequently carried his plundering expeditions to the neighbourhood of Kerman, Yezd, Shiraz, and even Tehran. These attacks were made with the most determined bravery. No number of Persians were able to withstand them, and the name of a Bakhtiyari was sufficient to put to flight the boldest of the peasantry. The communication between the north and south of Persia was frequently interrupted, and caravans almost daily plundered.' Morier, in his *Second Journey through Persia*, chap. ix. p. 156, mentions that in his time Isfahan was constantly threatened by the Bakhtiyari.

and dried fruits was brought in, with a huge bottle filled with Shiraz wine. The wine was sour, but I could not refuse to drink with my host, who soon got affectionately intimate, poured out his griefs, and cursed the Persians, the Shah, the Matamet, and the Government. Hearing that Saleh was acquainted with Lur ditties, he sent for him and made him sing, to the accompaniment of the measured beating of fingers on small drums. When he had drunk more than enough, an excellent supper was served, and I retired to rest not a little astonished at my reception by the man of whom I had heard so evil a report, and in whose hands, I was warned, I could not trust myself with safety. I was almost disposed to suspect that he had inveigled me into his stronghold with the intention of not letting me out of it again.

Early on the following morning the chief directed the guardian of the 'diz,' an old man named Sheikh Fereydun, to show me over it. 'Diz' is the name given by the Lurs to a hill-fort not requiring artificial defences, and considered impregnable. There are several of these natural strongholds in the Bakhtiyari Mountains, belonging to different chiefs, the most celebrated being that of Mungasht, in the occupation of Mehemet Taki Khan, and the one which I was visiting, usually known as the Diz Assad Khan, from the father of its present

owner. Its ancient name was Diz Melekân, or the Diz of the Angels, from a Lur legend that it was delivered into the hands of the Bakhtiyari by angels, as its summit could not possibly have been reached by mortals without their aid. It had been for eight generations in the possession of the family of Jaffer Kuli Khan. It consists of a mass of fossiliferous limestone rock,[5] about three miles in circumference, which rises in the centre of a valley or basin surrounded by lofty mountains. Its almost perpendicular sides have the appearance, from a distance, of having been artificially scarped. At its foot the rocky ground slopes rapidly, and could be easily defended by a few resolute men. A track leads to the spacious cavern in which I was first received, and which served for the 'diwan-khana' and for a stable for the chief's horses. His guests were entertained here, never being allowed to ascend to the upper part of the 'diz.'

Some steps, rudely cut in the face of the cliff, and a long wooden ladder, led to a narrow ledge, whence by the aid of ropes and of holes big enough to hold the foot, the lower 'diz' could be reached. This was a platform, upon which were

[5] In consequence of the number of small fossils, like grains of rice, which it contains, it is called the 'sangi-perinj,' or the rice-stone, and is much valued in Persia for making the heads of kaleôns.

the ruins of some houses built of roughly-hewn stones. Here Jaffer Kuli Khan and his wives and children resided, at the time of my visit, in black goat-hair tents. On it there was a small perennial spring, and several large reservoirs for collecting rain-water, apparently of ancient date, cut in the rock.

The upper 'diz' was also only accessible from the lower by the aid of ladders and ropes. It consisted of a spacious table-land, covered for the most part with arable soil, capable of producing about six thousand pounds of wheat, and of supporting a small flock of sheep and goats, amongst which were a few wild sheep and chamois, which had been brought to the rock and remained there, whilst the ibex, as Jaffer Kuli Khan told me, always contrived to make its escape. As it does not possess a spring like the lower 'diz,' only rain-water, collected in artificial reservoirs, is found on it. There were a few remains of buildings, possibly of the Sassanian period. The Lurs say that a machine for grinding corn, worked by the wind, once existed there, but that the secret of it had been lost. I endeavoured in vain to explain to the chief the construction of a windmill. It is very probable that this natural stronghold may have been a place of defence and refuge from time immemorial. No one but his wives and children,

with their female attendants, and six or seven trustworthy retainers, were allowed by Jaffer Kuli Khan to reside on its summit. These men were considered sufficient for the defence of the 'diz' during his absence, and were commanded in case of danger to remove the ladders and to cut off all communication with the valley beneath. The chief would not permit even his own brothers to ascend to it. Having himself been guilty of murdering his relations, he probably feared to meet with the same fate.

This remarkable natural fortress might be impregnable to the mountain tribes and to the ill-disciplined troops of the Shah, but not to a European force. The platforms on the summit could, no doubt, be shelled; but there are caves and places of refuge upon it in which its defenders and their families would be perfectly secure. As long as their provisions—of which an ample supply was constantly kept—and their water lasted, they could hold out.

After I had visited all parts of the 'diz' with Sheikh Fereydun, I returned to the 'diwan-khana.' Jaffer Kuli Khan was waiting for me, to have another drinking bout with his sour Shiraz wine before breakfasting. He was in high good-humour, and talked of the Matamet's expedition and its results upon the Bakhtiyari tribes. If, he said, Me-

hemet Taki Khan and his brothers had taken refuge with him, although they were his enemies, he would not have delivered them up to the Matamet, and would have resisted any attempt on the part of the Persians to possess themselves of them by force, even at the risk of his own life and the lives of his children. 'That dog of a eunuch,' he exclaimed, 'boasts that he has overcome and captured the most powerful of all the chiefs of the Bakhtiyari, and that none of them can stand before his face. If I had not gone to his help he would not have dared to open his mouth, and would have trembled before us like a hound as he is. And, after all, he only got Mehemet Taki Khan into his power by violating the most sacred oaths, thus making the name of a Musulman to stink in the nostrils even of infidels. Wallah! Billah! (by God! by God!) As soon as that "peder sukta" (son of a burnt father) turns his back I will replace Ali Naghi Khan at Kala Tul, and show the "gourum-sâg" that we can settle our own affairs without him!'

There was, no doubt, a great deal of vain-glorious boasting in all this talk, stimulated by copious libations of the Shiraz wine. When I expressed some astonishment at what he had said, as I had heard that there was a blood-feud between his family and that of Mehemet Taki Khan, he

replied with much warmth—'I will tell you the truth, Sahib Khan. We Bakhtiyari are all fools. So long as we are powerful and strong, and do not fear the Persians, we must needs be at enmity amongst ourselves and seek each other's lives. As soon, however, as one of us has fallen before the common enemy, the others become his protector. We cannot endure that those dogs of Turks[6] should interfere between us. Were we but united, these mountains would never be trodden by them, for they are women, not men. You were the friend of Mehemet Taki Khan, and when he fled to the Cha'b you buckled on your "keshkemer"[7] and followed him, whilst we Bakhtiyari went against him and aided his enemies. Those who ought to have helped him deserted him. I wish to be the friend of one who has thus shown himself a better man than us Musulmans. You are welcome to my diz, and you will always be so. This is a proof of my confidence in you; for my own brothers are not permitted to ascend to it—and as for those Turks, they shall never come within sight of it.'

On the third day of my residence on the 'diz'

[6] As is well known, the Shah and the governing class in Persia are of Turkish origin, and are looked down upon consequently by those of pure Persian stock like the Bakhtiyari.

[7] Belt to which the powder-flasks, &c., are attached.

Jaffer Kuli Khan received a summons from the Matamet to join him immediately with five hundred horsemen of his tribe. He made arrangements accordingly, and left his stronghold in charge of Sheikh Fereydun. He begged me to remain as long as it might be agreeable to me, and ordered some matchlock-men to be ready to accompany me to any place that I might wish to visit in his mountains.

Six matchlock-men only were left on the top of the 'diz' for its defence. When about to depart the chief said to me, 'I have not a friend in the world whom I can trust, not even my own brother. If any one comes to the diz let him have bread at its foot and then bid him continue his journey. This is not a place for guests. If the Matamet should treacherously make me a prisoner, as he did Mehemet Taki Khan, and you are weary of staying here, I entreat of you to shoot my wives and my children rather than allow them to fall into the hands of the Matamet to be dishonoured by the ser-bâz.'

I had no wish to remain in charge of Jaffer Kuli Khan's stronghold, nor to find myself under the necessity of carrying out his instructions with respect to his wives and children. I, therefore, begged him to allow me to make an excursion at once to a place in the mountains, where I had

been informed there were sculptures and inscriptions carved in the rocks, promising to return in a few days to the diz. He consented, and when he rode off to collect his retainers, I mounted my horse and went in a different direction, followed by the 'tufungjis' whom he had directed to accompany me.

The principal object of my journey was to reach the plain of Shimbor, where, I had been told, ancient monuments existed. I learnt from the Iliyats whom I met on my way, and who were migrating to their winter pastures, that there were still tents there, although it was usually deserted by the Bakhtiyari at this season of the year. I also heard that I should meet everywhere on my road with Iliyats, who were descending in large numbers from their summer camping-grounds to the low country. There was consequently no danger to be apprehended, and I left my guard of matchlock-men at the tents of one Baraud, where I passed the night — his brother, Aidi, volunteering to accompany me as a guide and protector. As he seemed to be a trustworthy fellow, I gave him my second horse to ride, leaving Saleh behind. He proved an intelligent and amusing companion, well versed in the lore and legends of the tribes. He entertained me on the way with stories, and pointed out the places where

remarkable events had occurred—amongst others a heap of stones which marked the spot where Madani, one of the bravest of the Bakhtiyari horsemen, had fallen in a desperate encounter between Jaffer Kuli Khan and his rival Kelb Ali Khan, whose brother he killed. Hence a blood-feud had arisen between the two chiefs and their respective tribes, which had not been extinguished. Aidi sang various ditties in praise of Madani, composed by Bakhtiyari poets in the Bakhtiyari dialect.

We passed the burial-place of a holy 'pir,' or Lur saint, called Ahmed Bedal, and crossing some hills descended into the small plain of Andakou, in which were two ruined forts which had been captured and destroyed some years before by Mehemet Taki Khan. Beyond this plain, in the hills, we fell in with some Iliyats of the Duraki tribe, who, taking advantage of the disorder and confusion which reigned in the mountains, had refused to acknowledge the authority of either Jaffer Kuli Khan, or his rival, Kelb Ali Khan. Aidi, fearing that they might stop us, invented a story, in which I had to acquiesce, that I was an officer of the regular troops sent on business by the Matamet to Kelb Ali Khan. In order to sustain my character and to make myself look as much like a 'ser-bâz' as possible, I concealed my

felt cap and put on the lambskin 'kulâ' which I carried in my saddle-bag. I was not recognised as I rode through the encampment, but was taken for a Persian.

We then entered a very narrow defile, formed by lofty precipitous cliffs, and blocked up with huge rocks, over which we experienced the greatest difficulty in dragging our horses. It was called Tangi-Shilor. In it was an encampment of the Gandali, a Bakhtiyari tribe, at the foot of a high mountain called Dallan, which we had to cross to get to Shimbor. They invited us to remain for the night in their tents, as we should be unable, they said, to reach before dark even the summit of the pass, which was one of the most difficult in the range, and we should probably have to remain for the night without shelter or food for ourselves or our horses. However, I would not listen to their advice, but commenced the ascent, the men following us for some distance, continuing to urge us to stay until the following morning.

Their warnings proved to be well justified. In all the Bakhtiyari Mountains which I had crossed I had not met with a more difficult pass than the one upon which we had entered. We had to crawl up the steep stony slopes, dragging our horses after us, and supporting ourselves on our hands and knees. To add to our troubles, one of the

horses lost a shoe, which we were unable to replace, and went lame. The sun was fast declining, and we were approaching the summit, when we came to a smooth rock, over which it was absolutely necessary to climb. We succeeded, after great exertions, in getting one horse over in safety, but the other absolutely refused to trust itself on the slippery surface. After attempting in vain for more than an hour to drag the animal over, and darkness having set in, we made up our minds that we should have to spend the night in a very unpleasant, if not dangerous, position. We fastened the horses as we best could, with their bridles and halters, so as to prevent their moving and rolling down the precipice, and, wrapping myself in my cloak, I prepared to pass the night where we were.

The fires of the encampment we had left in the afternoon could be faintly distinguished below us. Aidi, hungry and thirsty, was determined to make an attempt to obtain food and help. He accordingly uttered one of those shrill cries by which the Bakhtiyari are accustomed to communicate with each other in the mountains when far apart. It consists of a loud yell, dying away in a series of cadences. I scarcely thought that he would be heard at so great a distance, but after repeating his cry two or three times, a faint response to it reached us. He declared that he had been understood, and

that we should have food and water brought to us in the course of time. However, we waited for an hour and no one came. The moon rose, and it began to be very cold in this high region. I determined to make another effort to get the horse over the rock. But it still refused. I then proposed to pile up loose stones behind it, to prevent it from backing over the precipice, and then to drag it up by main force. We set about collecting the stones and soon made a low wall. Aidi vowed to offer a sheep to Ahmed Bedal if we succeeded. Then, both of us seizing the halter, we pulled with all our might, my pious companion shouting, 'Ya Ahmed!' and 'Ya Ali!' The animal, assisted by these powerful personages, scrambled safely up.

We resumed our journey in the moonlight, and soon attained the summit of the pass. The descent was scarcely less precipitous than the ascent. About half-way down it we found some Iliyats, who were migrating to Andakou. They had encamped for the night, and had lighted their fires under some oaks, not having been able to pitch their tents on account of the roughness of the ground. We were ravenously hungry, but all that we could obtain from them were some onions and very black bread. Long before dawn they left their resting-place, and we also had to depart. Early in the morning we reached the small plain of Shim-

bor, after passing through a forest of oaks. We stopped at an encampment of Monjezi, a very wild Bakhtiyari tribe. I was obliged, in order to avoid molestation, and to satisfy their curiosity and remove their suspicions, to maintain my character as an envoy of the Matamet, by whom, my guide informed them, I had been sent to report upon certain images and ancient buildings which were said to exist in the neighbourhood. Although originally from this part of the country, this branch of the Bakhtiyari tribe of Haft-Lang had some years before migrated into Mehemet Taki Khan's territories, and had only just returned to Shimbor. The men and women who gathered round me, and of whom I inquired about the site of the sculptures, said that they had frequently heard of them, but there was only one greybeard who had ever seen them, and he was away. However, they knew that there was a ravine in the mountains, behind their encampment, known as the Tangi-Bûtûn [8]—the defile of the idols.

After I had eaten a little bread to satisfy my hunger, I set off on foot to discover the Tang, followed by several men from the encampment. We searched in vain for it in the thick jungle of trees and brushwood which filled the gorge. After scrambling over rocks and huge boulders until

[8] The Lur plural of Bût, an idol.

I was tired, I returned to the tents. A Bakhtiyari, who had arrived during my absence, pretended that he knew where the idols were, and offered to conduct me to them after I had visited some ruins in the neighbourhood, if I would give him a small silver coin. This I agreed to do.

I rode with Aidi across the plain of Shimbor, which is scarcely more than four miles in breadth, and is surrounded on all sides by lofty and precipitous mountains. Its rich alluvial soil shows that it had been the bed of a lake which had at some remote period been drained by a tunnel cut through the rock. This was the ruin which I was taken to see, and of which I had heard so much from the Lurs, who attributed it to one Filomars. It is known as the Puli-Neghin—the bridge of the ring. I could find no sculptures nor inscriptions which might have given me a clue to the authors of this very considerable work. My guides repeated to me a distich in the Bakhtiyari dialect, to the purport that it was made by Filomars 'of the small head,' a general of the infidels, who had one hundred thousand attendants armed with golden-handled daggers.[9]

[9] In the Bakhtiyari dialect:

Ar yekí iporsí aval zédaurún,
Filómars ser kuchir sardár gaurún.
Ar yekí iporsí aval Negíwánd
Sad hezár khanjar telá biróvar íú stand.

I explored as far as I was able this subterraneous passage, cut through the solid rock, but it was blocked up with stones and rubbish. It appeared to be about twenty feet high. I could not obtain any satisfactory information as to its outlet, except that I was assured that it was carried through the mountain.

During our ride to Puli-Neghin, when forcing our way through the brushwood, we disturbed numerous wild boars. They abounded in the plain, as did bears, which were said to attain to a great size. We saw their fresh droppings in many places, but not the animals themselves. They were attracted by the fruit-trees and vines which now

Which may be thus translated:

Should any one ask about (the things) around.
(Answer) Filomars with the small head, the general of the infidels.
Should any one ask about Negiwand.
(Answer) One hundred thousand (men with) golden daggers stood before him.

This distich is sometimes varied thus:

Negín kih beburd daurún be daurún
Filómars ser kuchir sardár gaurún.
Sad hezár khanjar telá birówar ú stad
Be amal neh kih az ráhyesh neyoftád.

Who bored Negin around and around?
Filomars with the small head, the general of the infidels.
One hundred thousand (men with) golden daggers stood before him
Lest he should fall from his path.

grow wild, but are said to have been once cultivated in a great garden occupying the whole of the plain of Shimbor. The Lurs have numerous stories about bears, who, they believe, are endowed with intelligence far superior to that of other animals, and to have almost human habits and feelings. They consequently hold the animal in great respect.

As we rode along, Aidi and our companions entertained me with stories about them. The origin of the bear, they said, was the following. Hazret Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, travelling in disguise and weary, approached a tent to rest. Its owner, who was a sordid wretch, seeing a stranger coming and wishing to shirk the duties of hospitality, hid himself under a heap of wool—for it was the time of sheep shearing—and desired his wife to tell the traveller that her husband had gone to the mountains, and that, being a woman and alone, she could not receive him as her guest. She did as she was bidden, but the Wali of God[1] knew that the man had concealed himself. Addressing him, 'Rise, O bear!' he exclaimed, 'and dwell henceforth in the woods.' The wool adhered to the inhospitable Lur; he lost his speech, fled to the mountains, and became the first bear.

Bears, they related, would sometimes kill a man

[1] This is the title usually given by Shi'as to Ali.

to possess themselves of his arms, which they would conceal until they could give them to a person who had rendered them some service. One of those who accompanied me related as a proof of this, and of the human descent of the bear, the following anecdote. A huntsman who was hunting the 'pawzan' (ibex) high up in the mountains, came unexpectedly upon a number of bears, who were seated in a circle and uttering the most dismal moans and lamentations. Greatly frightened he attempted to run away, but he was pursued and soon captured by an immense bear, who, without seeking to hurt him, led him gently by the arm to the place where the others were assembled. The huntsman, to his surprise, found that the cries of mourning which he had heard were for a female bear lying dead in their midst. They made signs to him to dig a grave for her, and when he had done so he was directed, in the same way, to place her in it and to cover her with earth. When he had accomplished his task one of the mourners disappeared, but soon afterwards returned bearing a gun, the work of the renowned Haji Mustafa, a brace of pistols, a sword, and a complete 'keshkemer.' These arms were then presented to the astonished huntsman as his reward, and he was allowed to depart in peace. He made the best of his way off, admiring the generosity of the bears,

but not sorry to get away safe and sound from them.

The man who had undertaken to find the sculptures of the Tangi-Bûtûn had been as good as his word, and when I returned to the tents he was ready to take me to them. They were high up on the mountain-side, very difficult of access, and so hidden by trees and brushwood that any one not acquainted with their exact site would scarcely have found them. On the scarped rock were twelve figures in high relief, much defaced by time and wilful injury—the heads having been purposely destroyed. A few lines of inscription in the Pehlevi character sufficed to show that they were of the Sassanian period, to which, consequently, the tunnel of the Puli-Neghin may also be attributed. The larger figures were six feet in height, the smaller two feet three inches. The subject represented was apparently a religious procession or ceremony.[2] Near these sculptures I also discovered a small tablet containing one figure.

I returned to the encampment much fatigued and somewhat disappointed with the sculptures, which were far less important and interesting than I had been led to believe them to be by the

[2] These sculptures and the Puli-Neghin are fully described in my memoir on Khuzistan, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. xvi., part 1, p. 83, &c.

exaggerated accounts which I had received from my Bakhtiyari friends. Such disappointments constantly awaited me, as they usually do those who rely upon descriptions of ancient monuments given by ignorant natives. The Bakhtiyari, in whose tents we had been hospitably received, were so poor that they could only offer us bread made of acorns, which I found very unpalatable, but which seemed to be their usual food. I succeeded, however, in buying a sheep for about a shilling, and made a feast, of which all the men in the encampment partook.

We recrossed the Dallan Pass next day amid rain and snow, which made the rocks still more slippery and added to our difficulties and perils. We and our horses were constantly falling, but we accomplished the passage without any serious accident. There was a glorious view from the summit, when the clouds which had surrounded us suddenly drew up like a curtain, and disclosed the great mountain ranges of Zerda-Kuh and Kaïnou, now covered with snow. At the foot of the pass we found the encampment whence an answer had been returned to Aidi when he had asked for bread and water from the mountain-side. It belonged to an old 'rish-sefid' named Sheikh Dervish, who had sent us what we required. His servant had followed us to the top of the pass, but finding that

we had continued our journey beyond it, had returned.

On the following day I got back to the 'diz,' having left Aidi at his tents, and having been rejoined by Saleh. Jaffer Kuli Khan had not returned. His wives—they were nine in number—received me very kindly. They all lived under the same tent and apparently in good fellowship. Among them were some very pretty young women. His head wife, Sattara Khanum, was the daughter of his rival, Kelb Ali Khan. She did the honours, sent me an excellent supper, and gave me an ancient Persian seal, upon which was engraved a king contending with two winged horses beneath the emblematic figure of Ormuzd. It had been dug up, she said, in Andakou, and she looked upon it as a 'telesm,' or charm, which might protect me. The Khan's mother and eldest son were at Isfahan, where they were kept by the Matamet as hostages for his good behaviour.[3]

After passing a pleasant day with these ladies, who did me the honour to say that as I was their

[3] Not long after my return to Baghdad, Jaffer Kuli Khan, who had been unable to satisfy the demands for money made upon him by the Matamet, was declared to be 'yaghi,' or in rebellion to the Shah. Suleiman Khan, who, on the departure of the Matamet for Isfahan, had been left Governor of Khuzistan, made an expedition against the Bakhtiyari chief, who took refuge in his 'diz,' and successfully resisted the attempts of the Persian general to capture him.

brother they had no need to veil their faces before me, I started on my return to Shuster. I slept the first night at the encampment of a Bakhtiyari chief named Au Saffar, who was, however, absent with Jaffer Kuli Khan. His son, Au Ali Mirza, entertained me. The streams were much swollen in consequence of the rains. In fording the Âb-Shûr, a branch of the Karun, on the following day, I was carried away with my horse and narrowly escaped being drowned. I had to stop at some tents to dry my clothes. I there found two horsemen who were on their way to join Jaffer Kuli Khan, and I accompanied them to the village of Gotwand, which I did not reach until an hour after dark, very tired and one of my horses lame.

We crossed the Karun next morning upon a small raft to the plain of Akili, which I had previously visited, and arrived at the village of Istaghi early in the day. I passed the remainder of it in an orange grove, belonging to Mulla Kerim, the 'ket-khudâ.' This fine plain abounds in date and other fruit trees, and is very fertile. It would have been a rich and prosperous district, as its inhabitants are industrious and skilful cultivators, were it not for the exactions of the Persian officials on the one hand, and the constant depredations of the Bakhtiyari on the other.

Both my horses were now so lame from the

stony mountain tracks, that I could scarcely get to my journey's end. When passing the next night in an Arab tent, I met a man from Shuster, who related several anecdotes to me, amongst which was the following version of the story of Midas and his asses' ears. King Shapur had horns, of which he was greatly ashamed. Fearing that his subjects might learn the fact, and that his dignity would be thus compromised, he ordered every barber who shaved his head to be put to death immediately afterwards, so that the secret might not transpire. At length, one who was about to experience this fate succeeded in persuading the king to spare his life, and to employ no one else, so that the secret, which he took a solemn oath not to reveal, might remain with him alone. For three years he kept his oath; but, at last, the secret becoming too heavy a load for him to bear, to release himself from it he went to the mouth of a well and called out, 'O well! know that King Shapur has horns.'

Shortly afterwards a shepherd passing by the well cut a reed growing at its edge to make himself a pipe to pipe to his sheep. The first time he played upon it, instead of music there only came from it the words, 'Shapur has horns! Shapur has horns!' The king soon learnt that his secret had been betrayed, and sent for the barber, who

confessed that although he had divulged it to no one, according to his oath, he had been compelled, in consequence of the intolerable burden of keeping it, to deliver himself of it at the mouth of a well. Shapur accepted his excuse and graciously pardoned him.

Before returning to Shuster I was desirous of visiting some ruins in the neighbourhood of the city, which had been described to Major Rawlinson by the Lurs, and which he believed, from the accounts he had received of their magnitude and importance, to be the remains of one of the great fire temples of ancient Elymaïs. They were known by the Bakhtiyari as the Musjedi-Suleiman Bozurg, or the temple of the great Solomon, and the most marvellous tales were current about them. On arriving at Bolaiti both my horses were so lame that, in order to visit the place, which was at some distance in the hills, I had to hire a mare and to leave Saleh behind. A poor mulla offered to accompany me if I would give him wherewith to buy a pair of shoes. I agreed, and we left the tents together for Baïtawand, a village where we passed the night. The villages on our road thither had been abandoned by their poverty-stricken inhabitants in consequence of the exactions of the Matamet, who had seized their 'ket-khudâs,' and was subjecting them daily to new tortures.

The mulla was well versed in the traditions and legends of the country, and amongst them, those which related to the Musjedi-Suleiman. There Solomon, he told me, had held his court when he went forth to war with Rustem, Ali, and other heroes of antiquity, who were all jumbled together in the good man's brain. And there this mighty king, the wisest of men, sat upon a throne which had been made for him by seventy-two 'divs,'[4] each of whom had a castle of his own, but acknowledged as their chief the 'Div Lang,' who, as his name denotes, was lame. They still watched over the treasures which Solomon had concealed in his palace, and of which the mulla was persuaded I was in search. It was, therefore, with no little misgiving and alarm that he accompanied me to this haunted spot, expressing his regret that he had undertaken to do so. However, as a good Musulman, he believed that Solomon and Hazret Ali would protect him from the evil spirits, whatever my fate might be.

The ruins of which I was in search were on the crest of a low hill overlooking the plain. Again I was disappointed. There was little to justify the exaggerated accounts which Major Rawlinson had received from his informants. The remains con-

[4] Supernatural beings. Our word 'devil' is probably derived from 'div.'

sisted of an artificial platform, reached by a broad flight of steps built of large blocks of stone roughly hewn. Upon this platform could be traced the foundations of a building. But I could find no remains of columns nor other architectural ornaments, nor inscriptions on stone, marble, or brick. A fire temple may once have stood here, but I could find nothing to show that such had been the case.

The mulla had been anxiously watching my movements whilst I was examining the ruins, and was much astonished that I failed to discover the treasure. He was not sorry when I had given up my search and he could leave the place without being molested by the 'divs,' 'jins,' and its other supernatural inhabitants. He could scarcely persuade himself, or the villagers, who questioned him closely as to my proceedings on our return, that I had come away with empty hands after journeying all the way from Feringhistan (Europe) to visit the remains of the Temple of Solomon. The only wonder that he could relate to a curious crowd of listeners was, that I had taken a dry stick which served me as a pen, the ink flowing from it by a miracle—for so he described my pencil. The secret was only, he said, possessed by those who could read the 'Taurat ou Ingil'—the Old and New Testaments.

One of the Bakhtiyari, who was seated with us round the fire in the evening, related the following tale. The Musjedi-Suleiman was the 'Pá Takt'[5] of that great and wise king. There all the monarchs of the earth came to his 'salam,' or audience, except Rustem, who, jealous of the renown of the prophet-king, resolved to try his strength in single combat with him. Accordingly, he mounted his renowned charger, Raksh, and took the road to Solomon's capital. As he drew near to it, he met a beautiful youth riding a milk-white steed. This was Hazret Ali, Amir-el-Mûmenîn, the Commander of the Faithful. But he was disguised, and was not recognised by Rustem, who, addressing him, asked the way to the city. 'I am the cup-bearer of King Solomon,' replied Ali, 'and come from the foot of his throne.' 'And I,' exclaimed the hero, 'am Rustem, and defy your master, whom I will this day deprive of his kingdom.' 'First,' answered the son-in-law of Mahomet, 'contend with me, and if I am vanquished do as you propose!'

Thereupon Rustem seized the youth by his girdle, counting upon an easy victory over such a stripling. But he laboured in vain until evening to throw him, the blood flowing from his eyes, nostrils, and mouth in consequence of the violence

[5] The capital—literally 'foot of the throne.'

of his efforts. As night approached he ceased to wrestle with Ali, who, lifting him from the ground, hurled him so high into the air that he reached the fourth heaven, whence he fell heavily to the earth again. 'If such are the servants of Solomon,' exclaimed Rustem, recovering from the effects of his fall, 'what must the strength of Solomon himself be?' and, returning to his own kingdom, ever afterwards paid tribute to the great king.

There is no spot in Khuzistan to which so many legends attach as to the Musjedi-Suleiman, and it is looked upon by the Lurs as a place of peculiar sanctity. As I had brought away no gold nor silver, my hosts could not explain to themselves my object in visiting the ruins. They could only conjecture that I must belong to the sect of the 'Daoudis,' or worshippers of the Prophet David, whom I have described as living in the mountains near Zohab, and that I had come from afar on a pilgrimage to the palace of his renowned son.

I was only a short day's ride from Shuster, and arrived there, with my lame horses and Saleh, on December 1. During the time that I remained in the city I was the guest of Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan.

I learnt from him what had occurred since I had quitted Khuzistan in the summer. The

Matamet having succeeded in possessing himself of Mehemet Taki Khan's wives and family, through the treachery of a Bakhtiyari chief, had placed Ali Riza Khan at the head of the Chehar Lang, and had received the submission of the greater part of the Bakhtiyari tribes. He had been employed during the summer and part of the autumn in collecting the revenue and raising money from the province. With this object he had imprisoned, bastinadoed, and otherwise tortured many of the principal inhabitants of Shuster who were supposed to have property, and had reduced them to penury. The houses and the bazars had been sacked by the Persian soldiers, who were allowed to do so with impunity, as they were clamouring for their pay, of which they were many months in arrear. Officers, with bodies of irregular horsemen, had been sent to collect the taxes from the villages, which they did by cruelly ill-treating the inhabitants and devastating the country. The result had been that the population had for the most part taken refuge with the Arabs, or had fled to the mountains, and a region naturally of great richness and fertility had been almost reduced to a wilderness. It was thus that Persia was governed.

The Matamet had resolved to punish Sheikh Thamer for the protection he had afforded to

Mehemet Taki Khan, and for the resistance that he had offered to the advance of the Persian troops to Fellahiyah. As soon as the summer heat was over he proclaimed the Cha'b chief a rebel to the Shah, and marched against him.

Some of the principal Arab tribes previously under the sheikh's authority had been detached from their allegiance to him by the intrigues of the Matamet, and as Mehemet Taki Khan, his former friend and ally, had fallen, he could no longer look to the Bakhtiyari for assistance. Not being able, therefore, to resist the large force which the Matamet could now bring against him, he had embarked all his property and his three mounted guns on board his 'buglas,'[6] and had sought refuge with his family in Turkish territory to the west of the Shat-el-Arab.

The Matamet had already taken possession of Muhammera, and had demanded from the Governor of Basra the surrender of Sheikh Thamer. This demand having been refused, he threatened to attack that town. It was expected, therefore, that war would break out between Turkey and Persia, as the former Power claimed Muhammera and lands on the bank of the Euphrates which the Matamet had already occupied.

[6] Sailing-vessels used for the navigation of the Shat-el-Arab and the Persian Gulf.

The Persian army had left Shuster for Muhammera and the Cha'b country, and the city, which had been crowded with soldiers and camp-followers on my previous visit, appeared to be now deserted. The inhabitants had not yet recovered from their dread of the Matamet. The bazars were still partly closed, and the villagers feared to bring the produce of their fields to the market.

Mehemet Taki Khan was confined in a small dark room in the castle, in the custody of Mirza Sultan Mohammed Khan, a seyyid, and one of the notables of Shuster. Although I was informed that the Matamet had given orders that if I were still in the province of Khuzistan I was to be arrested, I did not believe that any of the Persian authorities at Shuster would venture to put them into execution, or to interfere with me, as the English mission had returned to Tehran and friendly relations had been re-established between England and Persia. I went about unconcerned and was not molested. Through the help of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan, who enjoyed great influence on account of his sacred character as the head of the seyyids of Shuster, and who had always shown himself very friendly to me, I succeeded in seeing the Bakhtiyari chief immediately after my arrival. He was chained, and the iron fetters which bound his hands and feet were at-

tached to a heavy iron collar fastened round his neck. I was deeply moved at finding him in this miserable condition. He was, however, in good health, having recovered from the fever which he had contracted in the marshes of Fellahiyah. He received me with his usual pleasant smile, and in reply to my expressions of compassion and sympathy showed that spirit of patience and resignation which distinguish the good Musulman. 'Ya sahib!' he said, 'God is great, and we, His creatures, must humbly submit to His decrees. Yesterday I was great; to-day I am fallen. It was His will, and I must submit to my fate.'

He then inquired whether I had seen his wife Khatun-jan, and Hussein Kuli his son. I told him that, having only just arrived in Shuster, I had not yet done so. He begged me to find them out, as they were in the city, and gave me some messages for them. He then whispered to me that he knew that on my first arrival at Kala Tul I had placed some money in his wife's hands to be taken care of for me, and that, in consequence of their flight and subsequent events, it had not been returned to me. He had been reduced, he said, to poverty by the Matamet, who had plundered him of all his property and had confiscated his lands; but he had formerly deposited some objects of value with an honest seyyid of Shuster, who

had faithfully kept them for him. As Khatun-jan could not, therefore, give me back the money she had taken charge of, he wished me to accept in lieu of it a Cashmere shawl, which the seyyid would let me have on the production of a written order which he handed to me.

I was much touched by his words. I tore up the paper and entreated him to think no more of the matter. He then told me that I would have no difficulty in seeing Hussein Kuli—Au Mohammed Zemaun, to whose care the Matamet had confided him, being a good man, who had treated the boy with kindness, and had even allowed him to visit his father and mother. I promised to find Hussein Kuli at once.

The chief related to me all that had occurred since he had been treacherously made prisoner by the Matamet. When the night attack which I have described was made by the Bakhtiyari and the Cha'b Arabs upon the Persian camp, he had nearly been rescued, like his brother, Au Kerim. They had almost penetrated to the tent in which he was confined when he was removed to that of the Matamet, who threatened to put him to death if the attack was likely to prove successful.

What appeared chiefly to distress the Bakhtiyari chief was the lamentable condition to which his tribes, and the inhabitants of Khuzistan, had

been reduced by the Matamet's invasion and by the oppression to which they were exposed. All his attempts to improve the country, to develop its resources, to settle the tribes, and to introduce good government, had thus, he said, been brought to naught. As for himself, all he feared was that he should be deprived of his sight, a fate worse than death. He did not believe that, after having once been taken to Tehran, he would ever be allowed to return to his native mountains, as the Shah was jealous of the influence which he had acquired among the Bakhtiyari tribes, and would never again permit him to exercise authority over them. But he would reconcile himself to a hopeless captivity if he were permitted to live with his family and his son, Hussein Kuli, and if his eyes were spared. The loss of sight was what he most dreaded, as he knew too well that this cruel and barbarous punishment was then generally inflicted upon those chiefs who, having been declared in rebellion, had fallen into the hands of the Shah.

I had no difficulty in discovering Khatun-jan Khanum and the rest of the chief's family. They were living in a state of the utmost misery, in a corner of a large house which had once belonged to one of the principal families of Shuster, but had been abandoned and was in ruins. They had lost

everything and were clothed almost in rags. As far as they were able they wore mourning for Au Kerim, who had been so cruelly murdered, and for Au Khan Baba, his brother, who, I learnt, had succumbed to his fatal disease under the privations to which they had been exposed after their departure from Fellahiyah. They still passed the greater part of the day in wailing over the deaths of the two young chiefs.

The women and children were huddled up together for warmth—for we were now in midwinter, and they were without fire—in a large 'iwan,' or hall, entirely open on one side to the air. Several of them were ill of fever and dysentery. They were all so pale and emaciated that I scarcely recognised them. Khatun-jan Khanum was overcome with grief, and could scarcely speak to me for sobbing, but expressed her delight at seeing me again, as she had heard that I had perished in attempting to escape after the capture of Au Kerim. No beauty remained to her sister, Khanumi, whom I had known so beautiful at Kala Tul. Fatimeh Sultan, the lovely Circassian wife of Ali Naghi Khan, had suffered less than her companions. I missed several of the ladies, and amongst them the mother of Khatun-jan, from whom I had received tender care and kindness. When I inquired about them I was

answered by the low wail, broken by repeated cries of 'Waï! waï!' which signified that they were no more.

After some composure had been restored in this group of unhappy and suffering women, who had done nothing but lament and sob since I had entered, I was able to deliver Mehemet Taki Khan's message to his wife, and to have some conversation with her. She related to me what had occurred since the day when I had left her to accompany Au Kerim on his mission to the Il-Khani. The fugitives in endeavouring to reach the mountains had been attacked by horsemen of the Kuhghelu tribe, whom they repulsed, but not without loss, Shefi'a Khan being among the killed. Ali Naghi Khan then left them, accompanied by some attendants, with the intention of appealing to Khalyl Khan to receive and protect the women. He learnt before reaching this chief's castle the treachery of which he had been guilty in delivering Au Kerim into the hands of his enemy, to be put to death. He then turned back to rejoin the women. They had, in the meanwhile, endeavoured to reach a hill fort belonging to a former dependent of Mehemet Taki Khan, but on their way were attacked by a hostile tribe, who robbed them of their ornaments, and of even the greater part of their clothes, took from them their horses, and

compelled them to retrace their steps on foot towards the low country.

They were joined soon after by Ali Naghi Khan, who, as they did not arrive at the Diz where he expected to find them, feared that some misfortune had befallen them, and had gone in search of them. He discovered them in a state of complete exhaustion, as they had been wandering in the mountains almost without food. He then proceeded to the tents of Abd'ullah Khan, the chief of the Boheramedi, a tribe which had received many benefits from Mehemet Taki Khan, and asked him to receive the family of his former chief. This man consented, but in violation of all the laws of hospitality, and with an ingratitude rare even amongst the most barbarous tribes, instead of protecting these helpless women, who placed themselves confidingly in his power, made them prisoners, and informed the Matamet that he was ready to deliver them over to him.

The Matamet sent one Jaffer Ali Khan and a small force of regular troops to bring them to Shuster. After suffering many privations on the road, and having been treated with great indignity, they at length reached the city—the men and most of the women having been compelled to walk the whole way. Several of the ladies had died on the road—amongst them Khatun-jan's mother. On

their arrival at Shuster they were placed in the house where I found them, and had been for some time under a guard, which had now, however, been withdrawn, and they were left to themselves. For their food—scarcely sufficient for their maintenance—they were dependent upon the charity of some Shusteris who had experienced the bounty of Mehemet Taki Khan in the days of his prosperity.

It was reported that Ali Naghi Khan, with a few followers, having escaped from Abd'ullah Khan, had subsequently attacked, by night, this chief who had so treacherously betrayed their wives and children, and had killed him and several of his relations. This just retribution afforded some consolation to Khatun-jan and the other ladies. Revenge is a delight as well as a duty with all semi-barbarous Eastern tribes, and blood for blood is a maxim inculcated in the child from its earliest age. Riza Kuli, Mehemet Taki Khan's youngest son, who was at his mother's breast when I was at Kala Tul,[7] had already been taught to lisp, 'Give me a sword, that I may cut off the Matamet's head, and bring back my father!'

Ali Naghi Khan had since taken refuge with Mirza Koma. That chief had been more fortunate than Mehemet Taki Khan. Mansur Khan, his

[7] Bakhtiyari mothers suckle their children until they are two or two and a half years old, and sometimes even longer.

rival, had scarcely possessed himself of Behbahan, as I have described, when a fatal epidemic appeared amongst his troops and followers. A large number of them succumbed to it, and among them two of his sons. He himself was attacked by the disease, and on his death-bed wrote to the Mirza attributing his fate to his impiety in persecuting a descendant of the Prophet, and asking the seyyid's intercession for the pardon of his sin. Mirza Koma had returned to his capital, which had been abandoned by the Persian regular troops, and had again become the chief of the district of Behbahan and of the Kuhghelu tribes. He had promised to protect Ali Naghi Khan until he could appeal to the Shah for justice against the cruel treatment to which his brother and his family had been subjected by the Matamet.

After I had spent some time with Khatun-jan Khanum and the other Bakhtiyari ladies, I went in search of Hussein Kuli, who, although in strict confinement, was kindly treated by the Shusteri notable in whose custody he had been placed. The brave boy was overjoyed at seeing me, and was eager to learn what had happened to me since we had parted. I was obliged to relate to him all my adventures since that time.

I spent some hours daily with Khatun-jan Khanum and her companions in misfortune, who

treated me as if I were one of Mehemet Taki Khan's family. I learnt much from them relating to female life and customs among Shi'a Musulmans. Their affectionate gratitude to me in return for my sympathy, which was all I could give them, was most affecting. I found in these poor sufferers qualities and sentiments which would have ennobled Christian women in a civilised country.

During my residence at Shuster, as on previous occasions, I was the constant guest of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan. I frequently dined with him, a tray, however, being always set apart for me, as, although not a fanatic, he would not dip his hands into the same dish with a Christian. I had no wish to resent as an indignity this mark of inferiority or of contempt for my religion, for it saved me from eating food touched by many dirty fingers. His house overlooked the Ab Gargar near the great bend, or artificial dam of stone, built across it. Upon this bend the women of Shuster were in the habit of washing themselves and their clothes, of which they divested themselves without scruple. Such a practice is, I believe, rare, if not almost unknown, among Musulman women, except it be among the wildest and most degraded Arab tribes, who are more like the buffaloes they tend than human beings.[8]

[8] I have mentioned the same practice among the women in the

Notwithstanding the circumstances in which I found myself during my visit to Shuster, I spent many pleasant days there, and received from some of its principal inhabitants much kindness, which was the more remarkable as they were almost without exception seyyids, very strict in their religious observances, and having the reputation of being exceedingly fanatical and unfriendly to Christians. They were always ready to afford me information, especially as to the produce and resources of the country. They listened with interest to my schemes for establishing commercial relations between Khuzistan and Europe and India, leading me to hope that if an attempt were made to promote trade, they would encourage it, and would afford protection to any English merchant who might be disposed to come himself, or send an agent, to Shuster. Several of these notables possessed lands in the neighbourhood of the city, from which, however, owing to the want of proper cultivation, the disordered state of the country and its shameful misgovernment, they derived but little profit. It was not difficult to make them understand that intercourse with Europe, where there were markets to which the produce of their estates could be sent, would greatly serve their interests, and would

marshes formed by the Kerkhah, inhabited by Arab buffalo-keepers. See *ante*, p. 161.

contribute indirectly to diminish, and perhaps ultimately to suppress entirely, the system of oppression and extortion which was practised by the Persian authorities, who would gradually be brought under the influence of European public opinion, and would not venture to ill-treat, as they had hitherto done, the inhabitants of the province. These were the subjects which formed the staple of our conversation. As the chiefs of neighbouring villages and tribes, and people from various parts of the province, were almost always to be found in the 'musif' of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan, I hoped that these views would spread, and that they would lead, in the course of time, to an opening for English trade in the rich and fertile regions watered by the Karun, in which cotton, indigo, opium, and many other valuable articles of commerce could be produced.

At the same time I obtained information as to the various modes of cultivation, as to prices, and as to the means and cost of carriage. This information I was able to furnish on my return to Baghdad to English merchants established there who were disposed to avail themselves of it.[9]

[9] I had already, when at Karak in December, 1840, sent a report on the subject to a friend at Bombay, to be submitted to the Chamber of Commerce in that city (*see* Appendix). The rich and fertile province of Khuzistan, with its navigable rivers, is still reduced through oppression and misgovernment to the condition of

The time having come for me to return to Baghdad, I took leave, with a heavy heart, of Mehemet Taki Khan and of Khatun-jan Khanum, for both of whom I entertained real affection. I had received from them during their prosperity a kindness and hospitality which, as a European and a Christian, I could not have expected in a tribe reputed one of the most fanatical, savage, and cruel in Asia. I had shared with them their dangers and their privations. I could not forget that even in moments of the greatest peril and of the greatest suffering, almost their first thought was for the safety of me—a stranger. I believed that we should never meet again. That thought, and the uncertainty of the fate which awaited them from those who delighted in cruelty and were at that time ingenious beyond most other Easterns in inventing new tortures, weighed upon me. When I left the wretched abode of the women and children, they set up their melancholy wail, beating their breasts and crying, 'Ah, sahib! we shall never see you more. Waï! waï!'[1]

a desert. Although attempts have, I believe, been made since my residence in it to navigate the Karun for commercial purposes, the province is still closed to trade through the jealousy of the Persian Government and its opposition to foreign enterprise.

[1] My readers may be interested in learning what became of Mehemet Taki Khan and his family after I saw them for the last time some time afterwards at Shuster. Desirous of ascertaining their fate I wrote, when in 1882 I was looking through these notes

of my wanderings in the East, to Mr. Ronald Thomson, her Majesty's Minister at Tehran, requesting him to make inquiries for me on the subject. This he very kindly did, and forwarded to me the following memorandum translated from the Persian original.

'In the year 1258 A.H. (A.D. 1841) during Mahomed Shah's reign, when Manucher Khan, the Moatimed-ud-Dowleh, was governor of Persian Arabia, Luristan and Isfahan, he was ordered by the Persian Government to seize Mahomed Tekkee (Mehemet Taki Khan) Bakhtiyari, chief of the Chehar Lang, who was very powerful and hostile to the Shah, and to send him in chains to Tehran. The Moatimed-ud-Dowleh accordingly set out with his troops towards Persian Arabia. Mahomed Tekkee Khan also came out to meet him with a large body of horse, and they met at the fort of Tel (Kala Tul),[1] which had been built by the khan. The khan gave a good reception to the Moatimed, and put Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan, his brother, and Shafee Khan, his vizir, in attendance on the Moatimed. As the latter was going to Shuster, it was arranged that Mahomed Tekkee Khan should join him there after ten days. The Moatimed then started for Shuster from the Fort of Tel (Kala Tul), Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan and Shafee Khan accompanying him. Two months passed away, and Mahomed Tekkee Khan not making his appearance at Shuster, Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan and Shafee Khan left the Moatimed on the plea of going and bringing him, but when they got to the Fort of Tel (Kala-Tul) they also refused to return. Upon this, the Moatimed took about fifteen thousand men and advanced upon the Fort of Tel (Kala-Tul), with the intention of seizing the refractory khan with his brother and vizir. On his approach Mahomed Tekkee Khan fled with all his tribe, family, and treasure to Ram Hormuz and Maukoh-i-Bahmanee, which is a district of Persian Arabia; but the Moatimed followed in his wake, and ultimately ten thousand of his tribe, who had fled with him, came in by degrees to the Moatimed. Mahomed Tekkee, on seeing this, went to Falaheeyah in the Chaab country, and sought refuge for himself and family with Sheikh Thamir Khan, Arab, Governor of Chaab and Falaheeyah. The Moatimed-ud-Dowleh followed him thither, and, pitching his camp near Falaheeyah, called upon the sheikh to give up Mahomed

[1] This is not quite correct. They met in the plain of Mal-Emir as described in my narrative.

Tekkee Khan. The sheikh despatched Sheikh Saad of Bahrain to intercede with the Moatimed for the khan, and it was finally arranged that Mahomed Tekkee Khan's family were to be sent to Shuster, and Suleiman Khan, the Seham-ud-Dowleh, father of the present Jehangeer Khan, was sent to Sheikh Thamir Khan to convey Mahomed Tekkee Khan to the Moatimed-ud-Dowleh. On the khan's arrival the Moatimed-ud-Dowleh confided him to Mirza Mahomed Khan Kalbâdee to keep him in his custody. Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan and Shafee Khan, however, remained with Sheikh Thamir Khan, and set about rescuing Mahomed Tekkee Khan by arranging to make an attack by night. They apprised the khan of their intention, but the Moatimed-ud-Dowleh also hearing of their intention, he ordered the close confinement of the khan. On the night fixed upon, the Moatimed's camp was attacked, but without any result, and Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan and his vizir fled back to Sheikh Thamir Khan. The Moatimed-ud-Dowleh then insisted upon their being surrendered to him. The sheikh, however, kept on promising to give them up, until one night he secretly sent them out of his tribe. The Moatimed-ud-Dowleh on learning of their departure despatched people to overtake them. On these coming up a fight took place between them and Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan's horsemen, in which Shafee Khan and several others were killed. Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan then took to flight and sought refuge with Ferhad Mirza, who was then the governor of Shiraz. The Moatimed-ud-Dowleh then put Mahomed Tekkee Khan in chains and sent him to Tehran, in charge of Mirza Mahomed Khan Kalbadee, ordering his family and adherents, who were kept at Shuster, to be also taken to the capital, where they arrived before Mahomed Tekkee Khan, and took sanctuary in the park of artillery.[2] When the khan arrived at Tehran, as the Shah was in the country, he was taken in chains to Niaveran, where he was kept under custody by Hajee Ali Khan, the Hajib-ud-Dowleh, and twenty-seven kerans (about twenty-seven shillings) were daily paid for the food of himself and his family. On the intercession of Habeebullah Khan Shahsevan, the Ameer of the Top Khaneh[3] at that

---

[2] By an ancient custom in Persia, criminals and persons fearing persecution by the government could take refuge in the park of artillery, which, like a mosque, afforded them sanctuary and protection from arrest.

[3] *I.e.* Commander-in-chief of the artillery.

period, the late Mahomed Shah gave up the intention of putting the khan (Mahomed Tekkee Khan) to death, and he was made over with his family to Habeebullah Khan. Two months after Habeebullah Khan died, and Mahomed Tekkee Khan was again put in chains and taken to the Top Khaneh, where he remained during the last five years of Mahomed Shah's reign.

'On the accession of Nasreddin Shah to the throne, the local authorities of Isfahan complained to the Ameer-i-Nizam (commander-in-chief) that as long as Mahomed Tekkee Khan was at Tehran, no order could be maintained in Persian Arabia or amongst the Bakhtiyari tribes. The Ameer ordered him to be taken and confined at Ardebil; some of the ministers interceded that he should not be taken there, and he and Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan, his brother, were therefore conveyed to Tabreez under a strong escort, where they were kept in chains for two years. After this they were brought to Tehran. and Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan was liberated to look after his brother's family, and Mahomed Tekkee Khan shortly after died in the Top Khaneh in 1267 (1851). After the death of Mahomed Tekkee Khan, his brother, Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan, with his (Mahomed Tekkee Khan's) two sons, Hussein Kuli Khan and Mehdi Kuli Khan, and Khatun-jan Khanum, wife of the deceased khan, together with Fatimeh Sultan Khan, the wife of Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan, were kept as hostages at Tehran, and the rest of the family, consisting of about sixty persons, were allowed to return to their Bakhtiyari hills. Four years after Hussein Kuli Khan, the eldest son of Mahomed Tekkee Khan,[4] died at Tehran, and his wife, who was the daughter of Khan Baba Khan,[5] followed him without leaving any issue. Ali Kuli (Naghi) Khan died four years ago, in 1295 (1879), his wife dying before him. Mehdi Kuli Khan (Mahomed Tekkee Khan's second son) is alive and lives at Tehran.

'The survivors of Mahomed Tekkee Khan are his wife Khatun-jan Khanum, who is now seventy years of age, and who is living at Feridan,[6] near Isfahan, and two daughters and one son. . . . The other brothers of Mahomed Tekkee Khan, such as Khan Baba Khan, Auslan Khan, Kerim Khan, and Mahomed Ali Khan, are all

---

[4] The memorandum says of Ali Kuli Khan, which is evidently a mistake.
[5] And consequently his cousin.
[6] A district to the north-west of Isfahan.

dead. Their descendants, who are about sixty in number, are in the Bakhtiyari country.

'When Mahomed Tekkee Khan died, Ali Reza Khan, Ali Mahomed Khan, Ali Murad Khan, and Ali Hemmel Khan, who were four brothers, became the chiefs of the Chehar Lang tribe; but Ali Reza Khan was the first chief, and since his death, in 1295, his son, Mirza Aga Jan, rules.

'During the time that Mahomed Tekkee Khan governed the Chehar Lang tribe, Assad Khan ruled the Haft Lang.[7] These chiefs had no personal connection with each other. On the death of Assad Khan he was succeeded by his son, Jaafer Kuli Khan,[8] but he, through his intrigues and hostile disposition, was unable to remain amongst the tribes, and at last took to flight. Kelb-Ali Khan and Abdal Khan then became the chiefs, when the present Hussein Kuli Khan, son of Jaafer Kuli Khan,[9] in league with his own brothers, invited Kelb-Ali Khan and Abdal Khan with their party to a dinner, and during the repast fell upon and murdered every one of them. It is now thirty years that Hussein Kuli Khan (the son of Jaafer Kuli Khan) is the absolute Eelkhanee[1] of the Bakhtiyari.'

A note states that this Hussein Kuli Khan was put to death on Sunday, June 11, 1882, by the Shah's son, Zil-i-Sultan, the Governor of Isfahan and of the southern provinces of Persia, who had, no doubt, seized him treacherously.

This memorandum, which has been derived, I presume, from an official source, corresponds generally, as it will be seen, with the account that I have given of the capture and imprisonment of Mehemet Taki Khan, although incomplete and inaccurate in some details. It endeavours to put the most favourable construction upon the conduct of the Persian Government, but it proves that Mehemet Taki Khan was justified in his suspicions as to the object of the Matamet's entry into the Bakhtiyari country, and that the crafty eunuch carried out with his usual unscrupulous duplicity the instructions of his government to seize the Bakhtiyari chief.

---

[7] It will be remembered that the great tribe of Bakhtiyari was divided into two branches, the Chehar Lang and the Haft Lang.

[8] The chief whom I visited at his Diz, or hill-fort.

[9] And consequently not to be confounded with his namesake, the son of Mehemet Taki Khan.

[1] *I.e.* chief of the nomads.

CHAPTER XVII.

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan—Arrive at Dizful—State of the town—The guardian of the tomb of Daniel—The tomb—The black stone—Legends about Daniel—The ruins of Susa—Return to Dizful—Join Faili horsemen—A country house—Cross the Kerkhah—Scene at a Lur encampment—A Lur family—A quarrel—A narrow escape—Sheikh Daûd—Lur hospitality—Arrival at the Wali's tents—Ahmed Khan—The 'tushmals'—The Ali-Ilahis—The Wali—His suspicions—The chief of the Sagwand—The murder of Grant and Fotheringham—Second interview with the Wali—A messenger in search of me—Birth of the Wali's son—Lur mournings—Lur graves—Detected by an Arab—My life in danger—Saleh's misconduct—Reach Turkish territory—And Baghdad—Incident on the way.

As Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was anxious to visit Kerbela and the shrines of the Imaums at Kasimain, he proposed to accompany me on my journey to Baghdad. I readily accepted his offer. In the dangerous country through which I had to pass, inhabited by tribes of Arabs and Lurs, equally fanatical and suspicious of a stranger, and especially of a European, the presence of a seyyid as my companion might be of no little advantage to me. The green turban is more regarded amongst these wild people than it is in places where it is

more commonly seen, and where it is not unfrequently worn by persons who have no right to it. A descendant of the Prophet is almost invariably treated by them with respect and consideration.

I was desirous to visit on the way the so-called tomb of Daniel, on the site of the ancient city of Susa, still called Shoush, near Dizful, where a celebrated black stone, covered with inscriptions, supposed to be in the cuneiform character, at one time existed. I was the more anxious to examine the ruins on this spot, which had not been previously fully described, as I had convinced myself that there were no grounds for the supposition of Major Rawlinson that the remains which I had examined in the Bakhtiyari Mountains were those of Susa, or Shushan the palace. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan agreed to accompany me to Dizful, and to wait there for me whilst I rode to the tomb of Daniel. On my return we were to continue together our journey to Baghdad.

Leaving Shuster early in the morning, and loitering on our way, we did not reach Dizful until late at night. We were accompanied by two Arab horsemen, who had joined us on the road. Neither they nor Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan knew their way about the town, which is one of some size, with a population at that time of about fifteen

thousand inhabitants. It was dark when we passed through the gate and found ourselves in the deserted streets. Not a human being was to be seen nor heard. As at Shuster, there were constant feuds between the principal families, who occupied different quarters of the town. Blood was constantly shed in street brawls, and few people ventured out after nightfall. Such a thing as a public lamp was unknown. We had to find our way through narrow and tortuous lanes to the 'musif' of Mustafa Kuli Khan, then one of the five principal chiefs of the city, who was known to Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, and had the reputation of being a hospitable man, and one of high character. But how were we to discover it, with no one to guide us in the darkness?

Whilst we were hesitating, one of the Arabs remembered that the mare he was riding had been with him two years before, when he had passed several days in Mustafa Kuli Khan's house. He was convinced that she would find it again, and giving the animal her halter,[1] went before us. She picked her way carefully, stopping every now and then as if to consider the turning she should take, when at length, after traversing more than half the town, she stopped before an archway closed by a

[1] The nomad Arabs do not use bridles, and manage their horses with the halter.

massive door. Her rider at once recognised it as that of Mustafa Kuli Khan's house.

We knocked loudly, but it was some time before we could arouse the inmates, who were asleep, and when awakened were not disposed to admit us until they had satisfied themselves that we were neither enemies nor thieves. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan received a warm welcome from the khan, and we were conducted to the spacious iwan which served as the 'musif' for guests. The house, like those of the notables of Shuster, was large, well-built, and handsomely decorated with carved wood and stone and painted ornaments, but in a ruinous condition.

I spent two or three days in Mustafa Kuli Khan's 'musif,' to see the town and to be introduced to some of its principal inhabitants. As at Shuster, the leading families were seyyids, and the population under their rule were fanatical and very punctual in the observance, outwardly at least, of all the ceremonies and duties of their religion. As in Shuster, too, these families occupied different quarters of the town, and were constantly engaged in party quarrels, besieging each other in their houses and killing each other in the streets. Shortly before my visit Mohammed Ali Khan, who was the most powerful of the Dizful chiefs, had been murdered in a public bath.

These frequent feuds, added to the plague, cholera, and misgovernment, had greatly reduced the population, and had left a considerable part of the town in ruins; but, unlike Shuster, Dizful appeared to be reviving at the time of my visit, and had become the principal market in Khuzistan and the capital of the province. But it is less advantageously situated for commerce than Shuster. The river upon which it stands, and which is crossed by a fine bridge of twenty arches, is not navigable for some distance below the town, and the lands around it are not so fertile nor so well suited to cultivation as those in the vicinity of that city.

Shuster and Dizful, though some thirty miles apart, were generally spoken of in Persia as if together, and forming but one city. Although the former is the ancient capital of the province, the latter was then the seat of the Persian governor and the more prosperous of the two, but Shuster possessed handsomer and better built houses. Dizful, however, appears to have been an important city in the time of the Sassanian kings; but I could find no remains of that period, unless the substructure of the bridge may belong to it. Both places, as well as the surrounding districts, suffered terribly—were indeed almost depopulated—by the plague and cholera, which followed each other a few years before. The inhabitants of Dizful,

although, like those of her neighbour, under the care and supervision of seyyids and other holy men, were not celebrated for their morals, the women bearing but a very indifferent reputation.

I chanced to meet in Mustafa Kuli Khan's musif, the day after my arrival at Dizful, Abd'ul Nebi, the dervish who had the custody of the so-called tomb of Daniel, which I intended to visit. He had left it on account of the Beni Lam Arabs, who were ravaging the country in the neighbourhood, and had even appeared at the tomb itself. With the help of Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan I prevailed upon him to return with me and to act as my guide; but he would only do so on condition that I put on an Arab dress to avoid observation, that I went with him alone, and that if anything happened to me he was not to be held responsible. I willingly subscribed to these conditions, and, making up my mind to be robbed of the little I took with me, I left Dizful with him. The seyyid and Saleh were to await my return.

The dervish and I slept the first night at Kala Nasr, a small village belonging to the shrine of Daniel, enclosed by a mud wall. Its chief, Kaid Azeez, entertained me hospitably, but endeavoured to dissuade me from visiting the tomb, as for several days past parties of Beni Lam Arabs had been seen on the plain, and I should certainly

fall into their hands and be robbed, if something worse did not befall me. As he found that his warnings were of no avail, he offered to accompany me. He and the dervish, he said, were known to and respected by the Arabs as the guardians of the tomb, and under their protection, although I might be stripped to the skin, my life would be safe.

We left Kala Nasr at daybreak. The plain beyond had been abandoned by its inhabitants on account of the depredations of the Beni Lam, and we saw no one during our ride. The vast mound which marks the site of the ancient city of Susa, the capital of Susiana and Elymaïs, was visible in the distance, and as we drew near it appeared to me to be little inferior in size to the Mujelibi, the principal ruin of Babylon. We rode first to the tomb—the principal object of my visit. I found it to be a building of comparatively modern date, resembling the Imaum-Zadehs, or tombs and shrines of Musulman saints, constantly met with in Khuzistan, surmounted by a high conical dome of irregular brickwork — somewhat resembling in shape a pine-cone. I entered through a gate into a court, in which pilgrims find a resting-place for the night, safe from wild beasts and Arab thieves. A dark inner chamber, opening upon an outer room, contained the so-called tomb—a square case

of plaster which might be supposed either to cover a grave or to enclose a coffin. Above it were suspended some ostrich eggs, and lamps which should have been kept constantly burning, but which, in consequence of the absence of Dervish Abd'ul-Nebi, had remained for some time unlighted. It was evident by the offensive odour that jackals had taken up their abode in the chamber whilst he was away. The tomb was surrounded by a wooden trellis, to which were suspended a few tablets, also of wood, with invocations to the Deity and texts from the Koran written upon them. In the outer chamber I observed one or two small capitals of columns in marble, and in the courtyard a larger one of the same material, with a kind of lotus-leaf ornament, one foot ten inches in height. They were of the early Persian or Persepolitan period. Beneath the chambers containing the tomb was a vault filled with rubbish. The building, surrounded by a few konar trees and palms, stands on the bank of a small sluggish stream, called by the Arabs the Shaour, which rises in the plain not far from the ruins. I found the remains of a flight of steps, built of large dressed stones, leading down to the water's edge. Amongst them was a slab, with a bas-relief, which has been described as a man between two lions, and has been converted by a

lively imagination into Daniel in the lions' den. It was partly concealed, and I could only distinguish the legs of a man.[2] As the visits of Europeans to the spot had given rise to great suspicion and jealousy among the Arabs, I thought it prudent not to endeavour to move the stone in order to examine the sculpture. The dervish assured me that it represented not one but two human figures, as well as two lions. On the fragment of a second slab I detected a few cuneiform characters, almost obliterated, and near these remains I found part of the shaft of a marble column and two capitals similar to those in the court.

There had formerly been preserved within the tomb a black stone, or slab, said to have been covered with mystical signs and human figures. It had been described by Macdonald Kinneir and Sir Gore Ouseley, but at the time of Sir Henry Rawlinson's visit to Shush it had disappeared. It was reported that it had been destroyed with gunpowder by a European disguised as a seyyid. But the dervish informed me that it had been broken into pieces by two Arabs, who used naphtha for the purpose—he could not explain how—as they believed that it contained gold. He himself had

[2] This slab was subsequently uncovered by Colonel (afterwards Sir Fenwick) Williams, and a drawing is given of it in Mr. Loftus's account of the excavations at Susa. *Travels and Researches in Chaldea and Susiana*, p. 145.

buried the fragments, he said, within the precincts of the tomb.

This black stone was believed by the Arabs to be a telesm, or talisman, upon which the prosperity of Khuzistan and its inhabitants depended. They attributed to its destruction all the misfortunes which had since befallen them—the plague, the cholera, bad harvests, the bursting of dams, the breaking down of bridges, war, and other calamities. They were convinced that the men who destroyed the black stone were Europeans in disguise, and that their object in doing so was to bring those evils upon the Musulmans. The bitterest feeling consequently existed against the Feringhi in general. It was on this account that at this time there was so much danger in a visit to the tomb of Daniel, and that I was unwilling to cause suspicion by inquiring too minutely after the 'black stone,' or by showing too much curiosity with respect to other remains on the spot.

The dervish told me that some years before, when the rains had washed away the soil near the tomb, some coffins had been uncovered containing human bodies, which on being exposed to the air had crumbled to dust, and vases, arms, and armour.

It is needless to say that there is absolutely nothing to connect the building on the banks

of the Shaour with the tomb of Daniel, except that it is on or near the ruins of the ancient city of Susa, and that there exists a Musulman tradition which points to the spot as the grave of the prophet. It is not improbable that the tomb is that of some Mohammedan saint, who, in the course of time, has been confounded with 'Nebbi Daniel.' There cannot be any doubt, however, that the great mound and the remains which surround it, and which still retain the name of Shush or Sus, and even Sûsan, occupy the site of the ancient capital of Susiana; and, consequently, it may be presumed, of Shushan the palace, of the Book of Daniel.

The dervish, of course, entertained no doubt as to the tomb being that of the prophet, who is held in as much veneration by Musulmans as by Jews and Christians. He related to me various legends and stories current amongst the Arabs which, according to him, explained the reason why Daniel was buried here. The prophet, he said, originally dwelt in Egypt, where he had acquired great renown for his sanctity and for the miracles he performed—his reputation extending throughout the whole world. Khuzistan having been visited by a terrible pestilence, its king sent a messenger to invite Daniel to come and deliver his people from it. Pharaoh declined to allow him to

leave Egypt unless hostages were given for his return. Twenty of the great nobles of Khuzistan were accordingly sent to that country, and the prophet was then permitted to depart. His presence alone was sufficient to stay the plague, and it conferred so many benefits and so much prosperity upon the kingdom, that the king resolved to retain him and to sacrifice the hostages. Daniel, therefore, lived and died in Susa, and was buried where his tomb was now venerated; but before dying he himself traced the mystic characters on the black stone, which, as long as it was preserved, was to protect the inhabitants of Khuzistan against all misfortunes. It was only after its destruction that the plague and the cholera had appeared in the province.

The dervish further related to me how the Egyptians after Daniel's death wished to obtain his body, and how the inhabitants of Susa, the more effectually to conceal it, diverted for a time the course of the Shaour, in order to bury the coffin in its bed. When the Egyptians afterwards sought for the remains of the prophet and could not find them, they attributed their disappearance to a miracle.[3]

[3] Arabian writers give a different version of this story, whence the tradition related by the dervish was probably derived. According to them, when Abu Musa Ashari took possession of Susa in the twenty-seventh year of the Hegira, he dug a canal from the Shaour

The dervish further assured me that his own family originally came from Egypt with the prophet, and that the right to the custody of the tomb had been enjoyed by his forefathers for innumerable generations. He even declared that, not many years before, he possessed the proof of what he asserted in the annals of his ancestors, which extended over a vast period of time; but that they had been destroyed by the Beni Lam Arabs when they sacked his dwelling.

Dervish Abd'ul-Nebi was a very intelligent old man, although his account of his family history and genealogy may not bear strict investigation. He described to me all the Europeans who had visited the tomb during the previous fifty years, and did not seem to entertain any of those fanatical prejudices against Christians which prevailed among the Arabs of Khuzistan.

After I had visited the tomb, and made a slight sketch of it, I proceeded to examine the great mound at the foot of which it stands. I discovered on one of its sides a slab nine feet in length and two feet

and buried the prophet's coffin in its bed before admitting the stream. According to Benjamin of Tudela, 'the great emperor, Sanjar, King of Persia,' finding that the Jews, who lived on either side of the river on which Shuster was situated, were constantly quarrelling and fighting for the possession of Daniel's remains, ordered them to be placed in a glass case and to be suspended from the arch of a bridge exactly in the centre of the stream, and there, he says, they remained to his day.

six inches in breadth, with an inscription in the cuneiform character carved upon it. I proceeded at once to make a copy of it. The dervish and Kaid Azeez were very anxious that I should not delay my departure, and kept eager watch lest Arabs of the Beni Lam tribe should surprise us. They incessantly urged me to mount my horse and to leave the dangerous spot. I had just finished copying the last line of the inscription when they jumped into their saddles, and, exclaiming that they saw horsemen in the distance, galloped off as fast as their horses could carry them.[4] I was obliged to follow them, and we did not slacken our pace until we reached Kala Nâsr. There were no Arabs, I believe, to be seen; but both my companions were in a prodigious fright, as, a few days before, a Beni Lam, in an attack upon one of the Matamet's officers, had been killed, and consequently there was blood between the tribe and the Persians. As I should have been taken for a Persian had I fallen into the hands of the Beni Lam, I should certainly, they said, have had my throat cut. I was sorry to be obliged to make this hasty retreat, as I had not had time to examine the ruins, which are very extensive and cover a large area, as carefully as I

[4] This inscription is in the cuneiform character used by the inhabitants of Susiana, differing in some respects from that of the Assyrians and Babylonians.

had intended. In addition to the slab with the cuneiform inscription, I found, about half-way up another of the sides of the great mound, a second slab, but, as far as I could judge, not being able to lift it, without any writing upon it. The mound itself, which is of enormous size, and the face of the soil to a considerable distance around it, was strewed with bricks, fragments of pottery, glazed tiles, and the various remains which mark the site of ancient cities in Babylonia.[5]

[5] When Sir Fenwick (then Colonel) Williams was employed as the British commissioner for the delimitation of the frontiers of Turkey and Persia, he encamped among the ruins of Susa. He was accompanied by Mr. Loftus, who was able, under the protection of the Persian authorities, to excavate in the great mound. He found little but remains of buildings and inscriptions, sufficient however to prove that the architecture of the edifice which had once existed there was of the Persepolitan order, and that it had been erected by Artaxerxes Memnon. He published an account of his discoveries in his work entitled *Travels and Researches in Chaldea and Susiana*. It was reserved for the French explorer, M. Dieulafoy, to uncover in 1886 the remains of a magnificent palace built by the great Persian king, and to remove to the Louvre a collection of highly interesting objects found in them, including capitals of columns and the very remarkable representation of the Persian guards enamelled on bricks. I may here mention that it appears to me that it has been erroneously assumed that these guards were of a race of blacks. The mistake seems to have arisen from the upper part of their faces, which were originally of a reddish tint, having been discoloured from some cause or another—perhaps exposure to air or water. This is, I think, shown by the photographs of them published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and still more by an examination of the originals. I cannot refrain from referring to the very interesting narrative of the French

The dry beds of canals, and long lines of smaller mounds, extend for many miles round the principal ruin, showing that the city must have been of great extent. I was able to obtain, from the summit of the principal mound, bearings by compass of a few of the principal landmarks and mountain peaks visible in the distance, and to trace the windings of the Dizful river, which approaches within a mile and three-quarters of the ruins. This river has been identified with the Coprates of the Greek geographers, and with the Ulai, or Eulæus, in the province of Elam, of the Book of Daniel.[6] Its banks are covered with brushwood, the resort of lions, which are especially dreaded at Susa by the Arabs in the spring.

In order to avoid the Beni Lam Arabs, and to see a country I had not yet visited, I had resolved to take the route to Baghdad through the hilly districts inhabited by the Faïli Lurs, a turbulent and lawless tribe living in the border mountains between Turkey and Persia. The only English

expedition to Susa, written by Madame Dieulafoy, the accomplished, courageous, and enterprising wife of the explorer, and published in *Le Tour du Monde* (July and August, 1887) with admirable illustrations.

[6] Chap. viii. v. 2. 'And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan *in* the palace, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.' The Karun, with which this river unites, is, however, believed by some geographers to represent the Ulai or Eulæus.

travellers who had attempted to visit them—Captain Grant and Lieutenant Fotheringham—had been barbarously murdered, and no European had since ventured among them.

As I was about to leave Dizful, a party of horsemen belonging to Ali Khan, one of the principal Faïli khans, arrived there on their way to his tents. I made acquaintance with their chief, one Ghulâm Ali Beg, who willingly consented to my accompanying him. Accordingly, I rode one afternoon with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and Saleh to the village of Bonewar Nazir, about six miles from the town, where Ghulâm Ali Beg promised to join us with his companions early on the following morning. This village was famous for its gardens and fruit-trees. One of these gardens had been very tastefully laid out, and contained in the centre a handsome country-house built of dressed stone, which appeared to me to have great architectural merit and beauty. It formed a square, each of its four sides being similar, and consisting of a lofty 'iwan,' or hall, entirely open on one side to the air, with small rooms adjoining it. In front of each 'iwan' was a parterre containing a 'hauz,' or reservoir of clear water, surrounded by rose-bushes and flower-beds. Beyond the building stretched long avenues of orange, citron, and lemon trees, so large that their branches uniting formed covered

alleys. This palace was falling to ruin, and its gardens were neglected and overgrown with weeds. It had been built many years before by Abbas Khan, a chief of Dizful of great wealth and power, and belonged to his grandson, who had, like other nobles of the city, been reduced to poverty by the exactions of the Persian Government. I was told that when in former days Prince Mohammed Ali Mirza, who had acquired great renown as governor of the province of Khuzistan for his justice and wise administration, visited Dizful, he was lodged in this palace, and received the whole produce of its gardens as a 'peeshkesh'—an offering made in Persia to men in authority or of high rank.

In the evening some of Ghulâm Ali Beg's followers made their appearance, and took up their quarters for the night in the room which I occupied. As this gave me a good opportunity to become friends with them, I ordered a lamb to be killed and a large pillau prepared for supper, an attention which pleased them much. Saleh, who was himself from the Faïli country, and Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, contributed to establish the best relations between us. Early on the following morning the Beg himself, faithful to his promise, arrived with the remainder of his party. They were in all twenty-three well-armed horsemen, so that we

had no cause to fear any Arabs that we might meet on our way.

We were soon in our saddles, and rode to the Kerkhah, over a rich and fertile but now deserted plain. Like other parts of the province, it had been reduced to this condition by the depredations of the Arabs and the oppression of the Matamet. The remains of great canals and innumerable watercourses now dry, and bricks and pottery everywhere scattered about, showed that at one time it had been thickly inhabited and highly cultivated. We came to the ruins of a stone bridge which had once spanned the river, where it issues from a range of two hills. Its massive buttresses had resisted the effects of time and the wear of the torrent. The ruins are called Payi-Pul—the foot of the bridge. We crossed the stream close to it by a deep ford, not practicable after rain. One of the horsemen was carried away by the current, but succeeded in saving himself and his horse.

We were now entering the country of the Faïli Lurs.[7] Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who was of a timid

[7] As I have more than once mentioned, the generic name of Lur is given to all the inhabitants of the great range of mountains known to the Persians as Luristan. 'Faïli' is, strictly speaking, the name of the largest and most powerful of the Lur tribes inhabiting the mountains to the north of Dizful. But it is now used in speaking of all the clans and septs inhabiting the lower range to the west of Zagros.

disposition and had heard much of the dangers of the journey before us, repeated a 'du'a,' or invocation to the Deity, turning to the four quarters of the horizon to build, as it were, a wall around himself against jins, and other 'du'as,' against carnal enemies, and to save himself from falling from his horse. Although by no means a fanatic or bigot he thought it necessary, as a good Musulman, to take these precautions. The Faïli horsemen held a consultation as to the best and safest road, and decided that we should at once strike into the hills, where we should be better concealed from any marauding parties of Arabs that might be out on a 'ghazu.' We accordingly entered upon very broken and difficult ground, and rode about four farsaks through a barren and uncultivated region. In it the Faïli tribe of Sagwand usually encamp, but this year, fearing an attack from the Matamet, they had moved to the northwards. As the darkness began to set in, we saw fires in the distance, and soon reached an encampment belonging to a few families of the Mokhtabaz, a small tribe which supplies Dizful with 'mast' (curds) and butter. Ghulâm Ali Beg gave himself airs because the men did not come out to meet and welcome us. After reproaching them, in rather violent language, for their want of hospitality, he vowed that he would pass the night in the open air rather than under

the tents of people who had such bad manners and who so ill performed their duties as Musulmans. He then rode to a small grass plot near a stream, and directed his followers to unsaddle their horses.

The men of the encampment, ashamed of themselves, came out in a body to implore Ghulâm Ali Beg to forgive their rudeness and to return to their tents. As he was inexorable, or pretended to be so, the women and children were next sent to entreat him with tears not to give a bad name to the tribe by refusing to become their guests. At length he yielded, but not without first extolling his own tribe and roundly abusing the Sagwands and Mokhtabaz, who, he said, were notorious for their want of hospitality and their covetousness, and who shunned a guest instead of running five farsaks to meet one.

I was not sorry when this scene, which it appeared to me the Beg had got up to show his importance, came to an end, as I was tired and hungry. Our party was divided amongst the tents. The seyyid and I became the guests of four brothers who, being unmarried, lived together with a sister, a girl about seventeen years old, very handsome and well-shaped, with the blackest hair and eyes. She had none of the assumed bashfulness and reserve of the women of the towns, but sat and ate with

us, taking part in the conversation without restraint. Her name was Eshrafi—a gold coin then current in Persia was so called. These poor families had been recently plundered by the governor of Luristan and were in extreme poverty. It was on this account that they had not welcomed with the warmth which Ghulâm Ali Beg considered proper, the large party of travellers about to be quartered upon them. Eshrafi boiled some rice and made cakes of bread—all that their tent could afford—for our supper. Neither she nor her brothers discovered that I was a European.

The following day we had a very long and tedious ride, ascending and descending the hills by precipitous and stony paths. Neither Ghulâm Ali Beg, nor any of his followers, were acquainted with the right track, and were constantly disputing as to the one we should take. After high words they came to blows, drawing their swords and pointing their pistols at each other. Their quarrels led to one or two broken heads, and I feared that they might end more seriously, and that I might be involved in them. However, the Faïli did not appear to resent insults like the Bakhtiyari, who would have had a man's blood for half the 'dushnâms' given by these Lurs to each other, and the reflections they cast upon the character of one another's female relations.

After riding about four farsaks we came to a small plain in which was an encampment of Sorkhah Arabs, under a sheikh named Yunos. In the distance I could distinguish a lofty artificial mound. This was Patak, to which I was invited by the Lur whom I had met in my journey through the Beni Lam country.[8] There is a local tradition that it marks the site of a great and ancient city.

The Faïli horsemen dismounted at the tent of the sheikh. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and I went to that of another Arab, where a sheep was killed for our entertainment. We had finished our breakfast, and my companion was busily employed in writing charms for our host and his wives and children—the way in which he usually repaid the hospitality he received. The horsemen had mounted and were leaving the encampment. I was preparing to follow them, and my foot was in the stirrup, when the sheikh, having parted with his guests, came towards me. He had no sooner set his eyes upon me than he exclaimed, 'This is the Feringhi, seize him!'

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan called to me to make off as fast as I could. I lost no time in following his advice, and vaulting into my saddle galloped after the horsemen and soon joined them. Abou'l-

[8] See *ante*, p. 228.

Hassan, at the same time, folding his arms and confronting the sheikh, said to him, 'Seize me! That man is my guest, he has eaten my bread. No one can harm him whilst under my protection, and I am a seyyid.' 'By your forefathers,' exclaimed the sheikh, 'had he not been your guest he never would have gone out of my hands. Alas! that I did not know before that he was in my tents!'

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan said that I had a very narrow escape, and cursed these 'Kafirs,' as he called them. My Faïli companions declared that if Sheikh Yunos had ventured to lay a finger upon me, they would have exterminated the whole encampment—men, women, and children. I was not, however, sorry that they had not been put to the proof, and congratulated myself on having got clear of these fanatical Arabs. It was fortunate that I had not been earlier recognised. As there were no tents to be seen at nightfall, we slept in the open air in a green valley, where our horses found abundant grass.

The next day (it was Christmas Day) we fell in with the Hiyieh Arabs, a division of the Beni Lam tribe, whose flocks and herds were grazing in the fine pasturage found, at this time of the year, in the plains and valleys at the foot of the great range of the Luristan Mountains. Some of

them were changing their encampment, and we passed long strings of laden camels and asses. We perceived the sheikh, at some distance, mounted upon a fine mare and followed by a number of horsemen with their tufted spears. My Faïli companions wished to ride up to him; but Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan dissuaded them from doing so, lest I should be recognised as a European, and be exposed to fresh danger. Although I should have been glad to see Sheikh Daûd, of whom I had heard much, and who was, at that time, renowned amongst the Arabs of Khuzistan for his prowess as a warrior, I agreed with the seyyid in thinking that the most prudent course was to avoid him, which we accordingly did, and passed on unobserved.

This Sheikh Daûd was one of the most notorious of the Arab robber-chiefs. He was a man of low origin, and had risen by his courage and daring to be the head of his tribe. He was the terror of the whole of the country to the west of the Karun. With his horsemen he was in the habit of carrying his marauding expeditions on one side to the gates of Dizful, and on the other to Mendali, a Turkish town. No 'kâfila,' or caravan, could pass through his territories without paying heavy black-mail or being plundered. Such was the dread he inspired that a muleteer would say to his mule that hesitated

to drink, 'Dost thou see the reflection of Sheikh Daûd in the stream?'

We stopped in the middle of the day at some tents belonging to the same tribe. I was not recognised as a European, but was nearly involved in a quarrel which might have led to the discovery that I was a Feringhi. The Arab at whose tent I had alighted with Sheikh Abou'l-Hassan gave us only bread and onions to eat. One of our Faïli companions, who had rested elsewhere and had been better treated, seeing the niggardly quality of our fare, was very indignant with our host, reproached him for his meanness in thus receiving his guests, and urged us to remove to the 'musif' in which he had been entertained. As we refused to do so he brought us from it a bowl of clotted curds.

Our host resented what he considered a reflection upon his hospitality, and consequently the greatest insult that can be offered to a true Arab and a Musulman. With the heavy club which the Beni Lam always carry he was about to belabour the Lur, who would probably have defended himself with his pistol or his dagger, and blood would have been shed. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan threw himself between them, and succeeded, at last, in restoring peace.

Towards evening we came in sight of Deh

Lûron,[9] a village surrounded by palm trees. It appertained to Ali Khan, the chief of the tribe to which the Faïli horsemen whom I had accompanied from Dizful belonged. They testified their joy at returning to their homes, after a long absence, by galloping their horses over a small plain, firing off their guns and pistols, and shouting their war-cries. The village was, however, almost deserted, the inhabitants having moved to the plain to find pasture for their flocks. As we could not procure barley for our horses, we rode to a neighbouring encampment of Beni Lam Arabs. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and I were very hospitably received in an unusually large tent. My Faïli companions called me Daûd Beg, and told its owner that I was a Persian officer sent on a mission by the Matamet to Ali Khan. A sheep was slain for my entertainment. When I suggested that a fowl would be sufficient for our dinner, our host indignantly replied that an Arab would be unworthy of the name who did not kill a sheep for his guest, whatever his rank. After those within the tent had eaten abundantly, he stood in front of it, and in a loud voice invited the poor and hungry to come and partake of what remained. A small crowd of dirty Arabs soon appeared and threw themselves upon the fragments of meat and

[9] *I.e.* the village of the Lurs.

the boiled rice. This exhibition of hospitality is common amongst the Arabs, and their chiefs endeavour to outdo each other in such boastful displays.

A lofty mountain, called the Kebir Kuh,[1] had been visible during the previous two days—a magnificent peak, one of the highest in the whole range of Zagros, and covered with perpetual snow. We made for its foot, and crossing some very barren and precipitous sand-hills, reached a small plateau in the midst of them. Here, near some abundant springs called 'Sheker Ab,' or sugar water, was the encampment, or 'amâla,' of the great Faïli chief, Ali Khan, more generally known as the 'Wali of Luristan.' It was so well concealed in the hills that it could only have been discovered by persons who were intimately acquainted with the country. The Wali had pitched his tents there in order to avoid the Matamet, who was reported to be about to advance at the head of a considerable force into Luristan.

In this secluded spot there were about three hundred black tents belonging to Ali Khan and some of his principal 'tushmals,' or dependent chiefs, of the Faïli tribe of Kurd. We dismounted at the 'musif' of the Wali, who was seated in the sun on one of those carpets of beautiful texture

[1] *I.e.* the Great Mountain.

and brilliant colours for which the looms of these mountains are celebrated. He was surrounded by a number of armed men, who stood respectfully in his presence. He gave directions that I should be conducted with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan to the tent of Ahmed Khan, one of the 'tushmals,' who received us with the greatest civility. The floor was at once carefully swept and sprinkled with water, carpets and 'nemuds' (felt rugs) were spread for us, and a huge fire of logs of wood was kindled, which was very welcome, as the air was frosty and cold.

The tent was a very large one, and was divided into several compartments by the usual screens of reeds, joined together by twisted worsted of various bright colours. Soft cushions and coverlets were provided for us, and we found ourselves in very comfortable quarters. Our host, who appeared to be an amiable, intelligent, and, for a Lur, well-informed man, did everything he could to please and satisfy me. Soon after our arrival one Mohammed Reshid Khan, a 'tushmal' of the tribe, whom I had known at Kala Tul, came to see me, and in the evening most of the other 'tushmals' assembled in the tent. I had heard so much of the savage character and want of hospitality of the Faïli Lurs, that I was agreeably surprised at my reception, and by the appearance and manners

of these petty chiefs. They willingly answered my questions, gave me the information I asked for, and entertained me with stories and legends relating to their tribes. I consequently spent a very agreeable evening in their company. I was desirous of learning something from them about the Ali Ilahis, or Chiragh-Sonderans,[2] who were said to be numerous in this part of Luristan. They admitted that the Dilfún, a considerable Faïli tribe, belonged to that curious and little-known religious sect, and they described some of the rites and practices which are commonly, but probably without reason, attributed to them. The Chiragh-Sonderans themselves deny that they have any such customs as those ascribed to them, and it is very probable that as they are very reticent with regard to their religious belief, owing to their fear of persecution and ill-treatment by the Musulmans, the reports spread about them are mere inventions of the ignorant and credulous Lurs. As I have before mentioned, they believe in one thousand and one incarnations of the Deity, and one of those incarnations is said to be still amongst them. Their great saint, for whom they have the highest veneration, is known as 'Baba Buzurg,' the great father.

The custom of passing their children through

[2] See *ante*, Vol. I., p. 217.

fire, on the tops of mountains and in high places, is also attributed to them, and some of their sheikhs, or holy men, pretend that they can enter fire without injury. One of the 'tushmals' declared that Mohammed Ali Mirza, the son of Feth-Ali Shah, when governor of Luristan, having heard of this pretension, ordered some members of the sect to perform the feat in his presence. A large fire was accordingly kindled, and the Ali Ilahis, having taken off their clothes, entered it without fear. They continued amongst the flames for several minutes, dancing and invoking Ali with a loud voice. They then came out unhurt!

I did not visit the Wali until the following morning, as it was not the etiquette to wait upon him except when he held his 'salam,' or public reception. He affects a kind of regal dignity, and holds a petty court. I was somewhat anxious as to the result of my interview with him, as I knew him to be exceedingly suspicious of strangers, and especially of Europeans; nor could I forget that it was his uncle who had seized and barbarously put to death my two countrymen, Grant and Fotheringham.[3]

[3] Sir Henry Rawlinson, who had known the previous Wali, remarks, in his *Notes of a March from Zohab to Khuzistan* (p. 53): 'The family of the Wali were notorious for their intolerant spirit; and I should recommend any traveller visiting the province of Pushtikuh to appear in the meanest guise. . . . I saw enough on

The 'diwan-khana,' where the Wali held audience, was a vast black tent, supported by innumerable poles. It was closed on three sides by screens made of reeds, the fourth side being left entirely open. He sat at the upper end on a beautiful carpet. No one except a seyyid or mulla of reputed sanctity was permitted to take a place near him. Within the tent, and outside it, were spread long strips of embroidered nemud, or felt, on which visitors, guests, and persons specially invited by the chief were allowed to sit. The 'tushmals' and other petty chiefs, with their attendants, formed a wide circle beyond. Behind the Wali stood a number of savage-looking men, dressed in the Lur costume, armed to the teeth, and resting on their guns. In front of the tent were his ferrashes, who were ready, in obedience to his commands, to seize, and administer the bastinado to, those who had incurred his displeasure, and even to put them to death. Those who approached the Wali were held by the arms by two of these men as a precaution against assassination—a form then usually observed in Persia when strangers were al-

this journey and upon subsequent occasions of the extreme jealousy and intolerance of the Wali's family, to feel assured that the attempt of a European to explore the country in an open and undisguised character, with any less efficient support (Sir Henry was at the head of a regiment), would be attended with the greatest danger.'

lowed to draw near to great personages. Standing about were several dirty fellows in ragged garments, bearing high-sounding titles, such as are used at the Persian Court, the ceremonies of which the Wali considered it necessary to ape.[4]

When I entered his tent, with Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, Ali Khan did not treat me with actual rudeness, but his reception of me was cold and distant, as if my presence was not altogether agreeable to him. He motioned to me to be seated on one of the 'nemuds,' at a short distance from him. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was invited to a higher place.

His first question to me was, 'Why have the English placed ships on the Tigris and Euphrates, and built a "kút" at Basra?' I denied the existence of any such fort, and as to the ships I explained that they had been sent to those rivers principally with the object of establishing a trade between his territories and the rest of the world,

[4] The title of 'Wali' was the highest borne in Persia by a subject, and had almost royal significance. There were formerly four Walis, or tributary princes, under the Shah: those of Luristan and Hawizah—whom I have described—and those of Gurjistan (Georgia) and Ardelan, or Eastern Kurdistan. Ali Khan was the head of a family to which, on the removal by Shah Abbas of the Atabegs, who for several centuries were the independent rulers of Luristan, was granted the government of the province, with the title of Wali. Ali Khan considered himself an independent prince, and he and his forefathers had constantly been in rebellion against the Persian Government. The four Walis were privileged, it was said, to be seated in the presence of the Shah.

which it was to his interest and to that of all the other chiefs of this part of Persia to promote, as it would tend to the prosperity of their country and thus increase their wealth and influence.

This explanation did not satisfy him. Turning round to those sitting near him, he observed angrily, 'You see, the English are about to take possession of our country, and they send this person' (pointing to me) 'to spy it out and to prepare for their arrival.' Then, addressing Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, 'Why,' said he, 'did you bring this man here, to see me sitting thus on a carpet, when he should know that my forefathers were kings of this country, and that they sat before the Shah on a throne and were his equals? He will believe that we were always what we now are, and so he will proclaim to his countrymen.' Near the Wali sat Malek Ahmed Khan, the chief of the barbarous Faïli tribe of Sagwand, and one of the most notorious robbers and evil characters in the Luristan Mountains. He had just arrived to conclude the contract for a marriage between one of his daughters and a son of the Wali. He began to question me, in a somewhat insolent manner, as to my reasons for having resided with Mehemet Taki Khan, asserting that the presence of a 'Kâfir' (infidel) had brought ill-luck upon that chief. I had to be on my guard in answering these and

many other questions of the same nature that were put to me, in order to avoid saying anything which might add to the suspicions of the Wali. At length he rose from his carpet, which was the sign for the breaking up of the assembly.

I returned to the tent of Ahmed Khan, who apologised for the want of cordiality with which I had been received by the Wali. He then explained the character of his chief, describing his good qualities and his vices—which were numerous enough—and telling me how I should treat him and answer his questions when I next saw him. Ali Khan, he said, was very proud of his descent, and desired to be treated as if he were a royal personage. It was necessary to humour him, and to pretend to show him the consideration and respect to which he thought himself entitled. The best way to conciliate him was consequently to minister to his vanity. I determined to follow the advice which my host gave me.

Although the Wali had the reputation of being a very strict Musulman, he did not conform to all the precepts of his religion; for he had, I was informed, no less than twelve wives, four of whom were sisters, which was altogether opposed to Mohammedan law. Each wife had a separate tent and establishment.

In the morning a Lur, who came to Ahmed

Khan's tent, informed me that he had been present at the murder of Grant and Fotheringham. He gave me the following account of it. Kelb Ali Khan, being at the time in rebellion against the Shah and at war with the Wali of Luristan, had taken refuge, with a part of his tribe, among the Beni Lam Arabs. Hearing that two English travellers were in the mountains, and that they had with them a large sum of money in gold, he lay in wait for them and attacked them on the right bank of a small river, called the Changolar. Captain Grant was shot dead on the spot, and buried at the foot of the hills. Lieutenant Fotheringham and his Armenian servants were kept for several days. Kelb Ali Khan did not at first intend to kill them, but having been warned that if he gave them their liberty they would return to avenge the murder of their companion, he ordered them to be put to death. They were then bound to trees and shot. He distributed the arms of his victims amongst his followers, but he gave their money, watches, and other valuables to an old and faithful servant, with instructions to conceal them in the mountains. The man, after obeying the order, returned and informed the chief of the place in which he had hidden them. He was immediately slain by the Khan, lest he should communicate the secret to any one else.

My informant declared that there was no truth in the report that Kelb Ali Khan had offered to spare the lives of the travellers if they would abjure their religion and become Musulmans. The chief himself was afterwards murdered when at Kermanshah, to which place he had gone under a safe-conduct from the Persian governor.

Next morning Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan went before me to the usual reception of the Wali. He availed himself of my absence to explain the object of my presence in Luristan in an ingenious fashion, and to satisfy the chief. I had come, he assured him, all the way from Feringhistan (Europe) to see a prince whose name and reputation had even reached that remote region, and who was the descendant of the mighty kings who had once ruled over Luristan. This explanation was so gratifying to his vanity that he resolved to treat me with the greatest civility, so that I might be properly impressed with his greatness and dignity. He accordingly sent for me, made me sit by his side, and treated me with special attention.

The seyyid had informed me, before going to the 'mejlis,' of the explanation he intended to give to the Wali of my visit to his country. Acting, therefore, upon the hint and upon the advice given to me by my host, I addressed an harangue to Ali Khan, in which I extolled the ancient lineage of

his family and their former greatness and power, and referred to his reputation for generosity and hospitality, which, I declared, had reached me long before I had any thought of visiting Luristan. He was much pleased by these compliments, bade me welcome to his country, and promised me his protection as long as I remained in it. At the same time, he advised me to avoid observation as much as possible, and to preserve my disguise, as the Lurs were very suspicious of strangers, especially of Europeans, and some evil-disposed person might do me injury.

The Wali was now as civil and loquacious as he had before been uncourteous and reserved. He asked me a number of questions about European institutions, and discoursed upon religion, philosophy, geography, and various other subjects, showing a good deal of shrewdness and intelligence. In the course of the day he gave me a proof of his desire to serve and protect me. As I was sitting at the lower end of the tent talking with some of the 'tushmals' a stranger entered. Shortly after, addressing the chief, he asked him whether a Feringhi had not been seen in the country. He replied in the negative. I pretended that I had not heard what had passed, and went on with my conversation. The man, having evidently perceived me, went up to the Wali and

whispered something in his ear, and after exchanging a few words with him, returned to his seat. Nothing further passed, and he soon afterwards left the encampment. The chief told me in the evening that the stranger had pointed me out as the European in question, but that he had assured him that he was mistaken, as I was a Georgian and related to the Matamet, who had sent me to the Faïli tribe on a mission. This explanation satisfied him, and he made no further inquiries.

I learnt afterwards that this man, who was a Lur from Khorumabad, had been sent in search of me. My friends in England, not having received any tidings of me for many months, and fearing that some accident had occurred to me, or that I might be detained as a prisoner in the Luristan Mountains, had requested the Foreign Office to make inquiries about me through the British Mission, which had recently returned to Tehran. The Persian Government, on the application of the British Minister, had accordingly directed the governor of the province of Kermanshah to obtain the required information. He had sent this Lur to find me, and, if necessary, to assist me in leaving the country. The Wali, not knowing the object of his visit, or suspecting that he might have evil intentions with regard to me, had thought it prudent to mislead him.

In the evening there were great rejoicings in the encampment, as one of the Wali's wives had given birth to a son. As soon as she was in labour a mulla who enjoyed a special reputation for sanctity was sent for. He took seven strings of cotton twist exactly equal in length to her height. These he united and knotted nine times, repeating a certain 'du'a,' or invocation to Allah, when making each knot. The strings were then tied round the lady's waist, and the child, which proved to be the son so much desired by the chief, was born. The efficacy of the mulla's charm was acknowledged with thanksgivings to the Deity, and he received a handsome reward. The men shouted the peculiar cry of the Lurs called the 'gola,' the women joined them with the shrill 'kel,' sheep were slain, and the whole encampment feasted. Salt was placed in the eyes of the new-born infant, and texts from the Koran, written on gazelle's skin, were hung about its body, to protect it from the evil eye and from jins and other wicked spirits.

On the previous evening there had been a very different scene in the encampment. A chief, nearly related to the Wali, had returned from a distant journey. During his absence his only son had died. His friends came to condole with him, and his wives and a number of other women, seated in a circle on the ground in front of his

tent, sang in chorus a funeral dirge. One of them first chanted in a loud wailing voice some extemporised words in praise of the deceased—that he was a lion in war, that he gave his substance to the poor, and that he was the wisest in council—which were then repeated by her companions, who at the same time sobbed, moaned, beat their breasts and tore their hair, rocking themselves to and fro. This lugubrious ceremony continued during the greater part of the night.

I remained another day with the Wali, with whom I was now on the most friendly terms. When I left him to continue my journey he ordered one of his retainers to accompany me, who would see me safe through his territories, between which and the Pashalic of Baghdad, where I should find the Turkish authorities, he warned me he could afford me no protection. He advised Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan and myself to keep as much as possible in the mountains, to avoid the Beni Lam Arabs, and then took an affectionate leave of us.

The horsemen whom I had accompanied from Dizful, and who had shown me so much attention and kindness on the road, had now left us. We had still to pass through a very dangerous region, in which we should be exposed to perils both from Lurs and Arabs. It behoved us, therefore, to be on our guard and continually on the watch.

We struck into the mountains, and arrived at nightfall at an encampment of Faïli Lurs under the Wali.

We continued next morning in the hilly country, occasionally descending into small valleys—rich pasture-grounds for the flocks and herds of the Lurs—carpeted with the narcissus and other sweet-smelling flowers. Black tents belonging to the Wali's tribe were scattered on all sides. In the burial-places of the Faïli which we passed, I observed, fastened to the headstones, the curved horns of the ibex, to which were hung women's tresses. They were the graves of chiefs, and the hair was that of their wives, which had been cut off on their death, in token of grief. I obtained occasionally beautiful and extensive views of the mountains, and the plains between them and the Tigris, from the high ground which I was crossing. We spent the night in the tent of a seyyid.

The following day was the first of the new year, 1842. As I descended by the steep and rugged track which led to the plains below, I could not but reflect upon the events of the past twelvemonth—the perils that I had gone through and had happily escaped. There were still dangers before me, but I was approaching the end of my journey, and I hoped in a few days to find myself again among Englishmen and friends. I had been

constantly suffering from intermittent fever, and required rest and medical care. Both I knew I should have as soon as I reached Baghdad. I was consequently in high spirits, to which the great beauty of the scenery and the fine mountain air greatly contributed.

At the foot of the hills we found the last encampment of Faïli which we were to meet with on our road. We stopped for a short time at the tents to refresh ourselves and our horses. At a short distance from them we came to the Changolar, the small stream which divides the Faïli country from that of the Beni Lam Arabs. Before we crossed it, the Wali's horseman, having conducted us safely through his master's territories, bade us God-speed and left us.

We had ridden five or six miles when we came to some Arab tents. Being thirsty I stopped at one of them, and without dismounting asked for 'leben' (sour milk). The owner of the tent brought me some in a wooden bowl. I had scarcely put it to my lips when he cried out in a loud and excited voice, 'Here is the Feringhi! Here is the Feringhi!' I dropped the bowl, and, urging my horse to its full speed, rejoined the seyyid and Saleh, who were at some distance. We then all three galloped as fast as we could until we were far from the encampment. For-

tunately all the horsemen were away from it, and we were not pursued.

We stopped for the night at another Arab encampment, after a very long and fatiguing day's journey, as we had ridden about forty miles, being anxious to get through the Beni Lam country as soon as possible. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, on account of his descent from the Prophet—marked by his green turban—was always a welcome guest in tent or cottage, and especially among the wandering tribes, the presence of such persons being rarer than in the towns, where they are generally too well known to be much respected. As soon as Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan entered a tent, he was surrounded by men and women begging for charms or 'du'as,' and his time was chiefly occupied in writing verses from the Koran on bits of paper or parchment, to be enclosed in little bags and tied round the necks of women who wished for offspring, and of children suffering from sore eyes. Sometimes these texts were written on the inside of a coffee-cup, and then washed off with water, which was drunk as an infallible remedy for every disease. The seyyid himself had little belief in these nostrums, but he found it to his advantage, especially in travelling in a dangerous country, not to discourage the confidence felt in them by good Musulmans.

He was employed in manufacturing them in the tent in which we had stopped for the night, until we were both so weary that we lay down to sleep where we had been sitting. I had scarcely closed my eyes when my companion gave me a nudge, as if to call my attention to something. Our host and one or two Arabs were crouching round the fire and talking together. The subject of their conversation, which was carried on in a low voice, but which I could distinctly hear, was a European who was supposed to be among the Beni Lam tribes, spying out the country. They expressed their intention of cutting his throat, as they would that of a dog, should he fall into their hands. They appeared, as far as I could judge from what they said, to have some suspicions as to my real character, and to doubt the truth of the new story which Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan had invented, that I was a Georgian Musulman on my way to Kerbela and Mecca. However, after discussing the matter for some time, one of them insisting that I was the Feringhi in question, they left the tent, and shortly after there was profound silence in the encampment.

As soon as they were gone Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who had been trembling with fear, whispered to me that the danger of my being discovered appeared to him to be so great, that he

thought that the only chance of my getting away in safety would be by leaving the tent in the middle of the night, and before the Arabs were stirring. He could not, he said, protect me; on the contrary, he might himself be exposed to very great peril among these ignorant and fanatical Arabs, for having been found in the company of a European, whom they looked upon as a 'Kâfir,' and for having eaten with him. They would no longer believe in his sacred character, but would denounce him for an impostor, which would add to the risk he ran. Being entirely of his opinion, I awoke Saleh about two o'clock in the morning, and directed him to get the horses ready as quickly and quietly as possible.

The owner of the tent was awoke by the preparations for our departure. Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan explained to him that we were anxious to reach Badraï, a town within the Turkish frontier, early in the day, and taking him aside had some private conversation with him, the effect of which was that he helped us to saddle our horses, and to leave the encampment without disturbing any of its inmates.

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan told me as we rode along that, judging from what he had overheard on the previous night, when our host, on being pressed to seize me, had refused to violate the

laws of hospitality, he believed him to be a good Musulman and an honest man. He had, therefore, informed the Arab that he had heard what had passed between him and his friends when they were sitting round the fire, and warned him against the terrible sin that he would commit, and which God would inevitably visit upon himself, his wives and his children, and all his kith and kin, if he were in any way responsible for the death or ill-treatment of a guest who had eaten his bread, and especially of a descendant of the Prophet. He was greatly alarmed by this solemn warning, and entreated the seyyid to leave his tent with me as soon as possible, so that he might run no risk of having our blood to answer for.

We urged on our horses as fast as they could go, and as we were now on level ground they were able to keep up a brisk pace, although much fatigued by their recent hard work. The night was very dark, and there fell a drizzling rain. Saleh, delighted at the prospect of speedily reaching a Turkish town, where he could repose in safety from his fatigues, and find 'raki,' gave vent to his joy in a loud Lur song. As it was of the utmost importance that we should proceed quietly as well as quickly, I ordered him more than once to desist. He nevertheless continued his wild melody until, losing all patience, I applied to him some strong

epithets which I knew that a Bakhtiyari would resent, but which I could not believe that Saleh, who had been so long resident among Persians in the towns, would consider an insult of a very grave character. To my surprise, he jumped from his horse and pointed his long pistol at me. Fortunately it missed fire, and as I immediately drew mine he thought better of the matter, and remounted.

He was afterwards very penitent for his misconduct, and implored my forgiveness, so, taking into consideration his hot Lur blood, and the fact that his fellow-tribesmen considered it a solemn duty to revenge an insult such as I had put upon him, I forgave him.[5]

[5] Saleh was of a very impetuous and passionate disposition, but a brave, devoted, and faithful servant. On one occasion I recommended him as an attendant to an officer in the Indian army, who wished to visit the ruins of Babylon from Baghdad. On their way Saleh did something which offended his employer, who, in Indian fashion, addressed him in insulting language and raised his whip to strike him. Saleh jumped off his horse and, drawing his dagger, thus addressed the officer: 'If you had not been the friend of the sahib, who is my master and protector, and who recommended you to my care, your life should have answered for the insults you have addressed to me. I will not injure you, but I can no longer remain in your service. May God be with you!' He then left the astonished traveller in the middle of a desert with three baggage horses to look after, and, returning to Baghdad, came to inform me of what had occurred. Some years after Saleh walked all the way from Baghdad to Constantinople to see me, and I had to keep him for some time, to my great inconvenience, in the small lodging that I occupied.

We crossed the Turkish frontier and reached Badraï without further incident, fortunately not having met with any Arabs on our way. Badraï is a small town surrounded by extensive groves of palm trees producing the dates which bear its name, and are the most renowned in Turkish Arabia. The Turkish governor received me with much civility, and expressed great surprise that I had been able to pass safely through the Beni Lam country. He informed me that a caravan would leave on the following day for Baghdad, escorted by a considerable body of 'hytas,' or irregular cavalry, as the roads were infested by Arab marauders, who had been committing depredations in the villages, and robbing travellers. He advised me, therefore, to accompany it, although, in consequence of the unsettled state of the country, it would not take the direct road, but would have to pass through Mendali, a town to the north of Badraï, which would lengthen the journey by two or three days. I thought it prudent to take his advice.

We reached Baghdad without any adventure. The only incident I have to relate is the following. Having joined the great highway between that city and the Persian frontier, which I had followed in my first journey, we joined, long after dark, having been travelling for many hours, a 'kâfila'

resting for the night. Overcome with sleep, I lay down on one of the loads which had been taken from a mule. It was only at daybreak, when I was roused by the preparations of the muleteers for their departure, that I discovered that we had fallen in with one of those numerous caravans which at that season of the year carried the dead bodies of pious shi'as to be interred in the holy soil of Kerbela. I had slept soundly on one of the coffins, which was wrapped in soft felt, and had not perceived the nauseous stench which accompanies these convoys of putrefying human remains.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Renounce journey to India—Propose to ascend the Karun—Leave Baghdad in the 'Assyria'—Pass through the bend of Ahwaz—Reach Bendi-Kir—Get aground—Notables of Shuster visit the 'Assyria'—Awkward position of the vessel—Floated again—Ascend the Ab Gargar—A lion—Reception at Shuster—A gigantic pillau—The Sabæans—Mehemet Taki Khan—Ascend river of Dizful—An unjust attack—Lieutenant Selby wounded—Travel Tatar to Constantinople—The ruins of Nineveh—Monsieur Botta—Opium-smoking—Embark at Samsoun.

On arriving at Baghdad I found letters from home awaiting me. They led me to give up my idea of going to India through Afghanistan, and to determine upon returning to England. But I was desirous before leaving Baghdad of establishing the fact, of which I had convinced myself by personal observation, that the river Karun was navigable, as far as Shuster, to the steamers which the East India Company then maintained on the Tigris and Euphrates. I had already written my memoir upon the province of Khuzistan, in which I have fully described the country, its inhabitants, and its resource, with a view to showing the importance

of establishing political and commercial relations with it, and had placed it in the hands of Colonel Taylor, the Company's Resident, who proposed to forward it to Lord Aberdeen, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

I had further induced an enterprising British merchant, Mr. Alexander Hector, who was established in Baghdad, and was endeavouring to extend British trade in Turkish Arabia, to enter into communication, through Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, with some of the principal landholders of Shuster, with the object of obtaining wool, cotton, and other produce from Khuzistan for export to England and India, and of opening a market there for British manufactures.

I had found among the chiefs of the Bakhtiyari and of Shuster, and of other parts of the province, except the Beni Lam country, a very favourable disposition towards England and Englishmen, and, at the same time, a desire to establish commercial as well as political relations with them. I did what I could to encourage these feelings, and had obtained from the most important of these chiefs promises that, if an attempt were made by English merchants to open a trade with their country, they would do their best to encourage it. They also assured me of their willingness to cultivate, with this object, their lands, which,

in consequence of the absence of a market for the produce of the country, had been long neglected. I had established personal relations with many of them, and believed that I had succeeded in obtaining some influence over them. The fall of Mehemet Taki Khan had unfortunately occurred to interfere with my schemes for the improvement of his country, and for commercial intercourse between it and England. His intelligence, his liberal and tolerant disposition, his earnest desire to promote the welfare of his people, and the attempts he had been making, not without success, to induce the tribes under his authority to abandon their nomad life and lawless habits, had given me hopes that with his aid I might have been able to accomplish what I had so much at heart.

The practicability of the navigation of the Karun as far as Ahwaz by steamers had been proved by Lieutenant Selby in the 'Nitocris,' and before him (in 1836), in a steamboat of the same size, by Major Estcourt, an officer employed in Colonel Chesney's Euphrates expedition. But both had been compelled to turn back when they had reached that place by four ledges of rock, which appeared to forbid the further ascent of the river. The rocks on one of these ledges had been connected by massive stone masonry, in order to construct a bend completely damming up the stream

for purposes of irrigation. In the course of time the Karun had forced its way through it in more than one place by carrying away this masonry. An examination that I had made of the bend had led me to believe that a steamer of the size and power of the 'Nitocris' might be taken through it with safety, although the stream formed rapids in the openings. I had further satisfied myself that Shuster might be reached in such a vessel, both by the Karun and the Ab Gargar.

Colonel Taylor warmly approved of my suggestion that an attempt should be made, in this or another similar vessel, to reach Shuster, and Lieutenant Selby was willing to make the experiment. I was to accompany him, and to take with me Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, whose influence in that city and in other parts of Khuzistan as a seyyid, and whose acquaintance with the country, were likely to prove of great use to us. Dr. Ross's knowledge of the Arabs and of their language, his admirable tact and temper in dealing with them, and his character of a 'hakim,' made him a most valuable addition to our party.

We left Baghdad in the 'Assyria,' a vessel the same size as the 'Nitocris,' at the end of February, and entered the Karun in the beginning of March. We found Muhammera in the same desolate condition as when we had visited the place in the

previous autumn. Sheikh Thamer was still a fugitive in Turkish territory. The Cha'b tribes, without his influence and authority to control them, were at war with each other. The country was everywhere in disorder, and roving bands of Arabs were plundering and devastating it on all sides. We learnt that the Matamet, having squeezed all that he possibly could out of the province, and having left its inhabitants absolutely naked—as the Arabs expressed it—finding that nothing more was to be got out of them, was on his way back to Isfahan, and had already left Shuster with his troops. We had consequently no reason to apprehend that any difficulties would be placed in the way in ascending the Karun. Had he been still in Khuzistan, his hostility to the English would probably have led him to forbid our entrance into the river. In such case, we could not have persisted in our attempt without running the risk of bringing about political complications between the English and Persian Governments.

Another circumstance favourable to our enterprise was an unusual rise which had taken place in the Karun, owing to the rains that had fallen in the Luristan Mountains. Notwithstanding the consequent increase in the strength of the stream, we experienced no difficulty in reaching Ahwaz. The jungle on the banks furnished us with ample

fuel. At Ahwaz the swollen river was breaking over and through the bend and ledges of rock, forming boiling whirlpools and eddies below. It seemed as if all further advance were out of the question.

Lieutenant Selby, after carefully examining one of the openings in the bend, about forty yards wide, was of opinion that, notwithstanding the formidable appearance of the race, the 'Assyria' could overcome it. He determined, therefore, to attempt to force the vessel through it, under steam. Twice he succeeded in taking her up to it, but each time she was arrested in her course, and turned completely round, by the force of the stream. He then resolved to try the united power of steam and of a hawser passed from the ship to the shore.

All his preparations being complete, the order was given for the engines to be worked at full speed, and for the crew to haul upon the hawser. When the 'Assyria' reached the opening and felt the power of the rushing waters, she appeared to be paralysed, and trembled from stem to stern. By the help of the hawser her head was kept steadily to the stream. It was a moment of intense anxiety and excitement, for had any accident occurred, such as the parting of a rope, she would have been in imminent danger of being driven

against the rocks below the bend, and of being shattered to pieces. I was standing on one of the paddle-boxes, watching her with bated breath. For some moments she was motionless, as if struggling for the mastery. Then she moved forward a little as if getting the better of the contest. The men gave a hearty cheer and redoubled their efforts. The 'Assyria' now seemed to have overcome her difficulties, and went slowly onwards until she had passed into the tranquil waters above the dam. The other ridges of rocks offered no serious obstacle, and we passed through them without trouble under steam.

We had thus proved that the bend at Ahwaz presented no insurmountable obstruction to the further ascent of the Karun—an important fact in view of the future navigation of the rivers of Susiana. A steamer like the 'Assyria' could probably pass through it, even when the stream was at its lowest, in the autumn. At a comparatively small expense the opening through which we took her might be enlarged, and thus all difficulties would be removed. But years will probably elapse before a government like that of Persia will be ready to undertake a work of this nature.

Above Ahwaz the Karun had overflowed its banks, and the country to some distance from them was under water. The current in mid-stream was

strong, and our progress was consequently slow. Moreover, the 'Assyria' was constantly grounding, as we had no pilot on board to guide us through the intricacies of the channel, but she was soon floated again. On the second day after passing Ahwaz we reached Bendi-Kir, where the Karun, the Ab Gargar, and the river of Dizful unite. After their junction they flowed for a considerable distance in three distinct parallel streams or bands, each of a different colour, according to the soil through which it had flowed—producing a very curious effect. The water of the Karun, which formed the centre band, was of a dull reddish hue; that of the Ab Gargar, milk-white; and that of the Dizful river, almost black, from the rich alluvial mould which it brought down.

It would be difficult to describe the beauty, in the spring, of the fertile plains watered by these rivers. When we passed through them they were clothed with the most luxuriant vegetation, and enamelled with flowers of the most brilliant hues, amongst which the scarlet anemone and the sweet-smelling narcissus were conspicuous. The grass was so high that it reached to the belly of a horse. In all directions we could see flocks of sheep, and herds of cows, buffaloes, and camels, and the black tents of their Arab owners. This delightful scene was soon to change. The grass and flowers, which

appear to grow up in a night when the spring rains begin to fall, disappear in a day under the scorching rays of the sun, and the plains become an arid waste.

Lieutenant Selby resolved to attempt, in the first instance, the ascent of the main branch of the Karun. To avoid as much as possible the strength of the current in the centre of the stream, he kept the 'Assyria' in the slack water outside the bed of the river where it had overflowed its natural banks. This was a hazardous proceeding. She grounded several times in consequence, but was got off by the help of anchors and other appliances. At length, towards evening, when we were within about seven miles of Shuster, we found ourselves aground at some distance from the real bed of the river. The first attempt to haul the vessel into deeper water not having been successful, and the crew being much fatigued by the labours of the day, as they had been constantly employed on board and on shore in similar operations, under a hot sun, Lieutenant Selby gave orders to cease work for the night, proposing to renew it at daylight on the following morning.

Knowing how quickly the rivers of Khuzistan rise and fall, I remonstrated earnestly against this decision, and was supported by Dr. Ross. But Lieutenant Selby was an officer of a somewhat

violent and impetuous disposition. He replied angrily that he would do as he chose with his own vessel, a right which I did not dispute. What I had anticipated occurred. The waters of the Karun decreased so rapidly during the night that when morning broke we found ourselves high and dry at a considerable distance from the river.

The position was not a pleasant one. The Persian authorities and the people of Shuster had not been made aware of our coming. We could not be certain that they would not be hostile to us. Parties of Arab marauders were, moreover, roving over the country. We found ourselves altogether in a very helpless condition. It appeared to me that our best plan would be to communicate at once with the principal chiefs of the city, to inform them of the arrival of the vessel, to lead them to infer that her stranding was rather intentional than the result of an accident, and to endeavour to obtain their friendly assistance in our difficulties. As some Arabs had gathered round the ship, and their tents were near, I managed to hire two horses, and, accompanied by Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, galloped into Shuster.

I rode at once to the diwan-khana of my former host, Mirza Sultan Ali Khan. Although early in the morning, it was already filled with guests. They had not yet heard of the arrival of

the steamer. I informed them of it, and invited them in the name of her commander to visit her. I explained to them that our object in ascending the river was to cultivate good relations with the population of Khuzistan, with the view of establishing a trade advantageous to it, and that the friendly reception I had already met with in their city, and the desire expressed to me by its seyyids and notables to extend its commerce, and thus to endeavour to restore its ancient prosperity, had encouraged me to believe that they would welcome the arrival of an English vessel. I proposed, therefore, to them to accompany me on my return to the 'Assyria,' assuring them that they would be received with due honour.

Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan proved exceedingly useful in the emergency in which we found ourselves. He had been very favourably impressed by the kindness and hospitality which he had experienced from Colonel Taylor and the British residents at Baghdad, and on board the 'Assyria.' He consequently confirmed what I said very warmly. He added that he was even authorised by a British merchant, by way of making an experiment, to send a cargo of wool and other produce of the country to Basra, on this gentleman's account. He ended by describing the wonders of the steamer—its machinery, its crew, and its armament—and

urged his fellow-citizens to accept her commander's invitation.

As Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan was much respected by the Shusteris, and possessed a good deal of influence in the city on account of his high character, his advice was accepted. Mirza Sultan Ali Khan and his friends ordered their mares to be saddled, and notice was sent to the other notables of the city that we were about to visit the English ship, and they were invited to join us.

They soon assembled at the city gate with their attendants, and we rode together to the stranded vessel. Lieutenant Selby, seeing so large a company of horsemen approaching, and presuming that I had brought, as I had undertaken to do, some of the principal inhabitants of Shuster to visit him and his ship, prepared to receive them with full honours. The marines and the crew were drawn out as on parade, and he and Dr. Ross, both in uniform, advanced to receive their visitors. We explained to them that, owing to the vessel being aground, it was not possible to fire a salute, but that we hoped on a future occasion to do so. They were then conducted over the steamer, shown the machinery, and entertained with coffee and sweetmeats. They returned to Shuster highly gratified by their reception, and promising to furnish any assistance that we might

require to move the 'Assyria' into the bed of the river.

To float her again was no easy task. Our first consideration was to place her in a condition of defence in case any attempt should be made either by Arab marauders to plunder her, or by the Persian authorities to seize her, which was, however, scarcely to be apprehended, as the Matamet was already far on his way, with his army, to Isfahan, and had left no troops behind him in Khuzistan. With this object, Lieutenant Selby disembarked her guns, and placed them on earthworks which were hastily thrown up round the ship by the crew, aided by some Arabs whom we hired. These improvised fortifications were amply sufficient, with the marines and the English part of the crew, for defence—at least against Arabs only armed with swords and spears.

The most serious question, however, was how to get the vessel back into the river? Lieutenant Selby hoped that another freshet would take place, and that she would shortly float of herself. All attempts that had been made to move her had failed, although the chiefs of Shuster had furnished us with the trunks of palm-trees to be used as rollers, for which they refused to receive any payment. The marks we had placed in the stream, which we watched with nervous anxiety, showed

not only that there was no rise in the river, but that, on the contrary, it continued to fall. We were approaching the end of March, and consequently the end of the rainy season in the Luristan Mountains, where the rivers of Khuzistan have their sources. Fearing that, unless the 'Assyria' were speedily moved, she might remain where she was for an indefinite period, Lieutenant Selby resolved to dig a deep trench through which she could be floated into the main stream. To lighten her as much as possible, he ordered her machinery to be taken to pieces and to be removed from her, with all her stores. This operation was successfully accomplished by Mr. Moon, the chief engineer, a very intelligent and skilful officer.

The trench had been almost completed when, in the middle of one night, the river began, without any previous notice, to rise so rapidly, that we had reason to fear that the machinery, stores, and provisions, which had been disembarked and were lying around the vessel, would be soon under water, and perhaps be partly destroyed. All hands were at once employed in carrying everything on board in the dark. It was fortunate that we had time to do so. By daylight the Karun had again overflowed its banks, and the 'Assyria' was soon afloat again and was speedily moved into its bed.

This sudden freshet was a most fortunate and

unlooked-for occurrence, without which it was very doubtful whether we could have succeeded in floating the vessel, as the river had been falling so rapidly that it would soon have been exceedingly difficult to drag the 'Assyria' down its bank without running the risk of causing her irreparable injury. As it was, she had in no way suffered, having grounded upon soft alluvial soil.

It required two or three days to put the machinery together again. When this was done we returned to Bendi-Kir and entered the Ab Gargar. We anchored in the afternoon for the night, and Lieutenant Selby and I, as was our wont, left the ship for a walk. He was accompanied by a terrier, which amused itself in tracking porcupines to their holes. Suddenly the dog began to bark violently. We ran forward, thinking that it was in pursuit of one of those animals. We had scarcely advanced many paces, when a huge, black-maned lion,[1] the largest I had seen in Khuzistan, rose before us. He gazed at us as if surprised by the intrusion, and then, turning from us, walked majestically away. We remained motionless; but the terrier followed the beast, still yelping. We feared lest, irritated at being thus assailed, he might attack us, and we were without

[1] I particularly mention its black mane, as the Khuzistan lions are generally supposed to be maneless.

arms; but he took no heed of us, and we watched him until he disappeared over the bank of the Ab Gargar.

As soon as he was out of sight we returned as fast as we could to the vessel, which was at no great distance from us. Collecting the marines, and all who could use a gun, we went in search of the lion; but, although we found the spot where he had descended the bank, we sought in vain for him, and night coming on we had to go back to the ship. On the following morning, as we ascended the stream we kept a good look-out, thinking that we might disturb him if he were concealed in the brushwood or the bushes; but we saw no more of him.

We were rather more than a mile from Shuster when the further ascent of the Ab Gargar was stopped by a great stone dam. We had thus proved that this canal was navigable to within a short distance of the city, with a depth of water of not less than from twelve to eighteen feet, even when at its lowest in the summer and autumn. The fact that vessels of the size of the 'Assyria' could reach, from the Euphrates, the foot of the mountains over which tracks lead to Isfahan and into the very heart of Persia, was thus satisfactorily established.

The 'Assyria' remained at anchor for several

days near the city. The inhabitants came in large numbers to visit us, and were allowed to inspect all parts of the vessel. When ready to depart we invited Mirza Sultan Ali Khan and the seyyid chiefs of Shuster to see her under steam, and took them for some distance down the Ab Gargar, giving them on their leaving us the salute which we had promised them on the occasion of their first visit. They were delighted with the attention that they had received, and we parted with them, hopeful that the result of our expedition might be the establishment of commercial and political relations between England and the province of Khuzistan which might prove mutually beneficial. I bade adieu to my excellent friend Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who did not return with us to Baghdad.[2]

During our detention at Shuster I spent almost the whole of my time in the house of Mirza Sultan Ali Khan, gathering information as to the produce and commercial capabilities of the province, prices, means of transport, trade routes, &c., as

[2] Many years afterwards, when, at the time of the Mutiny, I was staying with the East India Company's Political Agent at Hyderabad in the Deccan, I was informed that a native gentleman desired to see me. To my great surprise my visitor proved to be Seyyid Abou'l-Hassan, who had by some means learnt that a person answering to the description of his former English friend was in the country. We were both delighted to meet again. He was residing with the Nawab's celebrated minister, Salar Jung, with whom, I believe, he was distantly connected.

well as gaining further knowledge of the manners and customs of the people. The kindness and hospitality that I experienced from this gentleman and from the other notables of the city could scarcely have been exceeded. They furnished me with all the data that I required, invited me to live in their houses, and gave sumptuous entertainments to Lieutenant Selby, Dr. Ross, and myself.[3] On one occasion we were served, at a feast in Mirza Sultan Ali Khan's 'diwan-khana,' with a monster pillau, in which was a sheep boiled whole, smothered in rice, mixed with raisins, almonds, and pistaccio-nuts. It was ornamented with a number of little lamps, each formed of the skin of half an orange filled with melted butter, in which floated lighted wicks. This singular dish was brought in upon an enormous tray which several men could with difficulty lift. It was placed on the ground, and the guests sat on 'nemuds,' or strips of felt carpet, round it—those who could, Persian fashion,

[3] Lieutenant Selby writes of them in his account of the ascent of the Karun published in vol. xiv. of the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*: 'The Shústerees . . . exhibit many noble traits of character and exercise the most liberal hospitality, the greatest generosity, and the utmost attention to a stranger's wants that ever it was my good fortune to witness,' and bears his testimony to the kindness with which they treated himself and his crew. The principal inhabitants constantly sent presents of sheep, fruit, and other provisions to him and his officers and men.

on their hams—and made use of their fingers in the absence of spoons and forks.

The English sailors and marines freely visited the city, and were on all occasions treated with the greatest consideration and kindness. This was the more remarkable, as among the population were an unusually large number of seyyids, who in Persia were notorious for their fanatical hatred of Christians, whom they looked upon as 'nejis,' or unclean. Fortunately the Englishmen conducted themselves with propriety, and got into no trouble, which was, perhaps, partly to be attributed to the fact that there were no Christians, and consequently no grog-shops, in the place, nor any means of obtaining wine or spirits. I asked the old quartermaster of the 'Assyria,' a certain Mr. Lucas, what he thought of Shuster. 'Well, sir,' he replied, 'it ain't a bad place, but there bain't a public in it!'[4]

Whilst at Shuster I saw a good deal of the poor Sabæans and their priests, and among my notes made at the time were the following concerning them. 'They are now (1842) found at

[4] This same quartermaster was celebrated among the English in Mesopotamia for an entry in the log-book. The 'Assyria' had been left under his care near Basra, when there arose one of those violent tornadoes which occasionally sweep over this part of Arabia. The vessel was in great danger. After the storm was over Mr. Lucas thus recorded the event: 'The windy and watery elements raged. Tears and prayers was had recourse to, but was of no manner of use. So we hauled up the anchor and got round the point.'

Shuster, Dizful, Hawizah, Korna, Basra, Fellahiyah and Suk-el-Shuyukh, and among the Beni Lam, Montefik, and Cha'b Arabs. They have been greatly reduced in numbers, and can scarcely amount in all to fifteen hundred families. Among the Cha'b they are treated as guests, and do not pay taxes or tribute to the sheikh of that tribe. They are chiefly silversmiths, and are very poor, but very honest and industrious. At Shuster and Dizful they are greatly oppressed. The little money they have is extorted from them, and they are frequently compelled to abandon their faith. In consequence of this cruel persecution some of them yearly pretend to be converts to Islam, whilst secretly retaining their religion. The banks of the river Jerrahi were at one time, it is said, principally inhabited by them; but about one hundred years ago a Sabæan girl was carried off by a Persian, probably a Bakhtiyari, chief. They sought to recover her by force, and to avenge the outrage. Being greatly inferior in number to the Musulmans, they were defeated with great loss, and a vast number of them were put to death. The grandfather of the present Sheikh Thamer, of the Cha'b, persecuted them with so much cruelty that those who survived abandoned the country. Those who remained were exposed to every kind of ill-treatment to compel them to become Mohammedans.

The brother and predecessor of Sheikh Thamer, Sheikh Mobador, on the other hand, protected the Sabæans, and encouraged them to return to Fellahiyah. But after his death the present chief renewed the persecution of these unhappy people, who were again compelled to abandon their homes, or to become converts to Islamism. During the present year they have been sadly ill-treated and oppressed at Shuster, and their burial-ground seized and ploughed up. In this city alone, before the great plague and the subsequent appearance of cholera, there were, according to the Sabæan account, no less than four thousand families; but these numbers are probably very much exaggerated. This very ancient and very curious sect, one of the last remaining links between the old world and the new, is fast disappearing altogether.

'The Sabæans of Shuster retain their original language, whilst many of those who have lived among the Arabs have lost it, and only speak Arabic. Among the Mohammedans they are compelled to drop their own names and to adopt those of Musulmans. For instance, their chief at Shuster is known by his own people as "Ram," but by Mohammedans as "Abd'ullah."

'The Sabæans expressed to me a strong desire to leave the Persian dominions, and a wish to join the Chaldeans at Baghdad and elsewhere, whose

language, they said, they understood. They inquired of me whether in Bengal there did not exist many of their ancient faith, and whether, if they went there, they would receive the protection of the British Government. One of them informed me that a Musulman, who had long resided in India, had offered to conduct him to that country for a small sum of money.

'At Dizful there exists among the Mohammedans an ancient custom of digging up the body of a Sabæan and throwing it into the river in times of drought, in order to obtain rain.

'The Sabæans have a number of curious ceremonies and customs, and wear a peculiar dress. They are required to make constant ablutions in running water. The dress of their high priest, or "gonzevera," must consist of seven parts: a kind of mitre made of woollen stuff with seven points, a fillet of cotton threads, a girdle of the wool of a yearling lamb, a linen robe falling to the feet, an olive branch or staff of olive wood, a linen kerchief which covers the head and conceals the mouth like an Arab "keffiyeh," and a myrtle garland. They never wear blue, and hold that colour in abhorrence. Their priests cannot marry a widow. They have a very ancient book, known as "The Book of Adam," or in their language the "Sidra," and a written character of their own.'

Mehemet Taki Khan was still in chains in the castle. I often saw him, and took Lieutenant Selby and Dr. Ross to visit him. They were both struck by the nobleness of his character, his enlightened views for the improvement of his people, and the resignation with which he bore his misfortunes. He told me that his brother, Ali Naghi Khan, had succeeded in reaching Tehran, and had laid his case before the Shah. He was not without hope that he would shortly be released and restored to his former authority in the Bakhtiyari Mountains.

Khatun-jan Khanum and her children, and the ladies of the family, were still in the ruined house in which I had seen them when at Shuster in the winter, and in the same state of misery and wretchedness, without sufficient food, and almost without necessary clothing. Several had died, and her once beautiful sister, Khanumi, was apparently in a dying state. I took Dr. Ross to see her, and under his care she was rapidly mending, when orders were received from the Matamet for the removal of the ladies to Dizful. I endeavoured to prevail upon the Persian officer in whose custody they were to permit Khanumi to remain until she was sufficiently recovered to bear the journey. He brutally refused, and the poor girl died on the way.

We returned to Bendi-Kir with the intention of attempting the ascent of the river of Dizful, which here unites with the Karun. But by our long detention at Shuster we had lost the favourable opportunity afforded by the floods, which had occurred a month before. The waters had now fallen, and this river has at all times less depth than the Karun and the Ab Gargar. Its course through the alluvial plain is singularly tortuous. At one place, after winding for several miles, we found ourselves within only a few yards from a part of the river in which we had been fully an hour before. The bank which separated us from it might almost have been cut through in a day. After passing through an opening in a reef of rocks, we ascended to within about thirteen miles of Dizful. The force of the current and the shallowness of the stream then compelled us to desist from any further attempt to reach the town, and we returned to Bendi-Kir. Not far from that place, three lions which we had disturbed swam together across the river close to the 'Assyria.' A volley of balls from the vessel apparently had no effect, as they quickly reached the opposite bank and disappeared in the jungle. In descending and ascending the rivers of Khuzistan and Mesopotamia lions were constantly seen on their banks.

We had no difficulty in passing through the

dam at Ahwaz. The 'Assyria' shot through the opening like an arrow. The only danger to be apprehended was that she might not be brought up in time to avoid the rocks in the bed of the river beyond. But she obeyed her helm, and we cleared them without accident. The Karun had now resumed its usual level, and was no longer the impetuous stream that we had found it six weeks before.

On our way back to Baghdad an occurrence happened which might have led to a serious disaster. Whilst we were stopping at one of the stations on the banks of the Tigris, where wood was collected for fuel for the steamers, a favourite greyhound belonging to Lieutenant Selby strayed from the 'Assyria.' Believing that the animal might have been stolen by the Arabs of a neighbouring encampment, he sent a native servant in search of it. This man, having failed to find it, seized a boy, whom he threatened to carry away unless the greyhound were discovered. He was set upon by the father and some other Arabs, who beat him severely and released the child. He returned to the ship howling, and showing his broken head, from which the blood was streaming. Lieutenant Selby, who was of an impetuous disposition, broke into a violent passion, and ordered the marines on board to load their muskets and

to follow him. Dr. Ross and I did our best to dissuade him from committing an act of violence which might end disastrously. Seizing his loaded pistols, he threatened to shoot any one who ventured to interfere with him, and then, landing, went towards the encampment. Near it were some cattle, grazing. He drew up the marines, and commanded them to fire into the herd, which they did, killing several cows. The Arabs, who had run out of their tents with their long guns, exasperated by this wanton outrage, began a desultory fire. Lieutenant Selby, who was leading the marines, fell almost immediately. The corporal then felt compelled to withdraw his men to prevent them from being overpowered and massacred by the Arabs, who had assembled in large numbers and had surrounded Lieutenant Selby, who was lying on the ground. We retreated to the ship, and preparations were made to defend her in case of attack. Whilst we were discussing the measures to be taken to recover her commander, dead or alive, we saw at a distance an Arab coming towards us carrying a heavy load on his shoulders. A sentinel immediately discharged a musket at him. He dropped his load, which proved to be what we thought the dead body of Lieutenant Selby enveloped in an Arab cloak, and ran away.

Although wounded in the head with slugs, and insensible, Lieutenant Selby was not dead. He was taken to Baghdad, and soon recovered from his wounds. Colonel Taylor, having addressed an official complaint against the Arabs to the governor, and having demanded redress for their attack upon an English officer, the pasha sent a body of troops against them, who plundered their tents and carried off their flocks and herds. I felt the injustice of inflicting so severe a punishment upon these unfortunate people, who had acted under great provocation, and really in self-defence, and protested energetically against it. Mainly through my interference their property was ultimately in great part restored to them, and I was able to induce their sheikh, whom I found wandering in the desert, to return with me to Baghdad, and to offer explanations to the British Resident and to Lieutenant Selby. The matter was then settled and hushed up.[5]

[5] Lieutenant Selby was an enterprising and skilful officer, and performed excellent service during the time that he was in command of one of the steamers on the Tigris. But an unfortunate irritability of temper and a want of consideration for the prejudices and feelings of the natives got him more than once into serious trouble. He sent a report of his ascent of the Karun to the Indian Government. It was published in vol. xiv. of the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* in 1844, and consequently two years before my paper on Khuzistan appeared. In it he forgot to mention the fact that I had accompanied him, and that the expedition

We reached Baghdad in the middle of May. Whilst I was preparing to return to England by crossing the Mesopotamian desert to Damascus, news came from Constantinople that, principally in consequence of the proceedings of the Matamet in Khuzistan, and of his invasion and occupation of territory claimed by Turkey, the Sultan was about to declare war against Persia. Colonel Taylor was desirous that Sir Stratford Canning (afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe), then the English ambassador at the Porte, should be fully informed as to the merits of the matters in dispute between the two Powers, and that through his mediation hostilities between them, which might be very injurious to British interests in Turkish Arabia, might be prevented. He asked me whether, instead of proceeding to England by Beyrout, I would take the route by Constantinople, and be the bearer of despatches to Sir Stratford, and furnish him, at the same time, personally, with any information that he might require, should he think fit to offer his mediation. I at once consented to do so.

A Tatar[6] despatched by the pasha was leaving

was undertaken at my suggestion, although he refers to me as a traveller in that province and among the Bakhtiyari in flattering terms.

[6] It is scarcely necessary to explain that the Tatars were government officers employed for the conveyance of despatches between

Baghdad for Constantinople. He agreed to allow me to accompany him and to provide me with one horse during the journey, which was all that I required, as I had no baggage whatever. We were now in June, and the heat in the Assyrian plains was very great. But I was accustomed to it, as well as to fatigue and to every manner of privation. We trotted and galloped night and day, until we reached Mosul in little more than fifty hours, a distance of about 250 miles. The Tatar was de-

different parts of the empire. The race is, I believe, now extinct. Tatars were attached to all the foreign embassies in Turkey, and were renowned for the fidelity with which they discharged their duties. Those in the service of the British ambassador had never been known to betray the trust placed in them, although in very critical times, when a knowledge of the contents of their bags might have been of the greatest importance to some foreign governments, they were exposed to very great temptations. They were much considered and respected wherever they went, and were very rarely attacked, robbed, or molested. Their power of resisting fatigue was very great, and they would continue for many days on horseback with little rest, proceeding all the while at a jog-trot, except on entering a town or village, when they lashed their horses into a gallop through the bazars and streets, scattering mud over foot-passengers and the merchants who sat cross-legged in their shops. They were accompanied by a sureji, or post-boy, who led the horse carrying the letter-bags. The Tatar rode behind and kept the horses to their work with his heavy whip. I have had many a joyous ride through the European and Asiatic provinces of Turkey in company of a Tatar, who generally proved a very intelligent and instructive companion, intimately acquainted with the country through which we passed. In those days the government post-horses were very different from the wretched animals which at a later period were furnished to travellers.

tained there for three days by the governor, who had to prepare his despatches for the Porte. I spent them very pleasantly and very profitably with Monsieur Botta, who had recently been appointed French Consul there, and was meditating those excavations which ended in the discovery of the Assyrian ruins at Khorsabad, and rendered his name famous. We visited together the great mounds opposite Mosul, which were believed to occupy the site of ancient Nineveh, and on one of which stands the small mosque containing the apocryphal tomb of Jonah. He had opened one or two trenches in the largest of the mounds, known as Kouyunjik, but had only discovered a few kiln-burnt bricks and fragments of alabaster inscribed with cuneiform characters.

I had long wished to examine these great ruins, and had proposed to Mr. Stirling, an English merchant residing at Sheffield, and who was the agent of Mr. Hector, of Baghdad, to undertake excavations in them, believing that the objects of antiquity to be discovered would amply repay the expense. I had left Baghdad, however, before receiving any answer to my proposal. The conviction that remains of great interest and importance were concealed within these shapeless accumulations of earth and rubbish, induced me to encourage M. Botta in his experiments. As it is

now well known, the mound of Kouyunjik covered the great palace of Sennacherib which I discovered four years afterwards. M. Botta, having heard of the existence of sculptured slabs at Khorsabad, abandoned the site opposite Mosul and transferred his researches to that place, with what result the Assyrian sculptures in the Louvre and his magnificent work, published by the French Government, have shown.

M. Botta was a delightful companion. The son of the eminent Italian historian, he had become a French citizen. He was liberal in his views, large-minded, willing to impart what he knew, and ready to acknowledge the merit of others. His scientific attainments, especially as a botanist, were considerable. He had been employed in the Consular service in China, where, unfortunately, he had acquired the fatal habit of opium-smoking, which ruined his health and rendered him liable to occasional fits of melancholy and despondency of the most painful nature. He persuaded me to try one of his Chinese pipes. The result, happily, was that I suffered from so severe a headache, accompanied by violent sickness, that I have never made a second attempt, and have held the very smell of opium in abhorrence ever since. He sought to convince me that, if I only persevered, I should speedily overcome the effects which a

first trial frequently produces, and that I should find in opium-smoking an unlimited source of comfort and happiness.

Leaving Mosul, we quitted on the second day the sultry Assyrian plains, and ascending the mountains at Mardin, found ourselves in the high table-lands and forests of Asia Minor. This route has been so often traversed and written about by travellers that I need not describe it. Moreover, I travelled so quickly with my Tatar, only stopping to change horses, and rarely lying down to rest for more than two or three hours during the twenty-four, that I had no opportunity of seeing more of the country than my rapid ride afforded me.

I reached Samsoun on the Black Sea the day before a steamer bound from Trebizond to the Bosphorus touched at that port. I still wore the Bakhtiyari dress. In order to make a decent appearance on reaching the Turkish capital, and on presenting myself at the British Embassy, I had to borrow of the English Vice-Consul some articles of European clothing, as there were none to be bought in the town. Thus equipped I embarked, and found myself on July 9 again at Constantinople.

CHAPTER XIX.

Arrive at Constantinople—Reception at the British Embassy—Sir Stratford Canning—Mission to European provinces of Turkey—Salonica—Omar Pasha—The Spanish Jews—Consular abuses—Ambelakia—Larissa—Chatalja—Namik Pasha—Meteora—A swollen stream—Mezzovo—Zagori—An Albanian feud—Dislocate my shoulder—Revolution in Servia—The Servian leaders—Return to Constantinople—Travel Tatar—Thrown among tailors—Reach Pera—Sir Stratford's Servian policy—Zuban—Policy of Russia—Mediation of England in Turco-Persian question—Remain at Constantinople.

I DISEMBARKED from the steamer in the Golden Horn, and landed early in the morning at the Tophana Wharf. Hiring a porter to carry my saddle-bags, which contained all the effects that remained to me, I ascended the hill to a small hotel kept by one Roboli, where I had lodged on my first visit to Constantinople. Having secured a room, and deposited my scant luggage, I descended again to the Bosphorus, and engaged a caïque with two rowers to take me to Buyukdereh, where Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador, was then residing. I had promised Colonel

Taylor to lose no time in delivering the despatches which he had entrusted to my care, and which were of urgent importance. Accordingly, I proceeded to the Embassy as I had landed, with only such European garments as I had been able to procure at Samsoun, and bronzed and unkempt after my long and arduous journey and constant exposure to heat and cold, rain and sun.

In those days there were no passenger-steamers on the Bosphorus, and it took about three hours for two stalwart 'caikjis' to row to Buyukdereh. On arriving there I presented myself at the Embassy and delivered my letter for Sir Stratford Canning to a servant. I was told to wait, which I did for a considerable time. At length a fashionably-dressed young gentleman appeared, asked me roughly for the despatches of which I was the bearer, informed me that the Ambassador was too much occupied to see any one, and turning on his heel left the room without deigning to listen to what I had to say.

I felt very indignant at this uncourteous treatment, which I thought scarcely justified by my personal appearance, although the attaché might have been warranted in looking with some contempt upon an unknown traveller, who had but few marks of European civilisation either in his dress or his complexion. Having endeavoured in

vain to obtain an audience of some other member of the Embassy, whom I could ask for a passport to enable me to travel over the Continent to England, I left the house and returned to Pera.

After this rebuff I resolved to apply to the British Consul-General for this necessary document, and to leave Constantinople as soon as I had obtained it. Mr. Cartwright, who then filled that office, received me with the blunt kindness and good-nature for which he was well known to all English travellers in Turkey. He at once promised to send me my passport.

But before leaving Constantinople I was determined to inform the Ambassador of the manner in which I had been received at the Embassy. I accordingly wrote to Sir Stratford Canning, expressing in somewhat angry terms the indignation the treatment I had received had caused me. I had no right to expect any reply to my letter, which was hastily written under a sense of offended dignity and of resentment for what I considered a personal affront I was the more hurt by my reception at the Embassy, as in order to deliver the despatches with which I had been charged to Sir Stratford, and to afford him information which the British Resident at Baghdad considered of importance to the public service, I

had put myself to no little inconvenience, and had suffered considerable fatigue in travelling Tatar night and day from Baghdad.

I was not a little surprised when I received within a few hours a kind and courteous answer from Sir Stratford Canning, expressing his regret that he had not seen me, and that I had cause to complain of my reception at the Embassy; thanking me for having brought the despatches for him from the British Resident at Baghdad, and begging me to call upon him without delay, as he was desirous of communicating with me. I could not do less than comply with his request, and on the following morning I returned to Buyukdereh.

Sir Stratford received me immediately. I was greatly struck by his appearance. His hair was already white. His tall and spare frame was not altogether erect, as he had the habit of stooping. There was, perhaps, a somewhat too evident assumption of dignity and reserve in his manner, which was intended to impress people with the utmost respect for the Queen's Ambassador, and if the occasion required it, with awe. His earnest grey eyes seemed to penetrate into one's very thoughts. His thin, compressed lips denoted a violent and passionate temper. His complexion was so transparent that the least emotion, whether of pleasure or anger, was at once shown by its varying tints.

A broad and massive overhanging brow gave him an air of profound wisdom and sagacity. He was altogether a very formidable-looking personage, and he made upon me the impression which he, no doubt, intended to produce.

His manner towards me was, however, kind and considerate. He admitted and lamented that strangers had frequently cause to complain of their reception at the Embassy, adding that he had reprimanded 'the gentlemen of the Chancery' for the manner in which they had treated me. He then began to question me upon the state of the country from which I had recently arrived, and especially as to the events on the Turco-Persian frontier of which I had been a witness. He appeared to be satisfied with the answers that I was able to give him. After a long conversation, and when I was about to retire, he remarked that my knowledge of the territory in dispute between Turkey and Persia might be of considerable use to him, as he had reason to believe that the advance of the Persian troops to Muhammera and into territory on the Euphrates claimed by Turkey might lead to war between the two States. It had occurred to him, he said, that the mediation of England might be employed to prevent a rupture between them and consequent bloodshed, and he asked my opinion. I did not hesitate to approve of his idea,

offering at the same time to furnish him with such information as I had acquired during my residence in Khuzistan.

On parting with me he expressed a hope that I would remain for a short time in Constantinople, as he was desirous of seeing me again, and of obtaining further information from me as soon as there was a prospect of the mediation of England being accepted by Persia and the Porte.

I returned to Pera, and some days passed without my hearing from Sir Stratford Canning. My means were now nearly exhausted, and as I had scarcely more money than was required for my journey to England, I wrote to inform him that unless he desired to see me again I should leave Constantinople in a few days. Not receiving any reply to my letter I completed the preparations for my departure, and took my passage on board a steamer bound for Galatz, whence I intended to make my way by the Danube to Vienna.

I was descending the steep street which led from Pera to the wharf where I was to embark, when I was overtaken by a 'cavass' from the Embassy. He had followed me from the hotel with a note from Sir Stratford Canning, informing me that he thought he saw his way to make use of my proffered services, adding, 'Instead of going away, come and dine here to-morrow, and I will

try to arrange a plan with you.' After a moment's reflection I determined to accept Sir Stratford's invitation.

On the following day I went to Buyukdereh. The Ambassador told me that negotiations for the joint mediation of England and Russia between Turkey and Persia were in progress, but that some time would probably elapse before the latter Powers would formally accept it, and before he might be in a position to make use of the information which I possessed. He proposed that, in the interval, I should visit the western part of Turkey in Europe, and especially Bosnia and Servia, as both these provinces were in a very unsatisfactory condition, and there was reason to believe that political events of importance were about to occur in them. He suggested that I should travel through them and report to him on the state of affairs, but without my mission having any official character.

I readily accepted Sir Stratford's proposal. The few preparations that I had to make for my journey were soon completed, and on August 20 I left Constantinople by a small Austrian steamer for Salonica. I was furnished with letters of introduction to the Turkish authorities, and to the British Consuls and Consular Agents in the districts which I was about to visit, and arrangements

were made for me to correspond directly with the Ambassador.

Landing at Salonica, I forced my way through a clamorous crowd of porters, Jews, and beggars, and proceeded to the British Consulate. Mr. Blunt, the Consul, procured a room for me in the house of a native Christian family.

Mr. Blunt had been for many years in the British Consular service, and was a man of great knowledge and experience of Eastern affairs, and intimately acquainted with Turkey, its various populations and their languages. He was, moreover, a courteous and high-minded English gentleman of good family and education.

Omar Pasha, then governor of the province, was a Turk of the old school, who could neither read nor write. The populations complained of his government as arbitrary and oppressive. He had established monopolies of various articles of primary necessity, such as salt, notwithstanding the treaties between Turkey and England and other European Powers, by which the Porte had engaged to abolish them. These monopolies weighed heavily upon the poor and upon traders. Whilst they brought him wealth they brought ruin upon the country, which was suffering from secular misrule. As he was courteous and dignified in his manners, like most Turkish officials of rank, he

was favourably spoken of by the Consuls, whose representations and remonstrances were patiently listened to, although they produced but little effect.

Salonica was already a rising town, and gave promise of becoming the principal port for the trade of the European provinces of the Turkish Empire. But at that time there were no roads, and the produce of the soil and European merchandise were conveyed on the backs of mules and horses by rugged and difficult tracks. Brigandage prevailed, and the country in general was insecure in consequence of the political agitation which had already commenced amongst the Christian populations of Roumelia, promoted by foreign intrigues.[1]

One of the objects of my mission was to inquire into the movement which was alleged to be in progress amongst the Bulgarians, and the means by which it was being brought about. Secret societies were known to exist, which had for their object to excite the Christians to rise against the Turkish Government. They were directed and supported by secret committees in Russia and by Russian agents. There had already been more than one attempt at insurrection, which had been suppressed

[1] The 'Bulgarian Question,' which was destined in after years to assume such grave proportions and to lead to a great war, was already appearing on the horizon.

by the Turkish authorities. The Bulgarians, being of the Greek faith, were then included by the Porte, in classifying the Christian subjects of the Sultan, among the Greeks. It was not until many years afterwards that the Christians to the south of the Balkans, speaking the Bulgarian language, were recognised as a distinct nation. At the time of my visit to Salonica no part of its Christian population, which was considerable, was known as Bulgarian. The town then contained no less than twenty-five thousand Jews, who even exceeded in numbers the Musulmans. They were the descendants of those Jews who had been driven by persecution from Spain, and had taken refuge in the Ottoman dominions, where they were accorded a generous shelter and allowed the free profession of their faith. They still spoke the Spanish language, and were to be distinguished from the Turks and Christians, not only by their peculiar dress and by the long locks which the men wore on either side of their foreheads, but by their fair complexion, blue eyes, and light hair and beard.

During the short time that I remained at Salonica I was much surprised by the abuses arising from the capitulations, or ancient conventions between Turkey and the European Powers, which were rapidly undermining the authority of

the Turkish Government, and rendering its continued existence, under the state of things which they were calculated to produce, almost impossible. The principal were the exemption claimed by foreigners from dues and taxes, the monopolies in trade which their privileges enabled them to secure, the interference of the Consuls in all local affairs and in the administration, and the facilities afforded to Turkish subjects for throwing off their Ottoman nationality and obtaining that of some other country. Even the smallest European State had its Consul or Consular Agent at Salonica. These officials were in the habit of selling passports, and consequently foreign protection, to native Christians. Most of them (not however the British Consul) trafficked in these documents, and grew rich upon the profits they made out of them. One of the principal offenders in this respect was the Greek Consul, who claimed a large portion of the indigenous Christian population of the town as subjects of the Hellenic kingdom.

A privilege at that time enjoyed by the foreign Consuls was the cause of no little loss to the Turkish revenue, and of legitimate complaint on the part of the Turkish authorities and population. Each Consul claimed the right to keep one bakehouse, one butcher's shop, and one tavern. This claim was founded upon an ancient custom which

allowed the representatives of foreign nations to provide for the supply of the shipping of their respective countries.

On August 25 I left Salonica in a small boat bound for the village of St. Teodoro, on the coast of Thessaly. We set sail in the evening, and crossing the gulf with a light wind arrived at our destination soon after sunrise. It was with some difficulty that I was able to obtain a horse to take me to Platamona. I had fallen in with a Prussian doctor in the Turkish service named Auerbach, who was going to Larissa to take charge of the quarantine establishment in that place. We rode together along the sea-coast at the foot of Mount Olympus, and through the vale of Tempe, with the beautiful scenery of which, and the wonderful luxuriance of its vegetation, I was greatly charmed. It reminded me of classic subjects as treated by Claude in his pictures. But we found the country almost deserted. The mountain range of Olympus and Ossa was the refuge of bands of Greek brigands, who, descending into the valleys and plains, infested the roads, robbed travellers and caravans, almost put a stop to trade, and had compelled the inhabitants of the open country to abandon their homes and to seek for security in the towns. The soil consequently remained uncultivated, and one of the richest districts of European Turkey was reduced

to the condition of a wilderness. Reports were rife of the presence of brigands on the road we were taking; but we performed our journey without meeting with any adventure.

We crossed the Peneus by a ferry, and followed its winding course through a thickly-wooded valley, in which the pomegranate, the vine, and the fig—the remains of former cultivation—mingled with forest trees. We then entered a narrow and difficult gorge, through which the river forced its way, and arrived at sunset at Baba, a small village almost deserted, in which we found a dirty half-ruined coffee-house, where we took up our quarters for the night.

Next day we passed through the ruined town of Ambelakia, on Mount Ossa, about an hour's ride above Baba. This was once a place of considerable importance, and the remains of large, well-built houses, and of spacious buildings for the manufacture of cotton fabrics, gave evidence of its former industry and prosperity. Having read Urquhart's 'Spirit of the East'—a book which had a great charm for me, and in which are admirable descriptions of Turkish life—I had been greatly interested in the account he gave of Ambelakia. It was inhabited by Greeks, who, high up on the rocky slope of Ossa, had enjoyed an almost complete independence from Turkish

rule. Some of them, of an enterprising and ingenious character, formed the idea of constituting the population into a kind of joint-stock company for the manufacture of cotton prints, such as were then used in Turkey. The enterprise was for a time successful, and Ambelakia became one of the most prosperous communities in the Sultan's dominions. It was unable, however, to compete with foreign manufactures when the markets of Turkey were opened to Europe, and especially to England, by treaties of commerce. The administration of the affairs of the company fell into incompetent hands; frauds were alleged to have been committed by its managers; failure was the result. The manufactories were closed, and the principal inhabitants quitted the place, which soon fell into ruins.

From Ambelakia I descended the southern slope of Mount Ossa to Larissa, a town of some importance, situated in a rich and extensive plain, and at that time the residence of the governor of the province of Thessaly. Namik Pasha, who held that post, had, however, gone to Chatalja or Fersala —the ancient Pharsalia—to be present at an annual fair held there. As I had letters for him I determined to follow him. As Chatalja was near the Greek frontier, and the fair would be frequented by people from both sides of the borders, I hoped

to be able to obtain useful information as to the state of the country.

At Larissa I was hospitably entertained for the night by the Greek bishop. The town was in a ruined condition, and the rich plain in which it stood ill-cultivated. The majority of the population was Mohammedan.

A ride of six hours took me to Chatalja. Namik Pasha received me very cordially, and having quartered me upon the Greek bishop, who here, as elsewhere, was expected to entertain travellers recommended to the Turkish authorities, invited me to spend my time with him as long as I remained in the town. He was then a young man of prepossessing appearance, and of considerable intelligence. He was one of the foremost among the young Turks who had been brought up in the school of Reshid Pasha, the great Turkish reformer, and who had been selected to occupy posts in the administration of the Ottoman Empire by Sultan Mahmoud. He spoke French with fluency. After serving for some time in the army, in which he had rapidly risen to the rank of a 'Ferik,' or Major-General, he had been sent as Turkish Ambassador to London. On his return he had been named governor of the frontier province of Thessaly, a post of considerable importance on account of the critical state of the relations between Turkey

and Greece, the frequent violations of the territory of both States by brigands, and the endeavours of Greek and other agents to excite the Christian populations to rise against their Mohammedan rulers.

Namik Pasha had rendered himself popular both with Musulmans and Christians by his just and liberal administration. He professed very enlightened views and an earnest desire to improve the condition of the province. As was usual in Turkey, he was not left long enough in his government to put his intentions into execution. He made a very favourable impression upon me. I was disposed to look upon him as one of the men who, by their honesty, abilities, and enlightenment, might assist in carrying out the reforms instituted by Reshid Pasha, and save his country from the fate which even then appeared to menace it. But I was disappointed in him. He was afterwards employed in many high and important posts; but he abandoned his early principles, and joined the fanatical and reactionary party in Turkey.

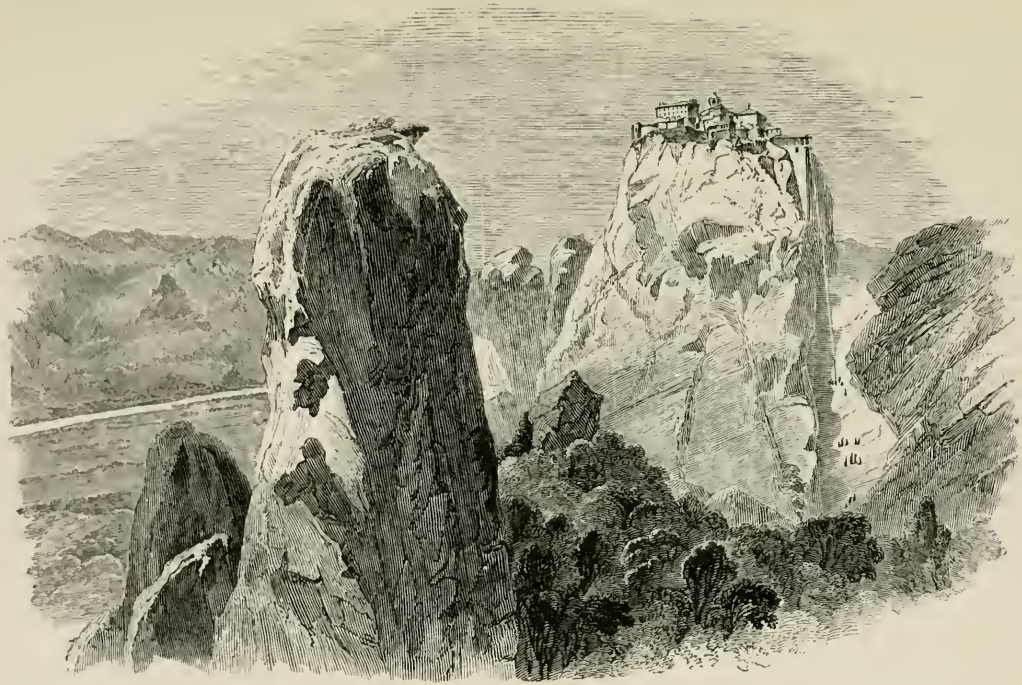
At the time of my visit to Thessaly, the province was apparently in a state of repose. Outwardly, the Christians, constituting by far the largest portion of the population, seemed satisfied with the Turkish rule, and, with the exception of brigandage, usually originating on the Greek side

of the frontier, and outrages occasionally committed by Greek patriots, who crossed into Turkish territory to perpetrate them on Christians as well as Mohammedans, when they could do so with impunity, public tranquillity and order were fairly maintained. But the Pasha was seriously disturbed by the intrigues and conspiracies of foreign agents, who, he was convinced, were seeking to incite the Greek subjects of the Sultan to insurrection.

Leaving Chatalja, I accompanied an old Ottoman Bey, named Abd'ullah, to whom I had been recommended by the Pasha, to Karditza, a village which, with the surrounding lands, he farmed from the Government. I was struck by the fertility of the plain of Pharsalia, and its numerous villages, inhabited almost exclusively by Greeks. At Tricala, a town of some importance which I reached next afternoon, I was again lodged at the house of the Greek bishop.

The following day I visited the celebrated convents of Meteora, built upon lofty, isolated rocks in a valley of Mount Pindus. That upon which stands the monastery of St. Barlaam rises abruptly to the height of above two hundred feet. There were two ways of reaching the summit: either to climb the rock by ladders attached, or rather suspended, to its face, which required a steady head,

and was a somewhat perilous proceeding; or to be drawn up in a net attached to a rope, which was lowered and raised by a rude windlass. I chose the latter method. The net having been spread out at the foot of the rock, I seated myself upon it with my Greek servant. When the signal that we were ready was given, the four corners were raised, and we shortly found ourselves, like two fish in a landing-net, suspended in mid-air. My companion, when he saw that he was leaving the solid earth and was powerless, became greatly alarmed and plunged violently, struggling with his arms and legs, and inflicting blows upon me with both. He continued to do so, roaring out with fear, until we had reached the summit, and found ourselves before an archway, in which were two monks. When the net with its contents was on a level with them, they gave it a violent push outwards, and when it had swung back over the platform on which they stood, suddenly loosened the rope, and sent us rolling on the floor. This primitive mode of ascent was neither pleasant nor safe. I was black and blue from the blows and kicks of my companion, and the windlass and the rope which sustained the net appeared to be old and in a very rotten condition. I spent a night in the convent, and then descended to the valley below in the same fashion that I had ascended from



THE METEORA CONVENTS.

it, except that I took care to be alone in the net.[2]

Whilst crossing, on the following day, the high mountain range of Pindus, which separates Thessaly from the province of Janina, in Albania, we were overtaken by a violent thunderstorm. We had several times forded the Peneus, across which the track constantly led us. The river, which was gradually increasing, in consequence of the heavy fall of rain, became an impetuous mountain torrent so suddenly that we could not recross it, and found ourselves unable to go either backwards or forwards. We had to remain for nearly twenty-four hours thus confined on a narrow ledge, along which the mountain path was carried, without food for ourselves or our horses. By the morning the storm had ceased, and the river having gradually subsided, we were able to ford it, and before nightfall reached the large village of Mezzovo, on the western slope of Pindus, inhabited entirely by Greeks. The place had been recently plundered by a band of brigands, which had crossed the frontiers of Greece, headed by a well-known Greek patriot, for the purpose of inciting the populations to insurrection against the Sultan, or of pillaging and

[2] An interesting and amusing account of the monasteries of Meteora, and of the ascent to that of St. Barlaam, is given by Mr. Curzon in his entertaining work, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*, published in 1849.

murdering his Majesty's Musulman subjects. Not having succeeded in either undertaking, they considered that they might safely and profitably rob and outrage their fellow-Christians of Mezzovo. They had done so effectively. The houses in the village had been sacked, and the women deprived of their ornaments and grossly ill-treated. The unhappy inhabitants had no complaints to make of the Turks, but prayed to be protected from those who came to deliver them from the Turkish yoke.

I spent some days at Janina, and visited thence the very interesting community of Zagori, consisting of several Greek villages situated in a mountainous district and difficult of access. It then enjoyed a constitution of its own, which had been granted to it at the time of the Turkish conquest, and had always been respected by the Porte. No Turk was allowed to reside in the district, and the communications of its inhabitants with the Turkish authorities were carried on by representatives chosen by popular election and accredited to the Pasha of Janina. The men of Zagori were in the habit of leaving their native mountains and seeking employment in various parts of Europe and of the Turkish Empire, serving as clerks in counting-houses or in merchants' offices, practising as physicians or lawyers, or engaging in trade—returning to their homes after they had saved sufficient money to

pass the rest of their days in comfort. They were known for their integrity, intelligence, and industry. The women were celebrated for their beauty. When I was in the district some of the villages were almost deserted by the men, and, as I was most hospitably entertained by the ladies, I had the opportunity of convincing myself that their reputation was well deserved. Their good looks were, moreover, set off by a very elegant Albanian costume, in which rich embroideries in gold formed a conspicuous feature.

The villages of Zagori had a most flourishing appearance. The houses were well built of stone, and, for the most part, elegantly furnished in the European fashion, their proprietors having brought back with them from foreign countries in which they had resided, the tastes and habits of civilised Europe. In each village was a school, in which an excellent education was given, generally by professors from Janina or Greece, to children of both sexes, and in every house I visited I found a library of useful books in various languages. To enter Zagori from the wild districts of Albania by which it is surrounded, was to pass suddenly from barbarism to civilisation. The people of Zagori were happy and contented. They governed themselves, enjoying an almost entire independence. They were neither molested by the Albanians, nor

interfered with by the Turkish Government. Their only dread was from the bands of patriotic brigands who came from Greece to liberate them from the Turks, and to afford them a proof of their sympathy by plundering their villages and shamefully ill-treating the inhabitants.[3]

The scenery of Zagori was of the highest beauty. The shapes of the mountains, broken into innumerable peaks, were singularly picturesque, and with the villages built upon their declivities, and surrounded by vineyards and gardens, formed altogether a charming prospect.

From Janina I rode leisurely through Albania and Bosnia, passing through the principal towns in both provinces, then but little known, visiting many of the Albanian Beys, by whom I was always most hospitably entertained, hearing much of robbers, but fortunately not meeting with any, admiring the magnificent scenery of this part of Turkey in Europe, with its mountains, forests, and lakes, and collecting political and statistical information which I duly communicated to Sir Stratford Canning.

At that time Musulmans and Christians lived in peace and harmony in these provinces. They

[3] Such was the district of Zagori when I visited it in 1843. I am not aware of the changes that have taken place in it since: they have probably not been for the better.

could scarcely be distinguished one from the other. They intermarried, and it was not uncommon to meet an Albanian Bey with a Christian wife. The Beys themselves, notwithstanding their lawless habits, arising chiefly from family feuds, which led to constant conflicts and bloodshed, were hospitable and generous, and without religious prejudices or intolerance. I was frequently admitted into the apartments of their wives, who did not think it necessary to veil themselves, like most other Mohammedan women, before a stranger.

Space does not allow me to transcribe from my journal a detailed account of my travels through Albania and Bosnia. I will only mention two incidents in them. I passed a day in a large Albanian village belonging to two Beys, between whom there was a feud. I lodged with one of them in his castle, or rather fortified house. Whilst I was with him he was attacked and besieged by his rival, and a regular battle ensued, which continued for several hours. My host was able to repulse his assailants, who did not withdraw until several of their number were slain. I was requested by him to withdraw into the harem, the safest part of the building, whilst the conflict was going on. As I had no wish to take part in it, I did so. As soon as the road was clear I thought it prudent to leave the village, as an immediate renewal of hos-

tilities was expected. I heard afterwards that the Bey who had entertained me had been defeated, his residence taken and sacked, and he himself killed. The Porte then exercised but little authority in Albania, and was unable, or more probably unwilling, to prevent these local disturbances, which weakened the Albanians and prevented them from being dangerous to the Government.

The other incident to which I have referred was the following. When riding through a forest in Bosnia, I fell from my horse and dislocated my shoulder. There was no village nor house near, and I had to ride several miles in great pain until we reached an isolated khan. It was a wretched place, in which little else but black bread and a fiery kind of 'raki' were provided for travellers. The stables formed the principal part of it, and it had only one small room, upon the floor of which the Christian keeper of the khan spread some hay for me to lie upon. He further offered to set my arm, which he proceeded to do by standing on my body, and, being a powerful Bosniac, by pulling the limb by main force back into its proper place. I could not mount my horse for several days. When I was able to continue my journey, and was about to depart, the 'khanji' demanded a preposterous sum for the accommodation with which he had furnished me, and for

the surgical operation which he had performed. I absolutely refused to pay it, offering him at the same time a liberal reward for his services. He not only declined to receive it, but, closing and locking the door of the khan, declared that he would not allow me to leave it until I had given him the money for which he asked. Exasperated by the man's insolence, I threatened unless I was let out to set fire to the building. Thinking that an Englishman was capable of executing such a threat, he opened the door, and I went away in triumph, giving him, however, the sum he had previously refused to accept.

On reaching the Servian frontier I found it occupied by irregular troops, and the province in a state of war. I had some difficulty and ran some danger in making my way to Belgrade. I was constantly stopped on the road by pickets of armed men, who looked upon a stranger with great suspicion, and to whom I was unable to explain, not knowing their language, that I was an English traveller on my way to the capital. The Servians were then not more civilised than the Albanians and Bosniacs, and not less ready to use their arms. After a long and fatiguing journey over the roughest of tracks, in a rude cart without springs—the only mode of conveyance—I found myself in Belgrade.

Shortly before my arrival a revolution had taken place in Servia, which had led to the expulsion of Milosh, the reigning prince, and the election in his stead of the son of Karageorge, the warrior-chief to whom the Servians owed their independence. The Principality was still in a very disturbed state, and the whole male population under arms. It was expected that Russia or the Porte would interfere to restore their fallen ruler, and the Servians had determined to resist any attempt to impose him upon them. A considerable force was assembled at Belgrade, which had been declared in a state of siege.

The principal leaders in the revolutionary movement were Petronievitch, Wuchich, and Zuban, who formed the Provisional Government. I had letters for them, which I presented on arriving at Belgrade. They had all three been prominent chiefs and patriots in the insurrection against her Turkish rulers which, principally under the direction of the popular hero, Karageorge, had freed Servia from the Ottoman yoke. Petronievitch was a man of some culture, had received his education in Austria, and spoke more than one European language. Wuchich was a brave and rude soldier of the pure Servian type, unacquainted with any tongue save his own. Zuban was a lawyer by profession, and had some pretensions to a knowledge

of literature. He had, indeed, although unacquainted with the English language, attempted to translate Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' into Servian. My communications with him were carried on in a kind of dog-Latin. The three statesmen, if they could be so called, enjoyed a high reputation for honesty, capacity, and patriotism amongst their fellow-countrymen, and were considered the chiefs of the popular and Liberal party which resisted interference in their affairs by Russia, under whose influence Prince Milosh was accused of being, and which desired for Servia a more complete independence and freedom from foreign control and dictation. Wuchich still wore the old Servian dress, which consisted of a jacket, vest, baggy trousers and leggings of brown coarse cloth, embroidered with black braid, and the Turkish red cap. In the huge belt of leather encircling his waist he carried an enormous pair of pistols, and a heavy sword dangled by his side. Petronievitch and Zuban were in European costume, but, like all their countrymen who still considered themselves subjects of the Sultan, wore the national head-dress, the fez.

The English Consul-General at Belgrade had been strongly opposed to the popular movement against Prince Milosh, and when it proved successful, had lowered his Consular flag, had suspended

his relations with the authorities, and had left Servia for Constantinople, to protest against it to the British Ambassador. This conduct, which was considered by the Servians as an unwarrantable interference in their affairs, was deeply resented.

The introductions which I possessed for the three Servian leaders, and for the Pasha who commanded the Turkish garrison which then occupied the fortress of Belgrade, enabled me to obtain trustworthy information as to the objects of the recent revolution, the intentions of its promoters, and the condition of public opinion in Servia. I convinced myself that the British Consul-General had acted hastily and injudiciously. It appeared to me that if England were called upon to take any part in the affairs of Servia, her true policy was to give her support to those who were struggling to obtain Liberal institutions, to uphold the independence of their country, and to resist the undue interference of Russia in its government.

Having formed these views I felt that even in my character of a private traveller, which I carefully maintained during the time of my residence in Belgrade, I was not committing an act of indiscretion in acceding to the request of the members of the Provisional Government, to inform Sir Stratford Canning on my return to Constantinople

of the true state of affairs, and to communicate to him copies of various documents which they believed would justify the expulsion of Milosh and the election of the son of Karageorge as his successor.

As upon the decision which Sir Stratford Canning might take, upon the representations of the Consul-General, might probably depend a war undertaken by Russia, or upon her demand by the Porte, to crush the popular party in Servia and to restore Milosh to the throne—a war which could not fail to cause much bloodshed and misery—I determined to proceed at once to Constantinople. The quickest mode of doing so was by riding post. The Queen's messenger, who in those days conveyed the despatches between Downing Street and the Turkish capital, and the Cabinet couriers of other Powers, as well as the Tatars employed by the Porte, performed their journeys in this fashion. Consequently, there was then a good supply of post-horses on a road which formed the main line of communication through the European provinces of Turkey, and between her and the rest of Europe.

The Pasha of Belgrade offered to send a Government Tatar with me as far as Nissa, and to give me a letter to the governor of that place, who would provide me with a fresh Tatar to Constanti-

nople. The Servian authorities were instructed to afford me any assistance of which I might be in need, and peremptory orders to the post-masters on my route insured me an immediate supply of horses at all the post-stations. It was the middle of October, and the weather, especially at night, was already cold in the mountains and in the bleak plains of Servia and Bulgaria. I consequently provided myself with a cloak lined with sheepskins, and purchasing a roomy and comfortable Tatar saddle, with heavy shovel stirrups, which served for spurs, I started from Belgrade on my journey to Constantinople.

The gates of Belgrade were being closed, in consequence of the state of siege, when I left the city at sunset. A 'sureji,' leading a horse, on which was placed my saddle-bags and those of the Tatar, led the way. The Tatar himself followed, with his long whip, which he used incessantly to keep the animals in front of him to their full speed. I brought up the rear. Notwithstanding the darkness of the night, and the state of the tracks which passed for roads, but which were deep in mud and were frequently lost altogether, we galloped day and night as fast as the horses could carry us, over rocky hills and through dense forests.

In the afternoon of the day after I left Bel-

grade, we reached the considerable town of Nissa, passing, as we entered it, the pyramid of human skulls—a trophy of a Turkish victory over the Servians—which was then still preserved. We rode through the narrow streets and bazars, still at full galop, scattering thick black mud over the passengers and the shopkeepers in their stalls—the 'sureji,' as was the custom when preceding a Tatar, warning the crowd of his approach by loud discordant yells and by cracking his whip.

The Pasha, to whom I delivered my letter, sent at once for a fresh Tatar to accompany me to Constantinople, and ordered horses to be got ready for me without delay. As an attempt had been made to construct a road from Nissa to Sophia, he offered me the use of his carriage for the first two or three stages. As I thought I could thus obtain a few hours' sleep after my journey through the night, I accepted his offer. I was followed by the Tatar, and a 'sureji,' leading a spare horse for me to mount if necessary. I soon found that this had been a wise precaution. The Pasha's carriage was drawn by four small active horses driven by a Bulgarian coachman, who urged them with his long whip and his cries to their full speed, utterly regardless of the state of the so-called roads and the stones and rocks which encumbered it. The carriage itself was a rickety, nondescript vehicle,

with primitive springs, constructed in Hungary. Sleep was out of the question. I was soon so much shaken that I preferred to dismiss the coachman with a present and complimentary message to his master, and to mount the spare horse.

The only incident of my journey that I recollect was that, when following the yelling 'sureji' and Tatar at full galop through a narrow and crowded bazar in one of the towns through which we passed, my horse stumbled on the slippery stone pavement, and, throwing me over its head, deposited me in the midst of a circle of tailors, seated cross-legged at their work in an open shop. They were not a little alarmed at this sudden intrusion, and I was no less surprised at finding myself in such company—fortunately without hurt or injury.

We reached Adrianople early one morning, having galloped day and night without stopping, except to change horses at the post stations. My Tatar, who had been accustomed to travel at a jog-trot pace, which was exceedingly fatiguing to me, declared that he could go no further. He accordingly conducted me to the 'konak.' or residence of the governor, who undertook to provide me at once with a fresh Tatar. Whilst the necessary preparations were being made, I went to a neighbouring Turkish bath. After a short, but

sound sleep on the soft cushions and white linen of the outer hall, I felt thoroughly refreshed and ready to continue my journey. I dressed and returned to the 'konak.' I found everything ready for my departure, and in a few minutes was in the saddle again.

The vast undulating plains of Roumelia, smooth as a racecourse, were soon crossed. The bracing October air, with a cloudless sky overhead, and the rapid motion, produced an exhilarating effect which made me forget my fatigues.

I reached Constantinople before dawn on the sixth day after leaving Belgrade. I had performed this journey of above six hundred miles in less time by some hours than Colonel Townley, a Queen's messenger, whose Tatar ride over the same ground had been mentioned by Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons as the fastest on record. I was, consequently, not a little proud of my feat. As some time had yet to elapse before the Adrianople gate, at which I had arrived, would be opened—the gates of Stamboul were then closed between sunset and sunrise—I dismounted, and lying on the ground, slept until I could enter the city. I was full an hour passing through the narrow and ill-paved streets of the Turkish quarter of Stamboul, and through Galata and Pera, before I reached Roboli's hotel.

Having breakfasted and made myself as presentable as my limited wardrobe permitted, I hired a horse and galloped to Buyukdereh, where Sir Stratford Canning was still residing. It was only the date of the letters that I brought to him which convinced him that I had left Belgrade six days before. I found that he had already, from the reports which he had received, come to the same conclusion as I had as to the revolution in Servia, and as to the policy which it behoved the English Government to pursue with regard to it. He had condemned the hasty step taken by the British Consul-General in lowering his flag and leaving Belgrade, and had directed him to return to his post without delay.

Sir Stratford Canning was highly satisfied with the accounts which I was able to give him of the state of affairs in Servia, as they confirmed him in the opinion which he had formed. He was desirous of entering into indirect communication with the leaders of the recent movement in the Principality, in order to obtain full and trustworthy information as to their views, and as to the events which were occurring there. The personal acquaintance which I had formed at Belgrade with the principal persons concerned in it enabled him to make use of me to this end. Shortly after my return to Constantinople, Zuban, who was Minister of Justice in

the Provisional Government, was sent there upon a mission to the Porte. Through him I was able to acquire the information that Sir Stratford Canning needed, and to communicate the Ambassador's views to those who had been entrusted with the direction of affairs in Servia, and to influence to a certain extent their conduct.

One of the charges made against the Provisional Government was its cruel treatment of prisoners belonging to the rival political party. It was accused, amongst other things, of placing them in deep open pits, where they were left exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and without sufficient food. There was, unfortunately, a sufficient foundation for this charge. I had ventured to remonstrate on the subject when at Belgrade, and the prisoners were in consequence removed to other quarters. The Servians were at that time but little less barbarous and uncivilised than their rulers, the Turks. One of the objects which both Sir Stratford Canning and I had in view, was to induce the new Servian Government to act with justice and humanity towards the partisans of the fallen dynasty, and so to conduct the movement, which had hitherto proved successful, that it might be justified in European public opinion by affording proofs of its having the support of the great majority of the Servian population.

In these views we were warmly and ably seconded by Zuban. Although of a somewhat rough exterior, and with the very limited education at that time accessible to a Servian, he was a humane and intelligent man, and an honest patriot. I saw a good deal of him and spent many an evening in his company. In the dog-Latin which we were compelled to use in our oral and written communications, as we possessed no other language in common, he would relate to me stories of Servian history, and especially of the wars with the Turks and of the struggle for his country's independence, in which he had taken a prominent part. He would usually end by singing, in a monotonous and plaintive tone, the popular ballads, in which Servia and the other Slav Provinces watered by the Danube are rich, accompanying himself on a rude fiddle with one string. In these songs, now that he was far from his native land, he took great delight. They stirred his inner soul, and as he sang them the tears would roll down his cheeks. Upon me his primitive music produced an indescribable feeling of melancholy.

Russia had determined to crush the popular movement which had taken place in Servia. Her representations induced Lord Aberdeen to adopt the opposite view to that of the British Ambassador. Sir Stratford Canning was deeply

mortified and angered by being thus 'thrown over'; but with his usual independence and energy he held to the policy which he had adopted, upon what he considered just grounds, and continued to give all the support in his power to the popular party in Servia, which was seeking to establish free institutions in the Principality.

It was, of course, soon known to the English Foreign Office that it was partly in consequence of my reports that Sir Stratford Canning had adopted this policy, and that he was employing me unofficially and privately as the medium of communication with the Servian leaders. The prejudice which, in consequence, Lord Aberdeen formed against me was not for a very long time removed, and stood very much in the way of my official employment by Sir Stratford, who was desirous of making use of my services as a member of the Embassy, and had suggested that I should be named one of his attachés.

In the meantime Sir Stratford had been authorised by Lord Aberdeen to propose, in conjunction with the Russian Minister at the Porte, the mediation of England and Russia to prevent a war between Turkey and Persia, and to suggest a scheme for the settlement of the differences which had arisen between these two Powers relating to their frontiers. He was anxious to avail himself

of the information which I possessed in preparing it. He requested me, therefore, to remain at Constantinople, promising that the services which I might render to himself and the Government would enable him to press upon Lord Aberdeen, with every prospect of success, my official appointment as a member of his Embassy.

I was rather at a loss to know how to maintain myself in the position which it would be necessary for me to occupy, as my private means were well-nigh exhausted and my work was entirely gratuitous. But I determined to trust to fortune, and to face the difficulties which were before me in the best way I could, relying upon my energy to overcome them. I accordingly agreed to Sir Stratford Canning's proposal to remain at Constantinople. He had now moved with his family from his summer residence at Buyukdereh to Pera for the winter. I was assigned a room in the Embassy, to which I came daily to carry on the work I had undertaken for Sir Stratford.

On my first visit to Constantinople I had formed the acquaintance of Mr. Longworth, who had recently returned from his mission, under the auspices of Mr. Urquhart, to Circassia, of which he published a highly interesting account. He introduced me to a young Turk named Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, with whom he had established an intimate friend-

ship. This very remarkable man was then a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age. His father, Ruh-ed-din Effendi, had been for some time Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* at Paris. Ahmed Vefyk had been with him, and had acquired the French language, which he spoke and wrote with singular correctness and fluency. On returning to Constantinople he had continued the studies which he had commenced in France, and had induced his father to form a library of the best English and French classics, which subsequently became the most valuable and extensive in the Turkish capital. His acquaintance with them would have been even notable in one who had received the best European education. He was, moreover, a good Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Greek scholar, and well versed in Oriental literature.

Ahmed Vefyk Effendi was at that time employed in the foreign department at the Porte, where his father held a high official position. They resided together in a large old-fashioned wooden house near the great Byzantine aqueduct which traverses Constantinople, and still supplies the city with water. The Effendi and Mr. Longworth were in the habit of spending two nights a week in each other's houses. No one was permitted to cross the Golden Horn from Galata after sunset, the gates of Stamboul and the bridge of boats

being then closed. In those days Europeans could not remain in the Musulman quarters after dark, and the very fact that an Englishman was allowed to pass the night in Ruh-ed-din's 'konak' afforded a proof of the enlightened and liberal character of its owner, as he ran the risk of seriously offending the religious prejudices of his neighbours, and, had he not been a man of rank and authority, would have been exposed to the interference of the 'mukhtars,' or chiefs of the quarter, who were charged with its superintendence and its police.[4]

The evenings which the two friends spent together were devoted to reading and study. I was invited to join them, and during the time that I spent at Constantinople I went, as regularly as I was able, twice a week to Ruh-ed-din's 'konak,' or winter mansion, when he was in Stamboul, and to his 'yali,' or country-house, on the Bosphorus during the summer months. We read together the best English classics, such as the works of Gibbon, Robertson, and Hume, and studied political economy in those of Adam Smith and Ricardo. My friend Longworth had strong Protectionist

[4] The Musulman quarters of Constantinople afforded a striking contrast to those occupied by the Christians and Europeans in their immunity from crime and vice. The Turks had no wish that the civilisation of Galata and Pera should be extended to that part of the capital which was inhabited by themselves and their families.

views. I was an ardent Free-trader. We spent many an hour in fierce argument, in which the Effendi joined with great vigour and spirit, lighting up the dry matter in discussion with an infinity of jokes and quaint illustrations. We also made him read the plays of Shakespeare, which he understood and appreciated, and the novels of Dickens, into the spirit and fun of which he thoroughly entered, roaring with laughter over the comic scenes. There was something catching in his merry and boisterous laugh, and even the solemn Turks, who were frequently present when he indulged in it, and did not comprehend the reason of it, could not resist joining in it. He took so much delight in 'Pickwick,' and the other works of Dickens which had then appeared, and was so well acquainted with them, that he was constantly in the habit of quoting from them in after-days. He had a singularly retentive memory, and rarely forgot what he had read. He was a perfect store of information on all manner of subjects, Western and Eastern, and had even then acquired a smattering of scientific knowledge. His great capacity, his acquirements, and his upright and honourable character, led his friends to believe and hope that he might rise to the highest offices in the State, and he himself would talk as if he were persuaded that he should one day become

Grand Vizir.[5] He was the most cheerful, the most merry, and the most entertaining of companions. As he was always ready to impart information, and had none of those scruples and prejudices which prevented Turks from speaking to strangers, and especially to Europeans, of their domestic affairs, I learnt from him many interesting details of Turkish life and habits. His father was equally communicative and free from prejudice. He spoke French indifferently, but sufficiently well to make himself understood. He was a perfect Turkish gentleman of the most refined manners, and of very dignified appearance, with his snow-white beard and the turban and robes, which the chief civil functionaries at the Porte still wore—the 'nizam,' or European uniform and dress, not having then been generally adopted by them.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi, although then in civil employment, had been educated as a military engineer, and had belonged in his youth to the corps of bombardiers. He had taken part in many of the important events which had preceded and followed the accession of Sultan Mahmoud to the throne. He used frequently to entertain me with

[5] The prediction was fulfilled many years after, and when I, who had been the companion of his youth, was the Queen's Ambassador at Constantinople.

descriptions of tragic incidents which he had himself witnessed, such as the murder of Sultan Selim and the massacre of the Janissaries. He gave me the following account of the death of Selim.

The Sultan had, in 1807, been virtually dethroned and confined to the palace, which, before its destruction in the great fire, rose at the entrance of the Golden Horn, still known as 'Seraglio Point.' He was believed by the majority of his Musulman subjects to be the victim of a conspiracy, formed by a party at the Porte and in the Imperial harem, to replace him by his brother Mustafa. There was very general discontent, as the populace, and especially the Janissaries, were favourable to Selim. Belonging to this powerful legion was a certain Mustafa, who was known as the 'Bairakdar,' or the 'Standard-bearer.' He was a man of colossal stature and powerful frame, and from these qualities, and from his courage and daring, possessed great influence amongst his fellows.

He was on military service with a part of his corps on the Danube, when he learnt how Sultan Selim had been deposed and had been imprisoned in the seraglio. He resolved to free his sovereign and to replace him upon his throne. Putting himself at the head of a body of men who were ready to accompany him, he marched across Bulgaria

and Roumelia—his followers increasing as he passed along—until on arriving at the gates of Constantinople he found himself in command of a powerful and well-armed force. The Janissaries in the city, hearing of his arrival, declared at once their readiness to join him, and the gates of the city were thrown open to him.

Mustafa Bairakdar marched through the streets of Stamboul followed by an immense crowd, and reached, without meeting with any opposition, 'the Bab-Aliyeh'—the great gateway which led into the spacious outer court of the palace, then thickly set with cypress trees and containing numerous kiosks and shrines richly gilt and ornamented with carved and painted woodwork. Traversing this court he sought in various parts of the enclosure formed by the ancient Byzantine walls, and in the many imperial dwellings it contained, for Selim. At length he reached the residence of the Sultan's wives and their attendants. The respect which all good Musulmans, under whatever circumstances, entertain for the harem, forbad him going further. He stopped at the entrance, and struck the door three times with a ponderous iron mace with which he was armed.

After a short interval the summons was answered by the chief black eunuch, who, opening a wicket in the gate, demanded the business of the

intruder. Mustafa Bairakdar replied, in a loud voice, 'I require to see Selim; he owes me a debt, and according to the law the debtor is bound to present himself when his creditor demands to see him.' 'Wait. and Selim will appear,' answered the eunuch, closing the wicket.

The standard-bearer and his followers waited patiently until the great gates were thrown wide open. In front of them, surrounded by the eunuchs, lay the dead body of the Sultan upon a large white slab of stone. Their black chief, pointing to the lifeless corpse, exclaimed, 'There is your debtor!' Selim had been strangled by the women and attendants of the harem.

Mustafa Bairakdar and his companions, exasperated by the treachery which had been practised upon them, no longer scrupled to force their way into the forbidden precincts, in search of the Sultan's next brother, Mustafa, the heir to the throne, who was found concealed in a roll of carpets. He was taken out trembling with fear in the anticipation of immediate slaughter. He was, however, reassured, and having been led to the great gate of the palace—the Bab-Homaiyun—was proclaimed Sultan before the crowd which had assembled in front of it.

The Bairakdar was afterwards concerned in one of the many revolts of the Janissaries. A band

of mutineers, at the head of whom he had placed himself, having been defeated, he took refuge with them in a stone tower which he defended for some time, and rather than surrender blew it up with gunpowder, perishing with his companions.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi, who, in command of a detachment of bombardiers, had accompanied Mustafa Bairakdar in his march from the Danube to Constantinople, had been present at the events which led to the death of Sultan Selim and the accession of Sultan Mustafa. He pointed out to me the harem gates where the body of the murdered Sultan had been exposed, and described with great animation the scene. He had also been in Constantinople at the time of the massacre of the Janissaries, and had been an eye-witness to many bloody incidents which occurred when Sultan Mahmoud exterminated that dangerous and powerful militia, which at one time imposed its will upon the Sovereign and his Government. He was fond of relating them to me in his broken French, and describing the anxiety with which the issue of the struggle was awaited, for had the Janissaries obtained the upper hand the city would have been given over to plunder, and those who were obnoxious to them would have been put to the sword. Their revenge would have been especially directed against the functionaries of the Porte, of whom he

was then one, and against the Europeans, as they were looked upon as promoters and instigators of the reforms which Sultan Mahmoud was endeavouring to introduce into the army and the Government—reforms in which the Janissaries foresaw the loss of their power and privileges.

Sultan Mahmoud determined to put an end to their opposition in a truly Oriental fashion. With the utmost secrecy and determination he planned the destruction of the authors of it. His orders were so well carried out that the Janissaries had no suspicion of the fate that awaited them. When the moment arrived for carrying out the Sultan's commands, they were entirely unprepared for resistance. They had no time to assemble, and as their officers, who were the first to be murdered, could not bring them together, they fell easy victims to their executioners. The 'nizam,' or regular troops, which the Sultan, in imitation of the civilised Powers of Europe, had formed, and the institution of which had been the principal grievance of the Janissaries, proved faithful. The slaughter continued from dawn till sunset. The streets and open places of Stamboul were reeking with blood; universal terror prevailed; but as the night closed in, calm and confidence were restored. The haughty, imperious, and undisciplined force which, for above three centuries, had almost directed and

controlled the destinies of the Ottoman Empire, had been utterly destroyed. Those who had escaped the general massacre—and they were few—hid themselves or fled from the city into the interior, only escaping the fate of their comrades by concealing the fact that they had belonged to this once redoubtable corps. Sultan Mahmoud's revenge was complete, and the policy by which he sought to regenerate his empire had triumphed.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi had been, during the day of the massacre, in the 'Ok-meidan,' or principal square of Stamboul, in which stands the fine mosque of Sultan Ahmed, where the largest number of Janissaries had assembled, where their defence was the most obstinate, and where the slaughter was greatest. He had been in the palace where Sultan Mahmoud, a man of remarkable courage and determination, was calmly awaiting the issue of the struggle, well knowing that his own life depended upon it, for had the Janissaries triumphed, he and all his race would have been slain. But he relied upon the fidelity and valour of his new troops, and his confidence was justified by the result. This was the more remarkable, as it was generally believed that his Musulman subjects who had been recruited for the 'nizam,' or regular army, which he was forming to replace the Janissaries and other irregulars who had hitherto

formed the main force for the defence of the Empire, resented the attempt to impose upon them a uniform and regulations opposed to the precepts of their faith, and that they would avail themselves of the first occasion to unite with those who were resisting these innovations.

I remember Sir Stratford Canning telling me, when we were walking together one day on the garden terrace in front of the British Embassy at Pera, how he had, when Ambassador to the Sultan in 1826, spent many hours on the same spot on the day of the massacre, listening to the continued discharge of musketry on the opposite side of the Golden Horn. He had learnt early in the morning the cause of the firing, and was awaiting the result of the attack upon the Janissaries with the utmost anxiety, as there was every reason to believe that, had they proved victorious, they would have fallen upon the quarters of the city inhabited by Europeans, who were the special objects of their hatred, as having been the originators of Sultan Mahmoud's reforms.

The life led by a Turkish gentleman in Stamboul was, at that time, a very simple one. Ruh-ed-din Effendi's 'konak' was provided with no European luxuries. It was divided, like all houses in the East inhabited by Musulman families, into the apartments in which the owner sat during the day;

and in which he received his visitors, and those occupied by the ladies and their female attendants, or the harem. Chairs and tables and other European articles of furniture were not then in general use. The floors of the rooms were covered with a simple but finely made matting, upon which were laid fine Kurdish or Persian carpets. Around and against the walls were placed very low divans, covered with Brousa or Damascus silk, and provided with cushions and bolsters. It was necessary to sit upon these divans in the Oriental fashion, cross-legged. Every one on entering a room, before treading on the carpets, took off his boots or shoes. I always adhered to this custom when visiting Turkish gentlemen, wearing, as they did, inside my boots and over my stockings, the thin, black leather 'mests,' a kind of slipper. Everything was kept scrupulously clean, and the interior of the house was a model of neatness.

The Effendi and his son had, as was then the custom, numerous servants. Neither of them could go to the Porte or elsewhere without being followed by at least two attendants, one carrying the long 'chibouk,' or pipe of cherry or jasmine wood, in a bag; the other, papers, books, and things which his master might require during the day. The other servants remained to look after the house in a room provided for them on the ground-

floor, where they spent the day in smoking pipes and drinking coffee.

In the harem, to which the male servants had not access, the work was done by female attendants. They cooked the dinner and other meals, being superintended in these occupations by the ladies of the family, who themselves were in the habit of making any special dish, and especially sweetmeats. Neither Ahmed Vefyk nor his father would tolerate the presence of eunuchs in their households, and their harems, unlike those of most Turkish gentlemen of their station and rank, were not guarded by these wretched beings. Nor had they any slaves, male or female, such as were then almost invariably found in Turkish families.

Ruh-ed-din Effendi had but one wife. His son, when he married, followed his example. Most of the leading Turkish statesmen of the Liberal and reforming party, to which both of them belonged, such as Reshid, Ali and Fuad Pashas, Cabouli Effendi, and other enlightened men, did as Ruh-ed-din, although they still maintained very strictly the harem system, their wives, with their female attendants, living in a part of the house—generally the largest and best—especially set apart for them, to which no male, except a very near relation, such as a father or brother, was admitted.

At sunset Ruh-ed-din Effendi and his son

retired to the harem to say the prayers obligatory upon all Musulmans at that time of the day. An hour after they and their guests—for like all Turkish gentlemen they kept open house and were very hospitable—assembled for dinner, which was served in the old Turkish fashion. A low stool was first brought and put in the centre of the room. A servant then appeared bearing an immense metal tray which he placed upon it. He was followed by a number of others each carrying a metal bowl or dish.

An attendant then went round with a kind of ewer of elegant shape, called an 'ibryk,' from which he poured water over the hands of those about to eat, into a basin held beneath, and upon which was a piece of soap. After they had thus washed, the master of the house and his guests sat on the carpeted floor round the capacious tray. A richly embroidered napkin was then thrown over the right shoulder of each of them, to wipe their fingers and mouth during the repast. One of the servants first placed in the centre of the tray a metal bowl containing soup. Each person took a few spoonfuls, and the bowl was speedily removed. A number of dishes then followed, each being rapidly taken away after the guests had helped themselves to a few morsels with their fingers—for knives and forks had not yet come into com-

mon use in Turkey, and even Turkish gentlemen of the rank of Ruh-ed-din Effendi still ate in this primitive fashion, only spoons for the soup being provided. Sometimes a knife and fork were given to a European guest, who was supposed not to be able to use his fingers or to be reluctant to do so. It was certainly difficult for a person not accustomed to eat in this manner to gather up the rice from a 'pilaf' without scattering the greater part of it over the tray, or to convey with decency and cleanliness to his mouth fingerfuls from made dishes, in which rich sauces and melted butter were the principal ingredients.

At a formal Turkish dinner to which guests were invited, the regular number of dishes served was no less than forty-two. But at Ruh-ed-din Effendi's house, on ordinary occasions, they rarely exceeded thirty. They came in succession, but each dish was so rapidly removed—the guests only having time given them to dip their fingers once or twice into it, and if they were not very alert not being able to do so at all—that the repast did not last as long as might have been expected.

After the soup came stewed meats, fish dressed in various ways, pastry, sweet and savory, made dishes of eggs, and vegetables of different kinds, 'kaimak,' a thick cream from buffaloes' milk, prepared with sugar and honey; and a variety of

other messes, served apparently without order—fish, meat, vegetables, and sweets alternating. The appearance of a huge 'pilaf' was the sign that the dinner had come to an end, with the exception of the great china bowl filled with 'sherbet,' or sugar and water, flavoured with prunes, from which the guests helped themselves with delicate wooden spoons of pear-wood, tastefully carved by Persian craftsmen.

When the last dish had been removed, an attendant again appeared with the ewer and basin. When we had washed our hands we returned to the divans round the room, and pipes, 'narguilés,' and coffee were served. Only water had been drunk during dinner, and wine was only occasionally offered to a European friend. In many Turkish houses it was the custom to hand small glasses of 'raki,' a strong coarse native brandy, and dried fruits and nuts, to the guests to whet the appetite—and frequently something more—before dinner. But in Ruh-ed-din Effendi's house, spirits were not seen.

Amongst Ruh-ed-din Effendi's guests were generally some functionaries of the Porte—mostly from the department of Foreign Affairs—and very frequently influential personages from the provinces, who had come to Constantinople on business with the Government; sometimes, too, a Circassian chief,

or a Turcoman Bey from Central Asia, on his way, as a pilgrim, to Mecca. Ahmed Vefyk sought to see and entertain such strangers, as he obtained from them useful, and frequently important, information on the state of far-distant Musulman countries, and upon political matters of consequence.

When our hosts had retired to the harem for the night, the servants took mattresses, pillows, sheets, and coverlets from a cupboard in the room in which we had been sitting, and beds were made on the floor for Mr. Longworth and myself. They were scrupulously clean and exceedingly comfortable. The household was usually astir by sunrise, the Mohammedan hour of prayer. We rose also. The ewer and basin were brought to us to perform our ablutions. The mattresses and bedding were rolled up and replaced in the cupboard. After drinking coffee and smoking our morning pipes, we returned to Pera on foot, generally leaving the house before our hosts had emerged from the harem.

I frequently passed a night in the same fashion, except as to the reading and study, in other Turkish houses, for I had a good many friends among the leading Turks.

A struggle for power was at this time taking place at Constantinople, between the reform party, of which Reshid Pasha, the author of the cele-

brated 'Hati Sherif' of Gulhaneh, or New Constitution of the Turkish Empire, was the head, and those Turkish statesmen who were opposed to the European institutions which Sultan Mahmoud had attempted to introduce into the administration of his Empire. The most active and powerful amongst the latter was Riza Pasha, an able, unscrupulous, and corrupt man, who at times exercised great influence over Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid, which he used to thwart the policy of his rival, Reshid.

Sir Stratford Canning supported the reform party with characteristic energy and vigour. He was in constant and intimate communication with Reshid Pasha and his principal followers, such as Ali and Fuad Effendis, men of remarkable abilities, who afterwards rose to the highest offices in the Ottoman Empire. These communications were frequently of a very secret and confidential nature. Sir Stratford, availing himself of my knowledge of the Turkish character, and of my slight acquaintance with the Turkish language, was in the habit of employing me in them. The task he imposed upon me was a very delicate and difficult one, and, even in those days, not unattended with danger. The visits I had to pay to these statesmen on Sir Stratford's behalf, whether they were in office or living in retirement and apparent disgrace, were usually made after dark, and always with the

utmost secrecy, as it was of great importance that it should not be known that they were in communication with the English Ambassador, and that they were acting upon his advice and encouragement. Many a night I have spent at Constantinople, or on the Bosphorus, engaged in these missions, sometimes meeting the persons to whom I had been sent in out-of-the-way places; sometimes introduced by stealth into their harems, where I could see them without risk of interruption or discovery.

I thus became well acquainted with the enlightened and able statesmen who were then at the head of the reform party, and who were endeavouring to regenerate their country, and to bring its institutions into conformity with those of the most civilised and liberal of the European States. My opinions as to the Ottoman Empire entirely agreed with those of Sir Stratford Canning. I was convinced, as he was, that unless its government was reformed by a fundamental improvement in the administration, which was deplorably corrupt in all its branches, by the employment of honest and competent men in public offices, and by a better treatment of the Christian populations, its fall would not be far distant. To induce the Sultan and his Ministers to adopt these reforms was the object of Sir Stratford Canning's policy.

Every effort was made by Russia, through her Embassy at Constantinople, and through her agents, secret and avowed, to thwart the policy of Sir Stratford. At every turn he had to encounter and baffle her intrigues. The Russian Minister, a crafty, vigilant, and far-seeing diplomatist, was ever active in intrigue, but carefully abstained from interfering too openly in the affairs of the Porte. Between him and the English Ambassador there was an incessant struggle, carried on, however, by each of them in a different way. The one impetuous, fiery, and dictatorial; the other calm, cautious, and restrained: the one seeking to inspire the Turks with awe and to drive them into doing his bidding; the other endeavouring to obtain his ends by cajolery, and by leading his victims by gentle and persuasive means to their destruction.

Whilst the Turks respected Sir Stratford Canning for his honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness, and were persuaded that he was their friend, and that all he said and did was in the true interests of Turkey, they resented his haughty interference in their affairs and the incessant trouble and humiliation to which they were exposed. On the other hand, they knew well enough that the Russian representative was working for their ruin, and that his soft persuasive words were but the means

by which he sought to effect it. But they preferred being led to being driven.

Pera was at this time, as it has always been and as it will always be, the centre of every manner of intrigue. Europeans, Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and the outcasts of various nationalities, who form the population of this polyglot and cosmopolitan suburb of Constantinople, were engaged in little else, whether political or personal. The representatives of the Great Powers—contending for influence, or seeking by every means at their command to promote the interests or policy of their respective Governments—had their secret agents and spies in every quarter. What little society there existed was not exempt from them. The most numerous and most active were those in the pay of the Russian Embassy. They literally swarmed in the Turkish capital, and amongst them were known to be men in high position in the Sultan's palace and at the Porte. They were equally to be found amongst the best native Christian families; and even, it was suspected, amongst the Europeans, who formed what might be called an upper class in the social strata of the Frank quarters. The Greeks—and principally those who were employed by the Turkish Government—were the agents chiefly engaged in these intrigues. The Armenians did not then take the

same active part in political affairs, nor occupy the same important offices, that they have since done. They were less active and meddled far less in political matters than the Greeks, and had not the same relations with the foreign representatives as their ambitious and more restless fellow-Christians. The Turks consequently trusted them more. The great functionaries of the Porte employed them chiefly as their bankers and agents, and but few of them held high offices. They were, however, cunning and skilful in money matters, and managed to make large fortunes out of those whom they served, principally by lending them money at usurious rates of interest. Every pasha and high Turkish functionary had in those days his Armenian banker, who supplied him with funds when he received an appointment, and sometimes accompanied him when he was raised to the governorship of a town or province. As it may be easily imagined, these crafty financiers knew how to take advantage of the ignorance and reckless extravagance of their Turkish patrons, and soon availed themselves of opportunities to enrich themselves at their expense.

When I was first at Constantinople, the mode of living of the Armenians—and indeed of the leading Greeks who had not adopted European customs—was nearly similar to that of the Turks,

except in the case of those families which had been converted to Roman Catholicism, in which European habits to a certain extent prevailed. Their women went abroad veiled, and were almost as carefully watched and guarded as the inmates of a Mohammedan harem. Their houses were built and furnished after the Turkish fashion; they slept on the floor, their bedding being kept in a cupboard during the day; they ate with their fingers, and sat cross-legged upon low divans. This similarity of manners was an additional recommendation to their Musulman fellow-subjects, with whose language, moreover, they were far better acquainted than the Greeks, speaking and pronouncing it like the Turks themselves.

The state of things that I have described was not calculated to render Pera a pleasant residence for those who were not required by their occupations or business to remain there. I loathed the place and its intrigues, and went very little into society except at the British Embassy, where I passed much of my time, and where I received the utmost kindness from Sir Stratford and Lady Canning—a kindness of which I was most sensible and for which I have ever been the more grateful, as it was shown to one who was a stranger, and who had, at that time, no claims whatever to it.

Soon after my return to Constantinople from

my mission to the Western Provinces of European Turkey, the joint mediation offered by the English and Russian Governments to Turkey and Persia to prevent a war, which was then on the point of breaking out between them, was accepted by the two Powers. Sir Stratford Canning was thus able to carry out his intention of availing himself of the knowledge I had acquired during my travels in Mesopotamia and Khuzistan, and to employ me in the correspondence and negotiations which took place. The principal matters in dispute were certain parts of the frontiers between the two States. Persia claimed the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab, or united waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, from about sixty miles of their junction with the Persian Gulf, and certain districts in the mountains of Kurdistan, which had been seized by the Turks. Since the Mamet's expedition against the sheikh of the Cha'b Arabs, who had given an asylum to Mehemet Taki Khan, the Persians had occupied Muhammera and some territory to the north of that town. This territory was claimed by the Porte, and as the Shah refused to withdraw his troops from it, the Porte was about to have recourse to war to enforce its claims. It was already fitting out an expedition for the purpose.

It was necessary for the representatives of the mediating Powers at Constantinople to make a

careful investigation into the claims of the contending parties, and to propose to them for their acceptance a fair and equitable arrangement founded upon their respective rights and interests. Sir Stratford Canning entrusted me with this duty on his part. I had to examine the evidence furnished by the Porte and the Persian Government in proof of their respective pretensions, consisting of a mass of documents, maps and surveys, many of them of ancient date, and to prepare a scheme for the settlement of the matters in dispute, to be submitted to the British and Russian Governments for their approval before being presented to the two Powers.

I took great interest in the work, which was very congenial to my tastes. The knowledge which I had acquired of the territory in dispute, and of the history and traditions of the tribes which inhabited it, proved of much use to me. I was able to prepare a project of settlement which appeared to me just to both parties, and warranted by the proofs which they had produced in support of their respective claims. It was entirely approved by Sir Stratford Canning, and sent by him to Lord Aberdeen, to be communicated to the Russian Government. He fully expected that he would speedily receive authority to submit it to the Porte for its acceptance. The result of my

examination of the evidence and maps furnished me was that the claims of Turkey to the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab and to Muhammera were well-founded. Persia had never exercised more than a nominal jurisdiction over the territory in dispute, the right to which had always been asserted by the Porte. The Arab tribes which inhabited it, and which were semi-independent, had, however, acknowledged at one time the supremacy of the Sultan, and at another that of the Shah. The question was further complicated by the change which had taken place in the lower part of the course of the Karun. In the early part of this century, as may be seen by maps of the time, this river discharged itself into the Persian Gulf by more than one outlet, the principal of which was known as the Bahmeh-shire. As it rose in the mountains of Luristan, and the whole of its course was through Persian territory, it was unquestionably a Persian river, and Persia had undoubted claims to the lands on both its banks.

But a canal had been cut to unite this river and the Shat-el-Arab, known as the Hafar, a name which denoted its artificial origin, and upon its banks Muhammera had been built by the sheikh of the Cha'b Arabs.[6] In the course of time the waters of the Karun had enlarged this canal,

[6] See *ante*, p. 216.

and through it the main body of the river was directed into the Shat-el-Arab; consequently Persia now claimed the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab below the Hafar, with the town and district of Muhammera, as Persian territory. The original mouth of the Karun, the Bahmeh-shire, was still open and navigable, at least to vessels of moderate draught.[7] The earlier mouths of this river to the east of the Bahmeh-shire had been gradually deserted by it, and were silted up and dry. In fact, the Karun had for centuries been forcing its way westwards until it found a convenient outlet for the principal portion of its waters through the Hafar canal into the Shat-el-Arab.

The Porte contended, not without reason, that as the Euphrates was a Turkish river, running through the dominions of the Sultan from its source, it was unjust, and against universally recognised principles, to give to Persia the control of its outlet into the sea, merely because a Persian stream had changed its course, and had invaded a territory which did not appertain to the Shah. The command of the trade and navigation of a great river, which had flowed for more than one thousand miles through Turkish territory, would thus be transferred to a Power which might, if hostile to Turkey, close that river at its mouth. The Bahmeh-shire,

[7] See *ante*, p. 216.

the Porte maintained, was the true outlet of the Karun, and might without much trouble or expense be rendered navigable to trading vessels of any size, and that consequently the possession of the entrance to the Shat-el-Arab was in no way necessary to Persia for the water communication between the sea and the province of Khuzistan. It was further able to show, by ancient maps and documents, that the frontiers of Persia had never reached the Euphrates, and that the whole of the delta between the mouth of that river and the Bahmeh-shire had originally belonged to Turkey.

I considered the contention of the Porte just and well-founded. I consequently proposed in my scheme, as a fair compromise, that the new frontier line should be drawn through the desert country to the west of Hawizah, at some distance from the Shat-el-Arab, across the Hafar, and midway down the delta to the sea. Turkey would have thus remained in possession of the banks of the Euphrates throughout the whole of its course.

My suggestion, approved and adopted by Sir Stratford Canning, was submitted by Lord Aberdeen to the Russian Government, which declined to accede to it, and not only upheld the claims of Persia to Muhammera and the left bank of the Shat-el-Arab from the Hafar to the sea, but insisted upon the cession to her of territory on its east

bank, which she had not even claimed, almost to the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris at Korna —thus giving her the control of the navigation of both those rivers, which form the means of communication between the sea and the south-eastern provinces of Asiatic Turkey.

Lord Aberdeen, who was desirous of deferring to Russia, accepted her views and instructed Sir Stratford Canning to recommend them to the Porte. He sent for me after the arrival of Lord Aberdeen's despatch to this effect. I found him walking up and down his study, his brows knit, his thin lips compressed, and his delicate complexion scarlet with anger. Without saying a word he handed me the despatch. I read it, and remarked that I was deeply grieved to find that Lord Aberdeen had come to a decision which, in my opinion, was not consistent with justice and right, and was not in the interests of England. He requested me to draw up an answer to Lord Aberdeen's despatch, pointing out the objections to the arrangement proposed by Russia, the injustice that would be done to the Porte, and the discredit that would fall upon England as a mediator if she showed so flagrant a spirit of partiality to Persia.

I wrote the draft of a despatch in this sense, which was adopted by Sir Stratford Canning. But it failed to produce the desired effect, and nothing

remained to him but to carry out the instructions he had received from Lord Aberdeen. The Porte protested against the decision of the mediating Powers, and against the sacrifice of territory it was called upon to make by it. But it was in the end compelled to yield, in the face of the threatening insistance of England and Russia.

I was deeply impressed with the position of Muhammera, and its great importance to any Power having commercial and political interests in the East. It commands the entrance to the Euphrates and Tigris, which are navigable to the very heart of the Turkish dominions in Asia, and to that of the Karun, which flows through one of the richest, though one of the most neglected, provinces of Persia. These rivers are destined to become great military and trading highways. It is, consequently, to the interest of England that their mouths should not fall into the possession of a Power which might be hostile to her.

Turkey having been compelled to accept the Russian project for the settlement of her differences with Persia, the next step was to appoint a commission to delineate the new frontier between that country and Turkey, to consist of commissioners to be named by the two Powers and by the mediating Governments of England and Russia. It had been Sir Stratford Canning's intention to employ me

as one of them, in recognition of the services which I had been able to render him, and he accordingly proposed my appointment to Lord Aberdeen. But my views on the Turco-Persian and Servian questions had not been such as to induce the Foreign Office to look upon me with favour, and Colonel Williams, afterwards known as Sir Fenwick Williams of Kars, was selected for the office, and Mr. Robert Curzon, the author of a popular and pleasantly-written book on the monasteries of the Levant, who had accompanied Sir Stratford to Constantinople in the capacity of private secretary, was chosen as his colleague.[8]

Soon after my arrival at Constantinople from Baghdad I became very intimate with Mr. Charles Alison, who was then attached as chief interpreter, and afterwards became Oriental secretary, to the British Embassy. The friendship which we then contracted lasted till his death. He had real genius and was singularly gifted. He was, perhaps, the man the most highly endowed by nature that I have ever known. His qualities of head and heart were equally remarkable. He was generous, affectionate, and unselfish, of the most amiable disposition and the most equal temper. He was

[8] I was some years afterwards named by Lord Palmerston joint commissioner with Sir Fenwick Williams; but I resigned the appointment to undertake my second expedition to Nineveh for the Trustees of the British Museum.

an accomplished linguist, speaking and writing Turkish, Persian, and Greek, and several European languages, with perfect facility, and having a sufficient knowledge of Arabic. He was a skilful musician, playing on several instruments, and would have been an excellent artist had he given himself seriously to art. His memory was singularly tenacious, and although he had not read much, he had retained all that he had read.

His remarkable talents were at once recognised by Sir Stratford Canning, who soon took him into his entire confidence, and made use of him in his negotiations with the Turkish Ministers and the Porte

Those who were behind the scenes at the British Embassy were well aware that the Ambassador owed some of his most brilliant diplomatic successes to the skill with which Alison had carried out his instructions, and to his thorough acquaintance with the character and habits of thought of the Turks, which enabled him to exercise an influence, rarely obtained by a European, over the principal Turkish statesmen and the functionaries at the Porte. But he never put himself forward, and it was only those in the secret who knew how important his services really were.

In his intercourse with the Turkish officials he maintained a calm and equal demeanour, and was

perfectly straightforward and truthful, scorning the petty intrigues upon which the agents, employed by the foreign representatives at the Porte, generally relied to carry out the policy of their chiefs. At the same time he showed a spirit of independence in his dealings with the Turks, which made them feel that he was capable of successfully resisting any attempt to deceive him.

Many amusing anecdotes were current in Constantinople of his way of treating those who gave him cause of offence and did not show him the respect which he considered his due. Amongst them I remember the following. Sir Stratford Canning had sent him on one occasion to transact some business of moment with the Grand Vizir, who was a Turk of the old school, notorious for his bigotry and intolerance and his hatred of Christians. In the middle of the business which they were discussing the Prime Minister rose from his seat, and proceeded to say his customary prayers on a carpet which an attendant had spread for him on the floor. He concluded them with the usual curses, very audibly and significantly uttered, upon all 'giaours,' or infidels, and to show his aversion to them went through the motion of spitting over his right and left shoulder. He then resumed his seat, and renewed the conversation as if nothing had occurred to interrupt it.

After a short interval Alison left the divan, and going into a corner of the room began to repeat in Turkish, and in an audible voice, an extemporary prayer, in which he invoked similar curses upon the followers of Mohammed. The Grand Vizir jumped up in a violent passion, and reminded him of the fate which, according to the Musulman law, was reserved for those who dared to blaspheme the religion of Islam and its Prophet. Alison very quietly replied that, like the Pasha himself, he had only performed a duty in saying his prayers at that particular hour of the day, and that he had no doubt that the denunciations that they contained against Mohammedans were as much a matter of form, and of as little significance, as the curses which his Highness had, a short time before, launched against those who professed the Christian faith.[9]

[9] A man of Alison's original and somewhat eccentric character and habits was not likely to be a favourite at the Foreign Office. Although, for many years, and under successive ambassadors, he had the conduct of the affairs of the Embassy at Constantinople, and had carried to a successful issue, by his extraordinary diplomatic skill, many questions of the utmost delicacy and moment, and had acquired the esteem and confidence of his chiefs, who had strongly recommended him for promotion and for employment in an independent position worthy of his abilities, it was not until 1860 that he was named her Majesty's Minister in Persia, where he died, at Tehran, on April 29, 1872.

CHAPTER XX.

Reshid Pasha—Riza Pasha—Ahmed Vefyk and his followers—Reforms in Turkey—M. Botta's discoveries—Live at Candili—Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid—Safvet Pasha—Frederick Pisani—A Christian apostate beheaded—Sir Stratford Canning's action—Scene at the palace—Offer to go to Bokhara—Dr. Wolff—Insurrection in Albania—Sent there on a mission—The Bulgarians—Greek bishops—Omar Pasha—Negotiations with a Ghega chief—Dervish Czar—An Albanian dance—Ghegas attack Turkish camp—Turkish treachery—Ochrida—Fishing—Excursions in Turkey—Leave for Nineveh—Conclusion.

ALTHOUGH I may have felt some doubt as to the wisdom and prudence of Sir Stratford Canning's high-handed manner of dealing with the Turkish Government, I was always convinced that he was actuated by the highest and purest motives, and that in all he did, and attempted to do, he had only the interests of his own country, and the welfare of the Ottoman Empire, in view. The Turks themselves were convinced of this, and whilst they feared, and perhaps even disliked him, they respected his honesty, and believed him to be their true friend—and such is the reputation that he

left amongst men of all classes. If his counsels had been followed, Turkey might have been spared many disasters.

My constant intercourse with Reshid Pasha enabled me to judge of the character and qualities of this remarkable man. I believe him to have been an honest, liberal-minded, and, considering his position, an independent Turkish statesman. He was morally courageous and resolute, but physically timid and weak. He had convinced himself by the study of European history, and by a practical acquaintance with the principal countries of Europe which he had visited, that it was absolutely necessary, for the preservation of the Turkish Empire, that it should be endowed with the political institutions which had given wealth, strength, and power to civilised nations. He had acquired the French language, and a knowledge of French literature. He had discarded most of the prejudices and traditionary superstitions of his creed and race. He sought the society and conversation of well-informed Europeans, and was amongst the first Turkish statesmen to adopt, to a certain extent, European manners and habits. When I first knew him he was building his fine 'yali' at Balta-Liman, on the Bosphorus, which he fitted up in the French fashion, with every comfort and luxury, adorning

it with beautiful gardens laid out in the European style.

He had entered warmly into the schemes of Sultan Mahmoud for the reform of the army and of the civil administration of Turkey, and was soon recognised as the head of the Liberal party, of which he was, at the same time, the most enlightened, able, and earnest member. He had the welfare and regeneration of his country sincerely at heart, and was as patriotic and honest as a Turkish statesman could be who lived in the midst of so much intrigue and corruption. Few men in Turkey who have attained to power and authority have been insensible to a bribe, or have obtained their wealth by strictly legitimate means. Although Reshid Pasha may have acquired his considerable fortune in a manner not altogether consonant with our ideas of integrity and public duty, he was never accused of having betrayed the interests of his country, or of having promoted those of her enemies, from unworthy motives.

His position was one of very great difficulty, like that of all really honest Turkish statesmen who have sought to reform the corrupt and demoralising administration which has brought the Ottoman Empire to decay. He was opposed by all those who from bigotry, ignorance, and self-interest resisted the introduction of reforms, and

especially of such as were derived from European sources. They formed a great and powerful party. Supported by so energetic and determined a sovereign as Sultan Mahmoud, Reshid Pasha might have held his ground successfully against them. But Mahmoud's successor, Abd'ul-Mejid, who was on the throne at the time of which I am writing, whilst a well-meaning and honest man, and really desirous of promoting the happiness and welfare of all classes of his subjects, was of too weak and yielding a nature to withstand the intrigues of those who sought to thwart the policy of Reshid Pasha, although he was supported by Sir Stratford Canning with all his well-known energy and ability.

At the head of the opposition and of the retrograde party was Riza Pasha, a man of considerable capacity, who, having risen from a low origin, was entirely uneducated, ignorant of European languages, and opposed to all reforms except those tending to increase the strength of the army, of which it was his object, for his own ambitious purposes, to place himself at the head. He was well versed in every manner of Oriental intrigue, thoroughly unscrupulous, and of great activity and energy. As the leader of the opponents of Reshid Pasha's liberal policy, he had the support of the Ulemas, or professors of the Musulman re-

ligion and law, and of all those—and they were many and powerful—who looked upon the reforms which that statesman was seeking to introduce as at variance with the creed of Islam, and dangerous to the existence of the Empire. In addition to those who acted from conscientious motives, and really believed that their religion was in peril, was the crowd of public functionaries and others who found, in the existing abuses and maladministration, the means of acquiring power and wealth, and who were determined to resist to the utmost any attempt to abolish or reform them.

To these opponents of Reshid Pasha's policy may be added a small number of enlightened, thoughtful, and honest men, of whom Ahmed Vefyk Effendi was the representative, who, whilst desirous that the corrupt and incapable administration of public affairs should cease, were of opinion that the necessary reforms could only be safely and effectively carried out upon Turkish and Musulman lines, and that great prudence and caution were required in putting them into execution. They were convinced that an attempt to introduce European institutions into the ancient and traditionary Turkish political and social system, before it was prepared for so great an innovation, could not possibly prove successful, but must inevitably so

weaken the Ottoman Empire that it would lose the little strength and independence that it still possessed, and would, sooner or later, fall to pieces before the ambitious and encroaching policy of those European Powers which were seeking to aggrandise themselves at its expense.

The failure of the attempts to introduce constitutional institutions into Turkey, and their results, have proved that those men were, from their point of view, in the right. Although they thought that Reshid Pasha was going too fast, and that his endeavours to Europeanise the Turks were unwise, they did not join the corrupt, ignorant, and fanatical men who were banded together against him under Riza Pasha and other Turkish statesmen of the old school. They held aloof, as much as possible, from public affairs, although, for the most part, functionaries of the Porte or employed in other public departments of the State, and enjoyed a high reputation both amongst Mohammedans and Christians for their independence and integrity. I was acquainted with, and saw a good deal of several of them—especially, as I have already mentioned, of Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, the most distinguished and gifted amongst them—and the great ability with which they supported their opinions led me to agree, to a great extent, with them. I came to share their doubts as to

the possibility of engrafting a European and Christian upon an Oriental and Mohammedan civilisation. They maintained that the deplorable condition to which the Empire was reduced was not to be attributed either to the Turkish or Musulman laws, which, if justly and rigorously administered, would secure to all the Sultan's subjects alike the justice, protection, and good government necessary to secure their happiness and prosperity, and would remove all valid grounds of complaint on the part of the Christians which could justify foreign interference in their behalf. The real cause of the sufferings and of the discontent of the populations, whatever their creed, they attributed to the corruption and incapacity of public functionaries in the capital and in the provinces, and contended that the remedy for this state of things did not consist in the introduction of political and social institutions opposed to the feelings and habits of the people, but in the thorough reform and purification of the administration, and in the employment of honest and capable men in the conduct of public affairs.

I continued to live at Constantinople for two years, waiting for the official appointment as a member of the Embassy which Sir Stratford Canning led me to hope he would in the end obtain for me, but which Lord Aberdeen seemed deter-

mined not to give me. I passed the summer with my friend, Mr. Longworth, in an Armenian family at Candili, a village which occupies one of the most beautiful sites on the Bosphorus. My life was not an idle one. M. Botta had continued his excavations among the Assyrian ruins, and had made those discoveries at Khorsabad with which his name will ever be connected. With a rare liberality and generosity, he had allowed me to see his reports to his official superiors in France, describing the remains that he had uncovered. They were accompanied by copies of the cuneiform inscriptions, and by drawings of some of the sculptures from the buried Palace of Sargon. They passed through the hands of M. de Cadalvène, a highly accomplished French gentleman who was then at the head of the French post-office at Constantinople, and who, after showing them to me, forwarded them to their destination. I was, at the same time, in constant correspondence with M. Botta, who kept me fully informed of his discoveries. I was thus enabled to be amongst the first to announce them to the public, by giving a full account of them in a series of letters to the 'Malta Times,' which were republished in many European newspapers. I endeavoured in these letters to fix the date of the wonderful monuments which my friend had

unearthed, and to connect them with the ancient Assyrian Empire and its renowned capital.

The success of M. Botta encouraged me to persevere in the design that I had formed of returning some day to Mosul, and of exploring the mounds of Nimroud and Kouyunjik on the left bank of the Tigris, supposed to occupy the site of Nineveh, which I had only hastily visited in my journeys to and from Baghdad. I determined, therefore, to prepare myself as well as I was able to undertake the work, and to turn any discoveries that I might make to good account, should the plans I had formed be eventually carried out. I accordingly set myself to the study of the Semitic languages, to which I conjectured the cuneiform inscriptions from the Assyrian ruins belonged. I obtained from England such dictionaries and books as my limited means allowed me to purchase, to enable me to acquire some knowledge of Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac.

These studies and a correspondence with an English newspaper—the 'Morning Chronicle'—with frequent visits to Sir Stratford Canning and his family at Buyukdereh, where I was always received with the utmost kindness, fully occupied my time, which passed swiftly and pleasantly, the only drawback upon my enjoyment being the uncertainty of my position, and the delay which,

notwithstanding all Sir Stratford's efforts in my favour, was taking place at the Foreign Office in finding the promised official employment for me. He did the best he could to reconcile me to the disappointment, preaching patience and confidence —virtues which, under the circumstances, it was very needful to possess. To give me a proof of his desire to serve me he offered to present me to the Sultan. I accompanied him to an audience of his Majesty in one of the Imperial palaces on the Bosphorus. Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid was then on the throne. He differed in every respect from his bold and resolute father, Mahmoud. He was a kind-hearted, well-intentioned man, but constitutionally weak and feeble. His appearance agreed with his character. He was small in stature, and pale, and sat with downcast eyes: but the expression of his countenance, although melancholy, was amiable and benevolent, and when lighted up with a smile, which it frequently was when the conversation took a turn which pleased him, very attractive. It was then the etiquette for the Sultan, when receiving an ambassador, or any other distinguished personage, in public audience, to speak in a very low voice, almost indeed in a whisper, and to address himself solely to the chief interpreter of the palace, who, in a very humble and deferential manner stood near him, and communicated

in French what he had said to the person for whom it was intended. That office, which was one of much importance and dignity, was then held by Safvet Pasha, a rising statesman of promise, known for the honesty and simplicity of his character, and generally respected and esteemed. He was one of those functionaries at the Porte who belonged to the school of Reshid Pasha, and who, understanding the French language, had made himself acquainted with the literature and institutions of Europe.[1]

The head dragoman of the Embassy was also present on these occasions. It was his duty to translate what fell from the Ambassador, also speaking in a low and almost inaudible whisper. The post was then held by the aged Frederick Pisani, an old, honest, and faithful servant of the British Government, and a member of a family which had been long connected with the British Embassy at Constantinople. Sir Stratford, under whom he had been during the troublous and dangerous times of the massacre of the Janissaries and of the Greek war, had the highest esteem for him, and the most complete reliance upon his fidelity, and upon his tact and ability in negotiating

[1] He subsequently rose to the rank of Grand Vizir, an office which he very worthily filled at the critical period when I was Ambassador at Constantinople. He was a statesman of gentle manners, of independent character, and of the strictest probity.

with the Porte. He was gifted with the most imperturbable patience and long-suffering, and was never moved by the outbursts of anger to which he was frequently exposed, and which broke harmlessly upon him—an additional recommendation to his chief.

Nothing of special importance occurred at this my first appearance at an Imperial audience. I was presented to the Sultan as an English traveller who had visited a large part of his Empire, and who desired to express personally to his Majesty the gratitude he felt for the protection and hospitality he had enjoyed whilst residing in his dominions.[2]

I had, however, an opportunity of again seeing the Sultan on a memorable occasion. The Turkish Government in the autumn of 1843 had been guilty of a cruel and outrageous act of fanaticism, which had excited the indignation and horror of Christendom. An Armenian who had embraced Islamism had returned to his former faith. For his apostasy he was condemned to

[2] On my return to Constantinople, after my first expedition to Nineveh, I was again presented to Sultan Abd'ul-Mejid by Sir Stratford Canning, who made an eloquent discourse to his Majesty upon the illustrations of history furnished by my discoveries, and the moral to be derived from the fall of great cities, which was pithily summed up by old Frederick Pisani, when he simply informed the Sultan that I was 'the man who had dug up the old stones.'

death according to the Mohammedan law. His execution took place, accompanied by details of studied insult and indignity directed against Christians and Europeans in general. The corpse was exposed in one of the most public and frequented places in Stamboul, and the head, which had been severed from the body, was placed upon it, covered by a European hat.

Sir Stratford Canning protested against this gross and abominable outrage with all the energy of his passionate nature. He demanded an immediate apology from the Porte for this insult to Christendom, and, at the same time, the repeal of the law which condemned to death apostates from Islam. An angry correspondence took place between him and the Turkish Government, in which he received the warm and powerful support of Lord Aberdeen, whose despatches on the occasion advocated the principles of religious freedom in language worthy of the subject and the high and honourable character of the writer.

The French Ambassador had at first supported Sir Stratford Canning in his demands; but the British Ambassador had to bear the brunt of the battle almost alone. I did what little was in my power to assist him, by pressing upon the principal Turkish statesmen in and out of office his arguments in favour of the abolition of a cruel and

barbarous law, and by warning them of the fatal consequences to the Ottoman Empire should the practice of putting to death converts from Islam to Christianity be persevered in. At the same time, my connection with the English journals and my relations with most of the newspaper correspondents at Constantinople enabled me to obtain for him the almost unanimous support of the European press.

Official notes, addressed to the Porte in language rarely used in diplomacy, but fully warranted by the circumstances of the case, having failed to obtain from the Turkish Government the concessions demanded by Sir Stratford Canning, he determined to make a personal appeal to the Sultan himself, and to warn him of the danger which would threaten his throne in the event of a refusal on the part of his Ministers to yield to the demands of the English Government. His representations and remonstrances produced their effect upon Abd'ul-Mejid, who was of a humane disposition and averse to the shedding of blood. By his Majesty's directions, and after a careful examination of the authorities on the Musulman law by the Sheikh-el-Islam and a council of the Ulema, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed a declaration to the British Ambassador, stating that 'effectual measures would be taken to prevent

henceforward the execution and putting to death of the Christian who is an apostate.'

The wording of this note was ambiguous, and the concession was not all that Sir Stratford Canning required. He determined, however, to place upon it, in acknowledging its receipt, an interpretation which agreed with his demand that no apostate from Islam, under any circumstances, should be punished with death. In order to give a greater solemnity to the declaration of the Porte, he demanded an audience of the Sultan to return him the thanks of the Queen, and her Government, for the abolition of a law which was an outrage and offence to all those who professed the Christian faith. The audience was granted, and Sir Stratford Canning was attended by all the members of the Embassy. He invited me to accompany him.

Abd'ul-Mejid received the Ambassador with his usual courtesy and affability, listening with patient resignation to the discourse on religious liberty which was addressed to him, and accepting with apparent pleasure the grateful acknowledgments of the English Government for the liberal and tolerant spirit he had shown in abolishing an odious and cruel law.

But Sir Stratford had not yet delivered his reply to the declaration of the Porte. He came

armed with it to the Palace, determined to hand it to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs after the audience, and after he had, as he believed, committed the Sultan to the interpretation he desired to place upon the concession made by the Turkish Government.

It was usual, after an audience of the Sultan, for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, or the Grand Vizir, to adjourn with the Ambassador to an apartment where sherbet, coffee, and pipes were served, and matters of political importance were discussed. The former office was at that time held by Rifaat Pasha, a clever and wily Turkish statesman. He received Sir Stratford and his suite, as was the custom. The conversation at once turned upon the great question which had brought the English Ambassador to the Palace, and Sir Stratford handed to him the reply which he had prepared to the official communication he had received on the subject. It was to the effect that the British Government would receive with the greatest satisfaction the assurance which the Sultan and the Porte had given, that henceforward no apostate from the Mohammedan religion would incur the penalty of death.

Rifaat Pasha read it with a look of astonishment, and, handing it back to Sir Stratford, declined to receive it, as it placed an interpretation

upon the communication from the Porte of which that document did not admit. The concession which the Turkish Government had made, he contended, was limited to the abolition of the punishment of death in the case of Christians who, having made a profession of Islamism, reverted to their former faith. The law as regards Mohammedans who apostatised was inexorable, and being prescribed by the Prophet himself in the Koran, the Sultan had no power to alter or modify it.

Sir Stratford had inadvertently taken the paper from the Pasha's hand. He now sprang to his feet from the divan upon which he had been sitting, and advancing with a menacing gesture towards the terrified Minister, who was crouched cross-legged in a corner, exclaimed that he *should* accept the note, and at the same time thrust it at him so full in the face that, in an involuntary movement of self-defence, he put up his hands and clutched the document. The Ambassador left it with him, hurrying out of the room, followed by his suite, and, regaining his caïque, returned to the Embassy. The rumour of this scene, which was not one easily to be forgotten by those who witnessed it, soon spread, with the inevitable exaggerations, over Pera, and speedily reached Europe through the press. It added to Sir Stratford Canning's reputation for energy and as the protector

of the Christians of Turkey. He persistently refused to take back or modify his note, and the Porte, with equal persistence, refused to admit the interpretation that it placed upon the concession made by the Sultan.[3]

In the summer of 1843 much anxiety was felt in England as to the fate of Colonel Stothard and Captain Conolly, two officers of the Indian army, who had gone to Bokhara and who had not been heard of for many months. Rumours had reached Europe that they had been made prisoners by the Emir, or Sultan, of that country, and on refusing to embrace the Musulman religion had been beheaded. I had endeavoured to obtain information with respect to them from pilgrims and merchants from Central Asia, who constantly passed through Constantinople and lodged in certain khans in Stamboul. To these hostelries I constantly went, but although I communicated with many such persons, who stated that they had heard that two Europeans had been publicly executed in Bokhara, I failed to obtain any authentic account of the death of the two officers in question.

[3] Many years after, when I was the Queen's Ambassador at Constantinople, I had to refer to these transactions, and to Sir Stratford's correspondence with the Porte, in the case of a Turkish mulla who was accused of having abjured Islamism, and whose life I was able to save after he had been condemned to death by a 'fetvah,' or decree, of the Sheikh-el-Islam.

As it was believed by many persons that they still lived, it was very desirable that some definite information should be obtained regarding them, and that if they were kept as prisoners by the Emir, an attempt should be made to deliver them. My prospects of obtaining permanent employment at the Embassy being still very uncertain, I offered to Sir Stratford Canning to proceed to Bokhara, and to endeavour to learn whether they were still captives, and, if possible, to effect their release. The mission was one of great risk and peril, but the experience I had of the wild tribes of Asia encouraged me to hope for success. Sir Stratford accepted my offer, and I was engaged in making arrangements for my departure for Turkestan when I learnt that a committee had been formed in England for the purpose of ascertaining the fate of the two officers, and that Dr. Wolff, the well-known missionary and a converted Jew, had consented to proceed to Bokhara with this object.

He arrived shortly after at Constantinople on his way to Persia. He at first proposed that I should accompany him, which I declined to do, being convinced that such a mission could be best performed by one person alone, and that no one was better fitted to undertake it than he was. He had already travelled in Central Asia. His enthusiasm and his confidence in his own influence

and resources were unbounded. He had the reputation in the East, founded upon the strange adventures which had befallen him, of being a madman, and, amongst Musulmans, madmen are looked upon as directly inspired by the Deity, and are invested with a kind of sacred character. I believed, therefore, that if any man could pass with safety through the savage inhabitants of the Turcoman desert between the Persian frontier and Bokhara, and could present himself before the fanatical and cruel ruler of that city with any chance of escaping with his life, that man was Dr. Wolff.

As it is well known, he succeeded in reaching Bokhara, and in ascertaining that Stothard and Conolly, after refusing to apostatise, had been put to death. He related that he had entered the city of Bokhara dressed in his robes as a Doctor of Divinity, and holding open in his hands a large Bible, out of which he read or chanted aloud certain passages. His strange appearance and proceedings confirmed the conviction that he was out of his mind, and consequently divinely protected and inspired. He was able to obtain the information of which he was in search, and, after a short detention, to leave Bokhara and return in safety to Constantinople.

In the early spring of 1844 a serious rising

against the Turkish rule took place in Northern Albania. Rumours reached Constantinople of shocking cruelties to which the Christians in that part of European Turkey had been subjected by the Albanian rebels, who, it was reported, had defeated the Sultan's troops in repeated engagements, and had succeeded in driving the Ottoman authorities out of the province. Sir Stratford Canning was desirous of ascertaining the real state of affairs in the revolted districts, and proposed to me to visit them, and to report to him upon what had occurred there. I readily agreed to his proposal, and left Constantinople on May 1 for Salonica, by a small steamer belonging to the Austrian Lloyd Company, which traded with that port. The journey from Salonica to Monastir was then a perilous one, owing to the unsettled state of the country, the roads being infested with brigands, who plundered caravans and carried off travellers for ransom, or murdered them for what they had with them. The Turkish authorities furnished me with an escort of Bashi-Bozuks, but they were little to be depended upon, being for the most part in league with the brigand chiefs, like the 'Derbend Agassi'—as the guards who were stationed to watch the mountain defiles were called. However, I accomplished my journey in safety. At Monastir I lodged in the house of the Greek

bishop, where I spent two or three weeks, and had an opportunity of learning something about Greek ecclesiastical life. I was not very favourably impressed with the morals or manners of the priests and dignitaries of the Greek Church. For the most part they led, very openly, dissolute lives, were surprisingly ignorant, very corrupt, and given to the grossest superstition.

At that time the question between the Bulgarians and the Greek Œcumenical Patriarch, which subsequently gave rise to a grave schism in the Greek Church and has led to serious consequences, had recently taken an acute form. It arose in this wise. The Christian population of the Turkish Provinces to the north and south of the Balkans (with the exception of Servia) consisted mainly of Bulgarians, but as they professed the Greek faith and recognised the Greek Patriarch as their religious head, they were generally known, as I have already mentioned, as Greeks. They affected, indeed, to be Greeks, as the name of 'Bulgarian' was then held to be one of contempt and reproach. Their bishops and clergy were appointed by the Œcumenical Patriarch, who selected for ecclesiastical dignities and offices Greek priests who were ignorant of the Bulgarian language, which was the one exclusively spoken by their flocks. This state of things caused great dis-

satisfaction to the Bulgarians, who demanded that these appointments should be given to men of their own race, who were acquainted with their language and customs. The Greek Patriarchate, however, refused to consent to this very just and reasonable demand, and persisted in imposing Greek ecclesiastics upon them.

The Greek bishops were, moreover, for the most part, even more grasping and corrupt than the Turkish officials, and it was more difficult for the unfortunate Christians to escape from them than from their Mohammedan oppressors. The Porte left to them the entire administration of the affairs of the Christian communities over which they presided, and did not interfere so long as the 'kharaj,' or poll-tax, and other Imperial imposts were duly paid, and even these, after being apportioned by the Turkish authorities, were frequently collected by the bishop and his council. The tithes and taxes required for the maintenance of the church, of the clergy, and of such schools as existed, and for charitable and other purposes, were also raised by the bishop, who had, moreover, jurisdiction in all ecclesiastical matters, such as marriages, disposition of property, and other questions relating to the affairs of the Christian communities which did not come within the Turkish or Musulman law. He had every means of

extorting money from those who were thus placed under his jurisdiction, and he generally availed himself of them pretty freely. I often heard Christians say that whilst they were able to deceive the Turkish authorities and to evade the payment of the Imperial taxes, it was impossible to escape from the bishop, who, through the priests and his other agents, could ascertain exactly how much money they possessed, and knew how to wring the very last 'para' out of them. The complaints against the oppression of the Greek bishops were loud and well-founded, and the Greek clergy in general set a bad example in morals and manners to their flocks—drunkenness and other vices prevailing amongst them to a lamentable extent.

Omar Pasha, a renegade Christian of Croatian origin, who became famous during the Crimean war, was in command of a small army corps which had been sent against the Albanian insurgents. He was marching upon Uscup, which they had then invested. I joined him, and accompanied him in his expedition, living with him and consequently seeing much of him. I was struck by his ability and by his great superiority over Turkish officers whom I had previously met, and I foresaw that he would distinguish himself if an opportunity were offered to him. I, there-

fore, strongly recommended him to Sir Stratford Canning, who contributed much towards his promotion and to his subsequent employment in important commands.

The insurgents, who were of the North Albanian tribe of Ghega, were led by one Dervish Czar, a petty chief who had placed himself at the head of the movement. They had taken up arms to resist the conscription, which was then being enforced in most parts of the Ottoman Empire, and the introduction into Albania of the 'tanzimat,' or constitutional reforms, which had been promulgated at Constantinople, and which were opposed, in many respects, to their ancient rights and privileges. The Ghegas were a wild and warlike clan, who had hitherto maintained in their mountain fastnesses a kind of semi-independence—the Porte being rarely able to maintain its authority over them. They were well-armed and brave, but without discipline, and when they ventured into the plains were unable to withstand even a small body of Turkish regular troops furnished with artillery, in which they were entirely deficient.

Dervish Czar, with his followers, who were said to number between ten and fifteen thousand men, had descended from the mountains of Dibra into the plains watered by the Vardar, had occupied a large number of villages, mostly inhabited by Bul-

garians, and had extorted large sums of money from them, besides driving off their cattle and flocks. It was further reported that they had committed great atrocities upon the Christians, and rumours had reached Constantinople of men, women, and children roasted alive, and subjected to other terrible tortures. As usual, these reports proved to be greatly exaggerated, if not altogether unfounded. From what I could learn, the Christian villagers had been robbed and plundered, and in some instances, when refusing to part with their money or to disclose where it was concealed, subjected to ill-treatment. But I failed to verify the shocking stories of outrages to women and children which were related in Pera, and had been consequently circulated by the European press, although I had opportunities of questioning a large number of persons who would have had personal knowledge of these outrages had they been committed.

When Omar Pasha advanced towards Uscup all the low country, with the exception of the towns in which there were Turkish garrisons, was in the hands of the Ghegas. But they retreated before the Turkish troops to their mountains. Thence they sent emissaries to the Turkish commander, with a view to coming to terms with him. He accordingly encamped between Kuprili and Uscup,

and entered into negotiations with the insurgents, which, however, ended in nothing, as he refused to listen to their demands to be exempted from the conscription.

In order to make a last attempt to come to an arrangement and to avoid bloodshed, Omar Pasha proposed to me to see Dervish Czar, and to endeavour to induce him to accept the conditions which had been offered to him. In those days the influence of England was great in the East, and the word of an Englishman was everywhere accepted as a pledge which would never be violated. The Turkish commander believed that the Ghegas would lay down their arms and submit, if I gave my personal assurance to them that the conditions he offered would be fulfilled, and that their lives and property would be respected.

I accepted the mission proposed to me, as I was not without sympathy for these brave and independent mountaineers, who had good reason to fear and mistrust the Turks, and as I was desirous of doing all that might be in my power to prevent bloodshed. Omar Pasha was to give me an escort as far as the outposts of the insurgents at the foot of the mountains. I was to make my way thence as I best could to the headquarters of the insurgent chief. I was accompanied by a tried and trustworthy cavass, himself of Albanian origin, in

the service of the British Embassy, who was ready to follow me wherever I might go.

I accordingly left Omar Pasha's camp early in the morning, and after a ride of about two hours across the plain, perceived a group of Albanians on a rising ground. My escort refused to accompany me any further, stating that they had received orders to return as soon as the first outpost of the insurgents was in sight, so as to avoid a conflict. The officer, with his Bashi-Bozuks, then turned back. I rode on, followed by my faithful attendant, who, considering that a Turk falling into the hands of the Ghegas would have had but little chance of escaping with his life, showed no little courage.

As we approached the Albanians I could see them levelling their long guns at us. I made signs that I wished to communicate with them, and as I wore the European dress and a cap with a band of gold lace, which then distinguished a Consul in the East, they allowed me to approach. I found assembled a wild and savage set of men, wearing the dirty 'fustanel,' or linen skirt, descending to the knees, and the embroidered jacket and shaggy white coat, which, together with a long gun and a belt carrying inlaid pistols and a dagger, formed the costume of the Ghega tribe.

They seemed at first disinclined to allow me

to approach, evidently mistrustful of the cavass, whom they took for a Turkish soldier. I managed, however, to explain to them that I wished to see Dervish Czar, with whom I had business of importance to transact. After some discussion, in which I was helped by my attendant, who, being an Albanian, spoke their language, they allowed me to proceed, informing me, at the same time, that their chief was in the mountains at some distance, and warning me that there were guards posted in all directions, who, ignorant of my object and character, and seeing me accompanied by a person in the Turkish uniform, might fire upon me before I had time to explain. They sent one of their number with me as a guide, and to protect me in case of need.

We rode over very rough and broken ground for several hours—armed men constantly springing up from behind the rocks and fixing me with their guns. Fortunately, the presence of the Albanian guide prevented them from firing, and after having learnt who I was and where I was going, they allowed me to pass.

In the afternoon I reached Dervish Czar's headquarters. I found him, with a large number of followers, in a forest, without any other shelter than the oak trees beneath which they were collected. A more savage and truculent, and at the

same time a more picturesque, body of men could not well be imagined. They crowded round me, eager to learn the object of my visit, and eyeing with angry looks my cavass, whose Turkish dress excited their suspicion and their anger. Their chief was only to be distinguished from them by a jacket and vest more richly embroidered than those usually worn by the Ghegas, and by his arms, which were elaborately inlaid with silver. He was accompanied by several chiefs who, like himself, were covered with gold embroidery.

He received me courteously, for although an ignorant man, of no rank amongst his people, who had by his influence and courage taken the lead in the rising against the Turkish Government, he had, like his countrymen in general, dignified manners and striking self-possession. Finding that I had not breakfasted, he ordered a meal, which consisted of black bread and some boiled rice—all that his camp afforded—to be prepared for me. After I had eaten, I retired with him and one or two of the chiefs to a distance from the crowd which had gathered round us, and, seated on the grass beneath an oak, proceeded to discuss the business upon which I had come.

After having stated the numerous grievances that the Ghegas had against the Porte, Dervish Czar declared that they were resolved not to re-

ceive any Turkish authorities in their mountains, nor to submit to the new laws of the 'tanzimat,' nor to furnish conscripts to the regular army. In all other respects they were ready to obey the Padishah, of whom they were the faithful and devoted subjects, and to supply him with any number of irregular troops, under their own chiefs, that he might require. If their terms were not accepted they were determined, he said, to fight to the last, and to defend their mountains against the Sultan's soldiers.

I replied that it was impossible for the Turkish commander to listen to these terms, and that if the Ghegas persisted in demanding them their country would be invaded by the Sultan's armies, and that they would, in the end, be compelled to submit to such conditions as the Porte might think fit to impose upon them. I then stated to them the conditions which I had been authorised by Omar Pasha to propose to them, which were fair and reasonable enough, and urged them to accept them to prevent bloodshed, the complete subjugation of their country, and the destruction of what remained to them of their ancient independence.

After a prolonged discussion they agreed to all the terms offered by Omar Pasha with the exception of that relating to the conscription—upon

which point they were not to be shaken. They declared that to give conscripts to the regular army, to be drilled and clothed according to the European fashion, was opposed to their religion and their tribal habits. They were ready to serve as irregulars—as they had always been—but they would never consent to be enrolled in the regular army. Rather than yield they would resist to the last, whatever might be the consequence.

Night was now approaching, and large platters piled with boiled rice mixed with bits of meat were brought to the chiefs, which, with a little black bread, formed their simple meal. When it became dark, preparations were made for a dance. We moved to an open space in the forest where the warriors had assembled. Some hundreds of them then joined hands and began to move round with measured steps to the sound of drums and oboes, stamping their feet and swinging their arms to and fro. It was a kind of 'Romaica,' or Pyrrhic dance.

A crowd of men surrounded the dancers, many of them holding torches made of pine wood, which threw a lurid glare over the performers, others brandishing their swords and raising their war-cries. The white fustanels of the Albanians, their glittering arms, their savage countenances lit up by the red uncertain light, the gloom of the

forest beyond and the star-lit sky above, formed a singularly weird and picturesque scene.

After the dance had continued for nearly two hours, the circle being constantly recruited by fresh dancers to replace those who were tired or wished to withdraw, the assembly broke up, and the warriors scattering themselves in the surrounding forest laid themselves down for the night. I followed the example of the chiefs, and stretching myself under an oak, wrapped in my cloak, soon fell asleep.

I was roused at dawn by a general movement in the camp. The Ghegas were preparing for the day, and buckling on their arms which they had taken off for the night. I observed that very few performed their devotions, as good Musulmans are required to do on rising in the morning, although a mulla had intoned the usual call to prayer at daybreak. But in this respect the Albanians were not very particular, and although professing to be good Mohammedans were very lax in the performance of their religious duties, and were neither fanatical, nor intolerant to those who differed from them in creed.

Immediately after we had risen, my conversation of the previous night with Dervish Czar and the other chiefs was renewed, and the same arguments repeated, but with the same result.

They were willing to give way on every point but the conscription. On this subject they were resolute. Finding that it was useless to press the matter any further, I remonstrated with them upon their treatment of the Christians, referring to the rumours which had reached Constantinople of the cruelties to which the Bulgarians had been subjected. They indignantly protested that there was no truth in these reports, which, they maintained, had been invented by their enemies, the Turks, to damage their cause and to set European nations against them. They declared that, with the exception of raising taxes, to which, as occupying the country, they considered themselves entitled, and which they had collected from all classes and creeds alike, they had in no way interfered with the Christians, who were their brothers and had not been troubled on account of their faith. I was inclined to believe that what they stated was to a great extent true; but I exacted a solemn promise from the chiefs that they would protect the Christians and not suffer them to be molested.

My mission to Dervish Czar having thus proved unsuccessful, I returned to Omar Pasha, to whom I gave an account of what had occurred. I dined with him, and retired early to rest in a small tent which he had assigned to me near his own. In

the middle of the night I was awoke by the report of firearms and by the bugle-call resounding in the camp. Fortunately, the Pasha had not neglected, as Turkish commanders usually did, to take the necessary precautions to meet a night attack, and the pickets had given timely notice of the approach of the enemy. His dispositions were soon made. The troops were formed into a square enclosing our small encampment, at the angles of which he placed his artillery. The attack soon became general. The Albanians greatly outnumbered the Turks, but, ill-armed and without discipline, they failed to make any impression upon them, and were beaten back whenever they attempted to charge, which they did with great courage and determination, throwing themselves upon the bayonets, and discharging their long guns and pistols almost in the faces, of the Turkish soldiers.

Morning beginning to appear, the Ghegas, repulsed in every attempt to break the square, retired to their mountain stronghold. I had been by the side of Omar Pasha during the struggle. He had no misgivings as to the result, having perfect reliance upon his troops, which was justified by the discipline and calm courage they displayed during the attack. Like others who have had the command of Turkish soldiers, he main-

tained that they were the finest in the world, and only required to be properly led. Our losses were small; those of the enemy considerable, and the ground round our encampment was strewed with the dead and wounded.

As soon as the necessary preparations were completed, Omar Pasha resumed his march, and late in the afternoon reached Uscup, which was held by a Turkish garrison, and had been fortified so as to resist any attack that the Albanians might make upon it.

I remained a few days at Uscup, and then accompanied the Pasha to Prisrend and Pristina, which were also garrisoned by Turkish troops. After the failure of their attack on the Turkish camp by night and their disastrous repulse, the insurgents had again opened negotiations with Omar Pasha, which were mainly carried on through influential Albanian chiefs and mullas who resided in these towns. As they dragged on, and I had nothing to do with them, I returned to Uscup, the capital of the province in which the Ghega insurrection had taken place, where I could obtain better information as to the state of affairs in Albania. I lodged in a respectable Christian house, and had thus an opportunity of hearing any complaints that the Christians might have had to make, and of interceding in their behalf with the

Turkish governor of the place, when those complaints were well founded. I rarely failed in obtaining redress, as the Pasha knew that I was in correspondence with Sir Stratford Canning, and a representation to the Porte from the English Ambassador would have inevitably led to the dismissal and punishment of an official who had neglected his duty or misconducted himself.

The governor of Uscup was a dignified Turk of the old school; not a bad man, and one of a kindly disposition, but an adept in all the arts and wiles which characterised Turkish policy and diplomacy. I was in the habit of going to him when he was at his breakfast—a meal which I frequently partook with him—to learn the news of the day, and especially to ascertain what progress the negotiations with the Albanian insurgents was making. One morning I found him in unusually good spirits. When I was about to take my leave of him he begged me to stop, 'for,' said he, 'the principal Ghega chiefs have agreed to submit to the Government, and I have given them a safe-conduct to come to Uscup to arrange as to the terms of surrender. I expect them every minute, and as they are all men of influence in their tribe, and the principal promoters of the insurrection, their submission will put an end to it.'

I accordingly resumed my seat and my pipe.

After a short time a discharge of firearms was heard, indicating the approach of the Ghega chiefs and their attendants. In the meanwhile, the Pasha had given orders that the gates of the fort, in which was the 'konak,' should be closed, and that only the chiefs, after depositing their arms, should be admitted, whilst their followers were to remain outside.

To these conditions they refused at first to comply, suspecting treachery; but after some negotiation, and reassured by the safe-conduct from the Pasha, which was solemnly confirmed by a mulla sent by him for the purpose, they consented to give up their arms and to leave their followers without the gate. They were ushered into the governor's presence and invited by him to be seated. They were twelve or fourteen fine-looking men, with a bold independent gait, very different from the cringing demeanour which was usually assumed in Turkey by those who were permitted to approach so great a man. They were served with the usual coffee and pipes, and the Pasha then addressed them in a set speech extolling the infinite clemency and goodness of the Sultan, and the heinousness of the crime of rebellion against him.

He had scarcely got to the end of his discourse when, upon a preconcerted signal, a number of armed cavasses and soldiers rushed in and threw

themselves upon the Ghega chiefs, who were without means of defence.. They were hurried out of the room, and after having been bound were consigned to prison until nightfall, when, chained hand and foot and placed on mules, they were sent off, under a strong guard, to Constantinople.

During this scene the Pasha sat with an imperturbable countenance, smoking his pipe, which rarely left his lips, as if nothing extraordinary was happening. I was seated near him and was lost in astonishment, and beyond measure indignant, at this gross act of treachery. After wishing him good-morning, and showing him by my manner and countenance what my feelings were, I quitted the 'konak,' not to return to it. The next day I left Uscup for Monastir.

Similar violations of the most solemn pledges, and of safe-conducts given by Turkish officials, had been so frequent and were so notorious, that it was surprising that the Albanian chiefs should have been deceived and have been entrapped as they were in this case. The successful treachery of the Pasha of Uscup had, however, the effect of putting an end to the rebellion. Dervish Czar, without the support of the most influential insurgent leaders, who had been made prisoners, and deserted by his followers, soon after surrendered. In the following year, when riding one day from

Pera to Buyukdereh, I passed a gang of convicts in chains, engaged in mending the road. One of them approached me, and holding out his hand, begged me to give him some 'paras' to buy tobacco. I thought I recognised his countenance. The convict was Dervish Czar. I exchanged a few words with him, gave him the 'tutoon-parasi' (tobacco money) for which he had asked, and then passed on. I never saw him again, and am ignorant of his fate.

As there remained nothing more for me to do in North Albania, the insurrection having collapsed and my mission being thus brought to an end, I prepared to return to Constantinople; but, before doing so, I spent a few days at Ochrida, a small town on the beautiful lake of that name. I lodged there in the house of a very intelligent native Christian of the Greek faith. He was a widower, and the father of three lovely daughters, who did the honours of his house and waited upon me. They were dressed in the picturesque costume then worn by Albanian damsels—jackets of cloth, richly embroidered with gold; ample 'shalwars,' or trousers; and skull-caps, adorned with pearls and long tassels of blue silk. They lived in mortal dread of the Turks, upon whom, on account of their religion and the atrocities attributed to them by the Christians, they looked

with the greatest horror. On my return to Constantinople I corresponded for some time with their father.

Ochrida had been the residence of one of those Albanian beys who, before the time of Sultan Mahmoud, had exercised almost independent authority. Both North and South Albania once abounded in these semi-independent hereditary chiefs; but, one by one, they had been swept away, either put down by force, or betrayed into the hands of the Government by the usual treacherous devices. They and their families had been, for the most part, removed as prisoners to Constantinople, or as exiles to some distant part of the Empire, where they rapidly died out. When I visited Albania in 1839, a few of these beys still remained; on my second visit they had nearly all disappeared. It was the policy of the Porte to destroy these troublesome vassals.

The palace of the former beys of Ochrida still remained, although deserted and almost in ruins. It was a picturesque building standing on a rock overhanging the lake, and richly decorated, without and within, in the ancient Turkish fashion. I passed many hours of the day in a charming kiosk, built on a headland overlooking the expanse of blue water which stretched beneath, hemmed in on all sides by lofty mountains.

In the evening, after dark, lights were seen issuing from the little bays along the shores of the lake. These were the torches of the fishermen engaged in the trout fishery, to attract the fish to the top of the water to be speared—a pursuit in which they were very skilful.

Another way of catching trout at Ochrida I have not seen practised elsewhere. The Drin, a clear and rapid stream, issues from the northern end of the lake. The fishermen made on its banks, and in covered huts, little ponds, which communicated with the river by a passage sufficiently wide for the largest trout to enter. In these huts, which were quite dark within, there being only a glimmer upon the water, they sat watching for the fish, which, impelled by curiosity or by some other motive, entered the pond, and were then captured by a hand-net. In this way a large number of trout were taken.

The fishing of the Lake of Ochrida had been leased by the Government to a Greek speculator. The trout it supplied were renowned for their size and for the delicate flavour of their pink flesh. They were for the most part salted, and sent over Albania and the adjacent provinces for the use of the Christians during their numerous fasts, when no meat is allowed.

After passing some very pleasant days at

Ochrida, I returned to Monastir, and taking post-horses rode to Salonica, where I embarked, and arrived at Constantinople towards the end of July.

On my return from this mission, Sir Stratford Canning treated me as a member of the Embassy. I resided with him and his family during the summer and autumn at Buyukdereh, and in winter in a house hired for the attachés adjacent to that temporarily occupied by the Ambassador whilst the Palace, which had been burnt some years before, was being rebuilt. I continued to enjoy Sir Stratford's confidence, and, in addition to taking my share of work in the chancery, I was employed by him in communicating with the Turkish Ministers and in other important matters. During this period I made more than one interesting excursion. With the late Lord Somers (then Lord Eastnor)—the most delightful of companions, equally distinguished for his wit, his artistic talents, his varied knowledge, and the nobility of his character—I spent some weeks, in a small Greek sailing-vessel, exploring most of the islands of the Archipelago, including Thasos, Samothrace, Metylene, and others famed in classic story, the plains of Troy, Mount Ida, and the country around, and the western coast of Asia Minor, with its many Greek and Roman ruins. We also passed

some days in the convents of Mount Athos, amid scenery of unrivalled beauty. With the Baron de Behr, the Belgian Minister at the Porte, an accomplished numismat and archæologist, but an eccentric and irascible diplomatist, I made the periplus of the Sea of Marmora, discovering and identifying the sites of several ancient cities previously unknown. I accompanied Lord and Lady Cowley on a tour in Bithynia, visiting Nicomedia, Nicæa, and Brusa, and ascending Mount Olympus. With the Count de Perponcher, then secretary to the Prussian Legation at Constantinople, and Mr. Miner Kellogg, a clever American painter, I visited for a second time the beautiful Ionic temple of Œzane, and several Turkish towns in Asia Minor then little known, including Kutayah, with its mines of meerschaum—an article which was exported in large quantities to furnish pipes for a considerable portion of the German race.

In the summer of 1845, Sir Stratford Canning had made arrangements to avail himself of a leave of absence from his post, as soon as the settlement of several important questions pending with the Porte [4] permitted him to do so. His family had

[4] Amongst them was the application made by the British Government for the Sultan's firman authorising the establishment of the Anglican bishopric at Jerusalem, which through the influence of Sir Stratford Canning was soon after obtained.

already left for England, and he was anxious to follow them. The Honourable Henry Wellesley (afterwards Lord Cowley) had been sent to Constantinople to act as *chargé d'affaires* in the event of the Ambassador's departure.

In the meanwhile I was still kept waiting for my promised attachéship. Sir Stratford felt convinced that when he had an opportunity of communicating personally on the subject with Lord Aberdeen, the difficulties which stood in the way of my appointment would be removed. But the time of his departure for England was uncertain, and he might still be delayed until the winter at Constantinople.[5] I had never given up the hope of returning on some future day to Mesopotamia, and of exploring the ruins of Nineveh. The success of M. Botta's labours at Khorsabad had added to my desire to make excavations in the mounds of Nimroud and in those opposite Mosul, which I was convinced covered monuments of great antiquity and importance.

I was not desirous of remaining at Constantinople after Sir Stratford Canning's departure, and I was anxious to find some means of spending my time profitably until he had been able, after his return to England, to obtain for me from Lord

[5] He did not, after all, leave for England until the following summer.

Aberdeen the permanent appointment in the Constantinople Embassy, of which I had the promise. I therefore suggested to him that I might proceed to Mosul for the purpose of examining these Assyrian ruins.

Sir Stratford not only approved of my proposal, but offered to share in the expenses which would be incurred in making tentative excavations. I was able to contribute a small sum from my own resources, which, added to 60*l.* he was ready to advance, would, if employed with the strictest economy, be sufficient for the purpose. I was persuaded that if the results proved such as I expected, funds for carrying on the explorations on an adequate scale would be forthcoming in England, where M. Botta's discoveries had already created considerable interest.

It was not until early in October (1845) that I was able to leave Constantinople for Mosul. I required very few preparations for my journey. My effects consisted of what a pair of large leather saddle-bags—such as were used by the Tatars—could contain. I had no need of a servant, and I determined to use post-horses, then the most expeditious way of travelling in Turkey.

The result of my first expedition to Assyria is known to the public by my work on 'Nineveh and its Remains,' which I wrote during a short residence

in England in 1848, and which was published after my return at the end of the same year to Constantinople, where I had been appointed, as a reward for my various services, and for my discoveries, an unpaid attaché to Her Majesty's Embassy.

APPENDIX.

WHILST the foregoing pages were going through the press I received from a relative the following copy of a letter which I addressed to Mr. Frith, a well-known merchant at Bombay, with a view to its communication to the Chamber of Commerce of that port. On January 20, 1841, the Chamber decided that they 'must write to Mr. Layard, advising him to ask his friend Mehemet Taki Khan to send samples down (to Bombay) of his productions.' Unfortunately, the capture of the great Bakhtiyari chief put an end to his endeavours to establish a trade between his territories and India, which might have proved of the greatest benefit to the Province of Khuzistan, and might have opened up that part of Persia to British commerce.

'Karak, Dec. 18th, 1840.

'My dear Sir,—I have been residing for the last three months in the mountains of the Bakhtiyari with their great chief Mehemet Taki Khan, and have come down from thence to pass a few days in this island amongst my countrymen. Mehemet Taki Khan is very anxious to establish commercial relations between his own country and India, and has requested me to make inquiries as to

the mode in which this might be effected. I have taken the liberty of writing to you rather fully on the subject, and of requesting your advice. The career of this chief is very remarkable. At first only the acknowledged head of the Kunursi tribe, he has by his extraordinary abilities, his prudence and his foresight, raised himself to his present prominent position as chief of all the Bakhtiyari tribes, and can at this moment bring into the field about 15,000 men. Major Rawlinson, in a memoir published in a late number of the London Geographical Society's Journal, bears ample testimony to his talents and his success. But the chief feature in Mehemet Taki Khan's character is his endeavours to repress the predatory propensities of his people and to check their wandering habits by establishing them in villages and encouraging in every manner the cultivation of the land. I feel assured that, if practicable, the Indian Government would, as far as it lay in their power, afford him some assistance in forwarding so laudable an object. At present he has no market to which he can send the produce of his country. Shuster and Dizful are too insignificant and too much ruined by oppression to be of much service to him, and he is most anxious, if possible, to have commercial relations with the English. The Bakhtiyaris extend, as you are probably aware, from Feridun almost to the highland between Tehran and Isfahan to Behbahan. Their strong position in their lofty mountains renders them comparatively independent of the Shah, and although they pay an annual tribute, the amount rather depends upon the will of Mehemet Taki Khan than upon the demands of the Shah. The climate of their country varies much. In the mountains there is little oppressive heat, and thither they retire during the summer

months; while the valleys and plains at the foot of the hills are exposed to the sultry heat of summer, and have a mild and equable temperature in winter. In the mountains they have the products of a temperate climate, whilst in the plains and valleys the palm-tree and even the indigo and tobacco plant flourish. A country so situated is capable of much. Hitherto their cultivation has been limited to grain of various kinds—corn, barley, and rice—tobacco, walnuts, and various kinds of fruits. This is the present produce of the land, which is eminently fertile. They could also obtain from the mountains an abundant supply of chibuk sticks, which might prove a valuable article of export to Turkey. Their numerous flocks afford them an abundance of wool, which is now carried to Behbahan, Shuster, and Dizful. Horses of very good quality and mules could also be made an article of export. I should feel much obliged to you by your mentioning these facts, if an opportunity should occur, to the Chamber of Commerce of Bombay. I would willingly, if it were required, send samples of wool or of any other article to Bombay, and obtain from the Bakhtiyari chief a list of prices and anything else that might be required. The possession of a port in case the Bombay merchants would feel inclined to encourage Mehemet Taki Khan's views would be a most important object. I have no doubt that the good understanding existing between Mehemet Taki Khan and Mirza Koma, the chief of Behbahan, would enable the former to send his caravans to Bender Dilum. But there appears to me to be a more important object to be effected—the opening of the river of Shuster—and the present moment seems to be favourable to such a scheme. The Shah, finding that he was unable to obtain money

from the province of Khuzistan through the medium of his own governors, and knowing the influence of Mehemet Taki Khan in that province, has within these few days placed two regiments with guns in his hands and constituted him the virtual Governor of Khuzistan, expecting that he will be able to collect the revenue which his own people have failed in doing.[1] The Cha'b Arabs occupy the lower part of the stream. Their sheikh would, I believe, offer no opposition to the views of Mehemet Taki Khan should a water carriage be opened to Shuster. There is a good mule road to Isfahan of about eight days through the Bakhtiyari country, which Mehemet Taki Khan would render perfectly secure; thus goods could be carried into the heart of Persia. That line might also be adopted in case of need as a means of communication between India and Herat through Yezd Toon and Tubbus, a road I believe to be much more secure than that between Bunder Abbas, Kirman and Yezd, which is always liable to the attacks of the Beloochees, and has even this year been rendered impassable.

'By embarking goods at Bender Dilum the heavy dues payable at Bushire and on the road to Shiraz would be avoided. From Bender Dilum to Mehemet Taki Khan's first village is three days' journey by a good road; the road is equally good from that village (Jerzoon) to Ram Hormuz and Shuster, and would be rendered perfectly secure. Being but little acquainted with commercial matters, I am not aware of the information that you would probably require to form an opinion of the practicability of opening a trade with the Bakhtiyari country. I shall, however, take an opportunity of send-

[1] Such was the unfounded report that had reached Karak.

ing you the prices of articles in that country and those at which they could be delivered at Bender Dilum; also specimens of wool and tobacco, height of horses, specimens of articles worn by the tribes, and their prices in the Shuster market from which they are obtained. Any suggestion from you I should receive with much thankfulness. Perhaps you will be kind enough to let me know at what price wool of a medium quality should be delivered at Bombay.'

INDEX.

THE END.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON